**Terms of reference   
and technical Specifications**

1. **General information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment name | Conducting a diagnosis study for the programme ‘Inclusive Capital Markets for Youth and Women Entrepreneurs in Ethiopia’ |
| Beneficiary | Expertise France |
| Country | Ethiopia |
| Total estimated number of work days | 150 days |

1. **Context and justification of the need**

Expertise France is France’s public agency and interministerial actor in charge of international technical cooperation, the second-largest in Europe. As a subsidiary of Agence Française de Développement Group (AFD Group), it designs and implements projects that sustainably strengthen public policies in developing and emerging countries. Expertise France works in key areas of development: governance, security, climate change, health, education, and more. Alongside its partners, it contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The project ‘Inclusive Capital Markets for Youth and Women Entrepreneurs in Ethiopia’ is co-financed by the European Union (EU) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), and implemented by Expertise France. The total budget of the project is EUR 10 million.

This project aims to enhance the Ethiopian capital market to better support Small, and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly those owned or led by youth and women. By addressing barriers to finance, improving market infrastructure and financial literacy, and fostering inclusivity, the initiative seeks to empower these underserved groups, drive economic growth and decent work, and promote sustainable development in Ethiopia.

The expected outputs are:

* Output 1: Strengthened skills and capacities within the capital markets authority and other relevant institutions in serving SME needs;
* Output 2: Increased knowledge among women and youth owned and led SMEs, including start-ups, in participation in the stock exchange and alternative means of financing;
* Output 3: Increased knowledge and financial education among international and local investors to participate in capital markets.

The main stakeholders benefiting from the project include the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority (ECMA), the Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) and the Accounting & Auditing Board of Ethiopia (AABE), alongside the entrepreneurship ecosystem and SMEs to drive economic development, innovation, and job creation.

The project is starting in January 2026 and will be implemented for a duration of four years.

In the context of this project, Expertise France is seeking a consultancy firm with combined expertise in capital markets, access to finance for SMEs and gender.

This diagnostic study is conducted within the framework of the Action “Inclusive Capital Markets for Youth and Women Entrepreneurs in Ethiopia” and aims to directly support programme design and implementation, in line with the Document of Action and exchanges held with the European Union and AFD.

1. **Objectives and desired results**
   1. **General objective**

The objective of the assignment is to conduct a comprehensive diagnostic study during the inception phase of the project. The results and recommendations of this study will allow the project team to better define the future activities of the project and prioritise the needs of its beneficiaries. It will also ensure that gender and ESG are integrated into the project activities.

* 1. **Specific objectives**

The study shall:

* **Map key stakeholders** relevant to the project (ESOs, investor networks...) to identify those best positioned to maximise the impact of the project;
* **Analyse the existing entrepreneurial and financial support offer** around SMEs and start-ups in Ethiopia (Business Membership Organisations, investors etc.);
* **Inform the design of subsequent technical assistance, regulatory reforms, and product innovations** aligned with ECMA’s priorities and the broader development of Ethiopia’s capital market ecosystem;
* **Assess the needs of Programmes’ beneficiaries (SMEs, start-ups, investors, etc.) and formulate recommendations to refine the programme design** (geographical scope, sector – including horticulture and coffee, outputs, inputs, activities);
* **Identify levers through which the project can contribute to women and youth’s economic empowerment** and propose approaches to integrate gender, youth and sustainability dimensions across the project’s activities, with a specific focus on the development of a gender action plan;
* **Benchmark relevant international good practices** and innovative approaches in terms of SME integration in capital markets, and provide recommendations on how the project can contribute to adapt and replicate them in Ethiopia;
* **Map cooperation programmes and ongoing initiatives** related to capital markets and the Ethiopian private sector in general, and identify synergies with the project.

The study is not intended to provide a broad assessment of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, but to deliver actionable and decision-oriented recommendations directly relevant to the project’s objectives and outputs.

* 1. **Expected results**

This diagnostic study is expected to deliver a limited number of clear, decision-oriented outputs, aimed at directly informing the design and implementation of the project.

The expected results of the study are as follows:

* Inception and planning
* Assessment of the capital market and access to finance environment in Ethiopia through:
  + - Desk review of financial systems, business environment strategies, legal and regulatory frameworks, investment and financing schemes, with a specific focus on crowdfunding.
    - Interviews with key experts and stakeholders.
    - Mapping of existing capital market support programmes and cooperation opportunities.
* Needs assessment of capital market stakeholders:
* Institutional actors: ECMA (including SME Unit and IPO Clinic), ESX, and the Ministry of Innovation and Technology.
* SMEs and start-ups: identification of financing and ecosystem barriers, with a strong focus on women- and youth-led enterprises and gender considerations.
* Investors and financial institutions: analysis of obstacles to financing and the start-up and SME financing gap.
* Regional Benchmark of:
  + - Comparative analysis of capital markets in four to five peer economies, identifying best practices, adaptation recommendations, and potential peer partners.
    - Relevant capital market events in Ethiopia and the region and opportunities for project engagement.
* Identification of potential partners and implementers for training and capacity-building activities
* Gender and ESG Action Plans:
  + Development of Gender and ESG Action Plans based on an assessment of the Ethiopian capital markets environment.
* Integration of feedback and presentation of findings to project stakeholders

This section provides an indicative overview of the expected outputs. Detailed descriptions of activities, methodologies and analytical steps are presented in Section IV.

1. **Description of the assignment**
   1. **Planned activities**

**Phase 0: Assignment Preparation, Inception and Planning**

This initial phase aims to ensure a common understanding of objectives, scope and methodology.

Activities will include:

* review of all relevant project documents (including the Description of Action, mission reports and background documentation);
* participation in introductory meetings with Expertise France;
* finalisation and validation of the work plan and methodological approach.

**Phase I: Assessment of the capital market in Ethiopia (maturity, challenges, etc.):**

This phase will provide a structured and prioritised diagnostic of the Ethiopian capital markets ecosystem, focusing on elements directly relevant to SMEs and start-ups access to finance, in particular for women and youth-led enterprises.

Activities will include:

* Conduct a preliminary desk research study using documents available online[[1]](#footnote-1) or in Ethiopia allowing an informed evaluation of the situational analysis of capital markets in Ethiopia: legal and regulatory framework governing the capital market (including the recent Start-up Proclamation Act), existing financial support system/instruments–with a specific focus on crowdfunding (equity, debt, donation-based), and business environment strategies;
* Conduct interviews with experts (regulators, market operators, financial institutions, Business Members Organisations such as EUROCHAM, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association, etc.) to assess:
  + The efficiency of government services/ regulatory bodies related to capital markets,
  + The current policy and regulatory environment for debt and equity markets in Ethiopia,
  + Progress report on Ethiopia’s opening up to capital markets in 2025 and improvements to their capital market ecosystem,
  + Remaining challenges (such as limited market infrastructure and liquidity, shallow investor bases and regulatory fragmentation[[2]](#footnote-2), tax, etc.) and risks, especially when it comes to youth and women led SMEs and start-ups,
  + Barriers specific to women-led (see Gender Action Plan below) and youth-led SMEs and start-ups,
  + Relevant regional and international best practices and innovative strategies that could be adapted to Ethiopia’s capital markets;
* Map existing support programmes to capital markets and potential forms of cooperation with them (see benchmark phase below).
* *Assess the situation / state of play of the Ethiopian capital market. The assessment shall include an analysis of gaps between the existing legal and regulatory framework and actual implementation practices. The analysis should focus on elements with direct relevance for programme feasibility and risk management, rather than providing an exhaustive overview.*

**Phase II: Needs assessment of capital market stakeholders:**

The needs assessment shall focus on institutional actors who will be receiving support through component 1 of the project. It should also address access to finance constraints faced by SMEs and start-ups, especially those led by women and the youth.

* **Institutional actors**

The assessment of institutional actors shall focus on capacity needs directly relevant to capital market development and SMEs and start-ups access to finance.

* The **Ethiopian Capital Market Authority** (ECMA): further detail the needs in training and capacity-building of ECMA's SME unit and IPO clinic (an initial list of needs will be provided by Expertise France based on previous meetings and missions in Ethiopia),
* The **Ministry of Innovation and Technology**: assess the needs for support (training, capacity building, tools, etc.) of the Ministry’s staff regarding the the implementation of the Start-up Proclamation;
* The **Ethiopia Securities Exchange** (ESX): assess their relationship to SMEs and start-ups
* The **Accounting and Auditing Board of Ethiopia** (AABE): assess their relationships to SME and start-ups; (including through the newly launched Ethiopian Institute of Certified Public Accountants ETI-CPA offering young people the opportunity to obtain internationally recognised accounting certification without leaving the country).
* **SMEs and start-ups**
  + Conduct **consultations with SMEs and start-ups** (including in the horticulture and coffee value chain), including women and youth-led and owned SMEs and start-ups (these consultations can be mutualised with these conducted as part of the Gender Action Plan – see below), to establish a diagnostic:
    - accessibility of financial resources (capital) and services (microloans, guarantees, investment etc.)
    - barriers they are facing: lack of knowledge/information on capital markets, lack of financial literacy, training, mentoring etc.,
  + Conduct **complementary consultations** with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Entrepreneurship Support Services (incubator, accelerator etc.) and think-tanks (Ethiopian Economics Association EEA, women and youth associations and Ethiopian Universities if relevant).
* *Provide recommendations and guidance on how to tackle the challenges identified, especially for women and youth-led and owned SMEs and start-ups and recommend project activities that Expertise France could implement (per geographical scope, sector of activity, type of activities – training, capacity-building, etc.) as part of this programme and in complementarity with other existing programmes.*
* **Investors & Business Angels**
  + Conduct consultations with Ethiopian, African and international investors and business angels on their knowledge, vision, experience and connection to SMEs and start-ups,
* *Provide recommendations and guidance on a strategy to engage with investors and business angels in order to connect them with SMEs and start-ups especially youth and women-led.*
* *For all, provide recommendations for project activities in line with what has already been proposed in the project structure that Expertise France could implement with ECMA, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, ESX and AABE as part of this programme and in complementarity with other existing programmes; with regard to ECMA, specify how to support the development of innovative financing instruments and de-risking mechanisms.*

**Phase III: Regional benchmark**

* Conduct a **Comparative Analysis** of capital markets in 4 to 5 regional and peer economies (including Kenya[[3]](#footnote-3) and Rwanda[[4]](#footnote-4)) ; provide concrete recommendations on how these models can be adapted and applied in the Ethiopian regulatory and economic context ; include a justification for the choice of benchmark countries based on explicit criteria to be defined (e.g. market development stage, financial inclusion, regulatory framework, etc.).
* Identify **events** related to capital markets and access to finance for start-ups and SMEs in Ethiopia and the region and how the project could interact with them.

**Phase IV: Identification of potential partners and implementers** for training and capacity building activities of the project (including for the development of training modules).

**Phase V: Gender and ESG Plan (including Sustainability Considerations).**

**1/ Design A Gender Action Plan (GAP)**

The study will support the design of a Gender Action Plan (GAP) aimed at ensuring that gender equality considerations are effectively and pragmatically integrated into the implementation of the Action.

The GAP will unfold in two complementary phases, fully embedded in the overall diagnostic process.

The GAP should be the result of the interviews and analysis conducted above, that shall all integrate gender as a key element. More precisely, the Context Analysis will include:

*Phase 1: Context and Gender Analysis*

The Gender Action Plan will be informed by the desk review (Phase I) and the needs assessment (Phase II) and will build on the qualitative analyses and stakeholder interviews conducted throughout the study. Gender considerations will be treated as a cross-cutting dimension of all analytical work, rather than as a standalone exercise.

The GAP will not constitute a baseline study, nor will it involve the collection of exhaustive or representative statistical data on women-led SMEs or start-ups. Given the limited availability of reliable data in Ethiopia and the scope of the assignment, the analysis will rely primarily on qualitative evidence, existing documentation and stakeholder perspectives.

The context and gender analysis will focus on:

* Gender-related data such as indicators of access to financial tools (by type), connections to investors and business angels, participation to training, etc.
* The gender approach in legal and regulatory framework related around capital market [[5]](#footnote-5);
* Documentation of informational gaps between women and men entrepreneurs at the macro level (legal and regulatory framework around capital market), meso level (investor bias, etc.) and micro level (ownership of companies and individual assets, access to loans, individual bias related to investment, family expectations, individual brakes, impostor syndrome etc.);
* Intersectionality with youth (and barriers specific to young women).

This assessment shall rely on the identification and segmentation of profiles (e.g. to be defined according to age, ethnicity, geographic area, religion, etc.).

*Phase 2: Operationalisation of Gender-Responsive Measures*

The GAP will enable the project's potential to reduce gender inequalities to be operationalised and strengthened through simple and directly operational measures that fall within the scope of the project and impact all its dimensions. It shall target all project activities and aims to make gender and accessibility to youth equality effective. It is a way of adopting a gender approach for all components and activities of the project. The GAP summarises the recommendations in a single tool for planning, monitoring and communication. Its formal structure facilitates stakeholder engagement and mobilisation and progress monitoring by quickly identifying who is responsible for implementing each action, the deadlines, the resources, the level of priority and the feasibility. More precisely, the GAP will also focus on developing a gender-responsive approach throughout the project by providing:

1. Analysis of Risks and Opportunities to provide the project with a gender-responsive approach answering the following questions:

* Risks: Is the project likely to perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities? What mitigation measures could be implemented?
* Opportunities: Is the project likely to propose actions to reduce the gender gap and gender inequalities? Which activities could actively promote gender equality? Which activities could promote women empowerment and transformative gender relations?

1. Analysis of barriers and constraints (immediate and structural) to men's and women's participation in the project and proposed actions to remove barriers to participation;
2. Analysis of the counterparties’ capacity in relation to gender (human, material, management/coordination/communication, financial, planning and MEAL, etc.) and proposed activities to strengthen the counterpart's gender capacity;
3. Identify priority interventions and support mechanisms;
4. Sourcing of partners/champions for gender and recommendations of partners/ alliances;
5. Definition of timelines, responsibilities, and required resources

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track impact.

**2/ Design an ESG Plan and Sustainability Considerations**

Rather than developing a standalone Sustainability Plan at this stage of the project, the study will integrate sustainability considerations through an ESG-oriented approach, in line with the commitments announced to donors and the scope of the diagnostic phase.

In this context, sustainability will be addressed as the capacity of the project’s results and mechanisms to remain relevant, usable and replicable beyond the end of the Action, without requiring the development of a separate long-term sustainability strategy.

The analysis will focus on two complementary axes:

* Connections between individuals, relationships with partners and the development of networks will be vital to ensuring long-lasting connectivity and, therefore, impact on the project; special attention will be paid to structural barriers limiting access to these networks and to identifying leverage points for strengthening long-lasting connectivity through the programme.
* The diagnostic will assess complementarities with existing cooperation programmes and regional initiatives, with a particular focus on opportunities for SMEs and start-ups to scale beyond national borders. This includes analysing pathways for regional expansion within East Africa, cross-border investment mechanisms, and alignment with regional capital market initiatives, in order to enhance the programme’s sustainability and multiplier effects.

Throughout these phases, the methodology emphasises a data-driven and collaborative approach. The study is primarily a desk review, complemented by stakeholder consultations, in order to produce recommendations for project implementation.

**Phase VI: Final Report**

* 1. **Anticipated deliverables**

The anticipated deliverables are the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Deliverables** | **End date** |
| **Deliverable 1: Inception Report**  The inception report will present:   * the proposed methodology and analytical approach; * the list of key stakeholders and organisations to be interviewed (to be validated by Expertise France); * the proposed outline and structure of the diagnostic report. | Week 1 |
| **Deliverable 2**: **First** **Draft Diagnostic Report**  The first draft of the diagnostic report will consolidate all analytical components of the study, including:   * the diagnostic of the Ethiopian capital markets ecosystem; * the institutional needs assessment; * the benchmark of regional capital markets and the mapping of potential partners and stakeholders; * the Gender Action Plan and the ESG Action Plan.   This draft report will reflect the integrated and cross-cutting nature of the analysis and will not be organised strictly along the phases described in Section IV. | Week 14 |
| **Deliverable 3: Presentation of results**  The consultants will present the main findings and preliminary recommendations of the diagnostic study to project stakeholders during a validation workshop organised by Expertise France. | Week 16 |
| **Deliverable 4:** **Final Diagnostic Report**  The final diagnostic report will incorporate feedback received from Expertise France and project stakeholders and will consolidate:   * Listing of key actors related to investment & financing schemes in Ethiopia (including crowdfunding platforms), * Existing support Programmes (cooperation), * Potential partners and stakeholders to be engaged in the programme, * Recurring events (and agenda) related to capital markets, * Best practices note. * The final report will follow Expertise France’s reporting template, or a template validated by Expertise France.   **Deliverable 5:** **Presentation of key findings and recommendations**  The consultants will prepare and present the key findings and recommendations of the diagnostic study. The deliverable will consist of the presentation materials (slides and supporting notes), which will serve as the basis for discussion and validation with project beneficiaries.  The final report will follow Expertise France’s reporting template, or a template validated by Expertise France.  The main findings and recommendations of the diagnostic will be presented by the consultants during a restitution workshop organised by Expertise France. The consultants will prepare the presentation materials used for this workshop. | Week 18 |

* 1. **Coordination and Methodology**

The service provider shall designate a single contact person. The expert will be reporting to the project manager at Expertise France HQs, who will coordinate the communication with other stakeholders.

Mrs Amani CHOUBANI of the GEO Department will be the service provider’s sole contact person for Expertise France

E-mail: [amani.choubani@expertisefrance.fr](mailto:amani.choubani@expertisefrance.fr)

A launch meeting shall be held 5 days after the contract award has been notified. Close collaboration will take place with the Expertise France director of the Ethiopian office, and the Sustainable and Inclusive Economy Department (EDI) at the headquarters from assignment preparation right up to completion. Furthermore, regular exchanges must take place with the Team Leader on assignment progress and any difficulties that may be encountered.

Expertise France will provide regular feedback on the advancement of the consultants’ work. In order to ensure maximum ownership of the results of this diagnostic study, the initial findings and the current state of play of the capital markets environment in Ethiopia, the needs assessment and the recommendations of the diagnostic study will be presented during a workshop to project stakeholders and beneficiaries. The feedback collected during this workshop will be integrated into the final version of the study.

Expertise France will facilitate connections with project beneficiaries and stakeholders.

1. **Place, duration and terms of performance**
   * **Place:** Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) and home based.
   * **Implementation period:** 4 months
   * **Start date:** February 15th 2026
   * **End date:** June 15th 2026
   * **Effective duration:** maximum of 150 days
   * **Schedule/programme:**

*The provisional programme for assignment implementation is as follows:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Place** | **Days** |
|  |
| **Phase 0: Preparation, inception and Planning** | online | 5 |
| **Phase 1: Assessment of the capital market in Ethiopia** | Online and in person | 30 |
| **Phase 2: Needs assessment of capital market stakeholders**: | Online and in person | 40 |
| **Phase 3: Regional benchmark** | Online | 30 |
| **Phase 4: Identification of potential partners and implementers** | Online and in person | 5 |
| **Phase V: Gender Action Plan and ESG Plan (including sustainability considerations)** | Online and in person | 35 |
| **Phase VI: Final Report** | online | 5 |
| **Total** | **-** | **150** |

*Candidates are invited to propose an alternative distribution of days, according to what best suits the achievement of the study’s objectives.*

1. **Required expertise and profile**
   1. **Number of experts:** a team of between 2 to 5 experts, including at least one expert with demonstrated knowledge of capital markets and one expert with demonstrated experience in gender. It is essential that the team demonstrates strong sectoral knowledge of SMEs and their access to finance constraints.

**Profile of the designated experts responsible for contract execution** (qualifications, skills and experience can be distributed among consultants)

1. Qualifications and Skills:

* **Education**: Holder of a postgraduate university degree in a relevant field is required. This may include project management, access to finance, public administration, management or a related field.
* **Thematic knowledge of capital markets and access to finance for SMEs**
* **Thematic knowledge of gender**
* **Excellent qualities/capacities** in:
  + Strong analytical skills, problem identification and resolution.
  + Excellent report writing and communication skills, able to produce clear, concise and well-structured reports in English.
  + Decision-making and taking initiatives
  + Workshop facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills, comfortable leading discussions to gather input.
* **Languages**: High proficiency in written and spoken English is required. Fluency in Amharic is an advantage for experts conducting local consultations and interviews.

1. General Professional Experience (must have)

* At least 10 years of professional experience in the field of financial systems, notably in Africa.
* Professional experience of at least 5 years in Ethiopia.
* Solid understanding of the issues relating to capital markets and gender related topics.

1. Specific Professional Experience (nice to have)

* Understanding of the operational modes of cooperation agencies.
* Prior experience of enhancing the capacities of SMEs, start-ups in Ethiopia.

Strong expertise in digital research methodologies.

1. **Practical information**

Each application must include the following:

* **Technical proposal (15 pages maximum)**, including:
  + the understanding of the Ethiopian context and the assignment,
  + challenges involved in implementing the study
  + Detailed methodology,
  + Work Plan: chronogramme, allocation of workdays and timeline,
  + a presentation of the consulting team and distribution of qualifications/skills/expertise and roles,
  + outlining each expert’s experience in line with the terms of reference,
  + Any other element enabling the quality of the proposed technical offer to be assessed.
* **Financial proposal**, covering all expenses and detailing the allocation of person-days following the template provided (Annex II – Financial offer: price breakdown framework for the global and lump-sum price (DPGF)), t**he financial proposal will be assessed as a key selection criterion,**
* **Detailed CVs** of the proposed team members,
* **At least three references** of previous assignments in similar topics and/or geographical areas.

1. The Ethiopian SME Development Roadmap (2020–2029), the “Homegrown Economic Reform” agenda and the Ten-Year Development Plan (TYDP) of the Government of Ethiopia (GoE), House of People’s Representatives, Start-up Proclamation, 2020-2025 National Entrepreneurship Strategy, Startup Proclamation, which is has been adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Assembly in July 2025, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Africa Capital Markets Report 2025, OECD Capital Markets series, 17 November 2025, <https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/africa-capital-markets-report-2025_7d26e1d3-en.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kenya’s capital markets—centered on the **Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE)—**has been **growing in 2025**, with market capitalisation hitting multi-year highs and investor wealth expanding significantly as share prices and trading volumes rise. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rwanda has developed a small but highly strategic capital market model based on institutional consistency, regulatory simplicity and regional integration. In 2011, they created the Rwanda Stock Exchange (RSE). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Ethiopian SME Development Roadmap (2020–2029), the “Homegrown Economic Reform” agenda and the Ten-Year Development Plan (TYDP) of the Government of Ethiopia (GoE), House of People’s Representatives, Start-up Proclamation, 2020-2025 National Entrepreneurship Strategy, Start-up Proclamation, which is has been adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Assembly in July 2025, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)