

ESWATINI ELECTRICITY COMPANY



TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DESIGN AND

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT OF THE OFF-GRID

ELECTRIFICATION ACTIVITIES UNDER ACCELERATING

SUSTAINABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY ACCESS

TRANSFORMATION PROJECT IN ESWATINI

(ASCENT-ESWATINI)

PROJECT ID NO: P508960

FEBRUARY 2026

Consultancy Services for the design and implementation support of the off-grid electrification activities under ASCENT-Eswatini

1 Context and background

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini (GoKE) is implementing the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation in Eswatini (ASCENT-Eswatini) Project (P508960). The project aims to increase access to sustainable and clean energy in Eswatini and supports the Government's goal of achieving universal access to electricity by 2030. The Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) is the implementing agency and manages fiduciary, procurement, and environmental and social aspects through its Project Implementation Unit (PIU).

The project has been divided into different components, namely:

1. Network Reinforcement (US\$43 million): Construction of new networks and network reinforcement
2. Electricity Access Expansion (US\$56 million): On-grid and Off-grid electrification
3. Technical Assistance, Studies, Capacity Building and Implementation Support (US\$10 million)

Subcomponent 2.2 focuses on off-grid electrification through the deployment of stand-alone solar home systems (SHS) for households in rural areas that are not expected to be cost-effectively reached by the grid in the medium term. Approximately 15,000 households are expected to be connected through SHS deployment using performance-based and catalytic grants provided to eligible off-grid service providers.

Under subcomponent 2.2.2, EEC (with support from a Consultant Firm) will prepare detailed Operating Guidelines for the grant scheme. The Operating Guidelines must cover, at minimum: eligibility criteria for providers and products (including use of VeraSol quality standards), target population, grant amounts, application and approval process, customer service/after-sales support obligations, compliance with the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) requirements, and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) procedures.

Recruitment of the Consultant Firm and adoption of the Operating Guidelines are conditions for disbursement under the Project, making early delivery of the Operating Guidelines critical.

2 Implementation arrangements and interfaces

The off-grid component will be implemented by EEC through the PIU in close coordination with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE) and other national stakeholders. Three complementary contracts are envisaged:

1. **Off-Grid Consultant Firm** (this ToR): scheme design, Operating Guidelines, and implementation support.
2. **Digital Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (D-MRV) Platform Service Provider**: establishment of a digital platform integrated with ASCENT regional systems.
3. **Independent Verification Agency (IVA)**: third-party verification of (off-grid) results and milestones.

The Consultant Firm shall coordinate closely with EEC, MNRE, the D-MRV provider, and the IVA (once contracted) to ensure coherence across scheme design, data flows and verification processes. The ASCENT-COMESA project will act as the regional integrator of country level digital platforms.

3 Objectives of the assignment

- Design and operationalise a fit-for-purpose Off-Grid Finance Facility (grant scheme) to enable deployment of approximately 15,000 SHS, using performance-based and catalytic grants to incentivise service-oriented delivery models (e.g., PAYGo, energy-as-a-service) and ensure affordability and sustainability.
- Ensure Government and stakeholder buy-in for the most appropriate model(s) for Eswatini.
- Prepare detailed Operating Guidelines for the grant scheme, including eligibility, targeting, grant structure, application and approval processes, customer service obligations, ESF compliance and MRV/verification procedures.
- Support EEC and MNRE to launch and implement the scheme through procurement support, provider onboarding, operational workflows, and capacity building, and provide ongoing implementation support through project closing (December 2029).
- Define MRV and D-MRV requirements, data governance provisions and alignment with the Independent Verification Agency.

4 Scope of Services

The Consultant Firm shall perform the assignment across the following five workstreams:

1. Workstream A: Market assessment and option analysis (input to scheme design).
2. Workstream B: Operating Guidelines and scheme design.
3. Workstream C: MRV/D-MRV requirements and data governance.
4. Workstream D: Procurement and contracting support (providers and related services).
5. Workstream E: Implementation support, monitoring, learning and handover.

5 Detailed tasks

5.1 Workstream A - Market assessment, and business model options and selection

- Conduct a comprehensive market assessment of Eswatini's off-grid sector, including demand, affordability, current and potential market players, distribution/last-mile capacity, and barriers to entry for private sector participation.
- Assess feasibility for both local and international companies (including firms active in South Africa and neighbouring markets) to participate in Eswatini's off-grid SHS delivery.
- Assess the opportunities and constraints for EEC to participate directly or indirectly in off-grid service provision, and identify practical partnership models.
- Develop a stakeholder map of actors active in rural areas (e.g., NGOs, churches, community groups, local businesses, qualified individuals within the beneficiary communities) who could support last-mile delivery, customer engagement, or after-sales service. Building on this mapping, the consultant will assess how the presence, capacity, or absence of these actors affects the feasibility and design of different off-grid business models, define their potential roles within each model, and identify gaps that may constrain implementation. The analysis will explain why certain business models may be more difficult to implement in specific contexts and will inform the selection and structuring of realistic, context-appropriate business models aligned with rural market conditions.
- Propose and compare delivery and business models tailored to Eswatini's market size and universal access goals (e.g., private sector service contracts/concessions, RBF with sustainability arrangements, EEC-integrated models, hybrid options), including treatment of future grid arrival and transition/integration options.
- Assess subsidy needs for each proposed model (type, level, structure) to balance affordability and provider viability; propose feasible funding and payment structures.
- Present lessons learned from comparable countries and programs and adapt recommendations to Eswatini's context, including reference to recent pilots where available.
- Present the different delivery and business models to EEC, MNRE, the World Bank and other stakeholders with the aim of reaching consensus on the most appropriate implementation strategy for Eswatini.

5.2 Workstream B - Operating Guidelines (OG) and scheme design

The Consultant Firm shall draft, consult on, finalise and support adoption of detailed Operating Guidelines for implementation of the grant scheme in line with the agreed implementation strategy under workstream A.

The Operating Guidelines shall include, at minimum:

- Scheme architecture and objectives; definitions of results/milestones that trigger payments; anti-fraud and conflict-of-interest provisions; audit trail requirements.

- Eligibility criteria for off-grid solar providers (technical, financial, governance, track record, E&S capacity) and eligibility criteria for products (including VeraSol quality standards and compliance verification approach).
- Climate-resilience requirements: define minimum resilience specifications for products and installations (including tolerance to high temperatures, moisture/flood exposure, dust, and mechanical robustness), and integrate these into product eligibility, installation checklists, and post-installation quality assurance.
- Targeting approach: definition of target population and geography, inclusion and gender-responsive affordability measures (including female-headed households), and coordination with MNRE's role in identifying priority areas and selection of group schemes/beneficiaries.
- Alignment with the ASCENT Eswatini Gender Action Plan (GAP): ensure targeting and affordability measures explicitly address barriers for female-headed households, and define sex-disaggregated data fields required for monitoring.
- Grant design: performance-based grants and catalytic grants, including grant amounts/ceilings, payment tranches, milestone definitions, and acceptable evidence for each tranche.
- Application, evaluation, and approval process: templates, scoring and due diligence methodology, timelines, decision authority, and standard contracting approach.
- Customer service and after-sales obligations: warranty, service centres/coverage, response times, spare parts availability, consumer protection and complaints handling.
- Environmental and social compliance: ESF requirements, screening and mitigation expectations for providers, OHS and community safety measures, and end-of-life management of panels/batteries and related waste.
- Supply-chain labour risk (solar PV): include provisions consistent with World Bank requirements to identify and mitigate potential forced labour risks in solar panel supply chains, including bidder declarations, supplier due diligence expectations, enhanced contractual remedies, and documentation requirements for audit/verification.
- MRV procedures: reporting requirements, claims submission and review workflow, data quality controls, linkages to D-MRV platform, and management information dashboards.
- MRV must enable reporting against project indicators, including the number of female-headed households provided with access to electricity, and include standard definitions and validation rules for such fields.
- Verification readiness: evidence matrix per milestone, sampling principles, and alignment with the IVA verification approach.
- Data protection and privacy-by-design provisions consistent with Eswatini Data Protection Act 2022 (consent, minimisation, access control, retention, security).

The Consultant Firm shall facilitate consultations with EEC, MNRE, ESERA, private sector and community stakeholders to validate the Operating Guidelines and ensure ownership and operational feasibility.

5.3 Workstream C - MRV/D-MRV requirements and data governance

- Define functional and data requirements for the digital MRV platform, including minimum dataset, unique identifiers, data capture methods (including where applicable near-real-time reporting), dashboards, interfaces, and interoperability considerations with ASCENT regional D-MRV.
- Define governance arrangements for data management, including roles and responsibilities, data quality controls, and procedures to ensure compliance with data protection requirements.
- Align MRV requirements with Operating Guidelines and IVA verification needs, including evidence requirements, audit trails, and reporting frequency.
- Provide practical guidance for EEC on managing D-MRV procurement and implementation (without duplicating the D-MRV provider's scope).

5.4 Workstream D - Procurement and contracting support

- Support EEC/MNRE in preparing procurement documents (bidding documents/RFP inputs) for selection/engagement of off-grid providers and related services under the scheme, consistent with the Operating Guidelines.
- Prepare evaluation tools (eligibility checklists, scoring matrices) and standard contract clauses addressing service obligations, MRV reporting, E&S requirements, and data protection.
- Support evaluation of proposals and documentation of evaluation results, as requested by EEC.
- Develop provider onboarding materials and training sessions to ensure consistent understanding of scheme rules and compliance requirements.

5.5 Workstream E - implementation support, monitoring, learning and handover

- Provide hands-on support to EEC/MNRE during scheme launch and early rollout, including provider onboarding, first claims processing cycles, issue resolution, and process refinement.
- Support establishment of internal operation procedures for scheme operations (claims processing, payment authorisation, quality checks, grievance handling, reporting).
- Support coordination with the IVA once contracted, including verification readiness, responses to verification findings, and continuous improvement of processes.
- Provide quarterly implementation support reports (progress, risks, issues log, mitigation actions, recommended adjustments) and annual learning/strategy updates.
- Support capacity building and knowledge transfer to EEC PIU, MNRE and relevant stakeholders to ensure sustainability of scheme management and monitoring.
- Support end-of-project handover and documentation by December 2029, including final lessons learned and recommendations for post-project sustainability and possible scale-up.

6 Deliverables, timelines and performance milestones

The assignment is expected to commence upon contract signature and continue through project closing (December 2029). Deliverables and indicative timelines are as per following table.

#	Description	Deadline from contract signature	Indicative payment (%)
D1	Inception Report (workplan, stakeholder plan, outline OG, risk register)	4 weeks	5%
D2	Market assessment & options note (decision-oriented, incl. recommended model(s), subsidy logic, roles, grid-arrival transition)	10 weeks	10%
D3	Draft Operating Guidelines. Draft and final OG must be in form and substance satisfactory to the World Bank and explicitly address PAD requirements (VeraSol, ESF, MRV/D-MRV, consumer service obligations, data protection, climate resilience, and supply-chain labour risk).	12 weeks	15%
D4	Final Operating Guidelines Final OG ready for adoption and acceptable to the World Bank for meeting the off-grid disbursement condition.	16 weeks	20%
D5	MRV/D-MRV requirements & data governance specification (incl. evidence requirements and dashboards)	16 weeks	5%
D6	Procurement & contracting toolkit (templates, evaluation tools, model clauses, onboarding pack)	24 weeks	5%
D7	Verification readiness package (evidence matrix, sampling principles, audit trail, IVA interface note)	24 weeks	5%
D8	Quarterly Implementation Support Reports (QISR) + updated risk/issue log and recommendations (from quarter after OG adoption through Dec 2029)	Quarterly through Dec 2029	25% (allocated across QISRs)
D9	Final Completion & Handover Report (lessons learned, sustainability recommendations, updated OG/SOP package)	By Dec 2029	10%

Note: The allocation for deliverable D8 will be paid in equal tranches against each accepted Quarterly Implementation Support Report. EEC will confirm the number and schedule of quarters in the contract, based on the contract signature date and the project calendar.

7 Contract type and payment modality

The consultancy shall be procured as a time-based contract in accordance with the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers.

Payments shall be made on the basis of actual expert time inputs (staff-months or staff-days) and approved reimbursable expenses, supported by timesheets and periodic invoices. Acceptance of periodic outputs and reports by EEC shall constitute confirmation of satisfactory performance for payment purposes.

8 Duration and Level of Effort

The contract duration shall run from contract signature through project closing (foreseen December 2029). The Consultant Firm shall propose a staffing plan that provides intensive inputs during the design and Operating Guidelines phase (first 4–6 months), followed by continuous implementation support through the remainder of the project, with flexible surge support during key milestones (provider onboarding, first payment cycles, IVA onboarding, and scaling phases).

9 Consultant team composition (indicative)

The Consultant Firm shall mobilise a multi-disciplinary team. The Firm may propose additional experts as needed. At minimum, the following key roles are required (roles may be combined if justified):

- Team Leader / Off-Grid Program & RBF Specialist – leads scheme design, Operating Guidelines, stakeholder coordination, and implementation support.
- Off-Grid Technical & Quality Assurance Specialist – SHS technical standards, VeraSol compliance approach, warranties and after-sales service requirements.
- Market/Business Model Specialist – market assessment, delivery model analysis, stakeholder mapping and last-mile strategy.
- Finance/Subsidy Specialist – affordability and subsidy design, provider cash-flow/RBF implications, funding and payment structures.
- MRV/Digital Systems Specialist – MRV design, D-MRV requirements specification, dashboards, data governance and quality.
- Procurement Specialist – WB procurement familiarity and preparation of procurement tools, evaluation support, contracting templates.
- Environmental & Social (ESF) Specialist – integration of E&S requirements into eligibility, contracting, monitoring, and end-of-life management provisions.
- Gender/Consumer Engagement Specialist – gender-responsive targeting and consumer protection, customer engagement and grievance handling integration.

10 Reporting and coordination

The Consultant Firm shall report to the EEC PIU Project Manager and work closely with MNRE, the D-MRV provider and the IVA. Key deliverables, including the Operating Guidelines, shall be subject to review by EEC and the World Bank.

11 Firm qualifications and experience

- At least five (5) years of experience providing consultancy services in off-grid electrification (stand-alone solar/SHS) and/or distributed renewable energy access programs, preferably in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Demonstrated experience designing and operationalising at least two (2) off-grid programs or facilities involving performance-based payments or results-based financing, including development of operating manuals/guidelines and verification-ready procedures.
- Demonstrated experience with product quality assurance frameworks (e.g., VeraSol/Lighting Global or equivalent) and defining service obligations (warranty, after-sales, service network).
- Experience with MRV systems, preferably including digital MRV platforms and data governance (privacy, security, access controls).
- Experience integrating Environmental and Social Framework requirements into private sector delivery programs (screening, OHS/community safety, waste/end-of-life considerations).
- Experience working with utilities, PIUs and/or government agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa; familiarity with World Bank-financed project environments is an advantage.

12 Evaluation method

The Consultant will be selected using Quality- and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS), with a technical and financial weighting as specified in the procurement documents (indicatively 70% technical and 30% financial).