Terms of References

Pilot External Evaluation 2026

A. INTRODUCTION

1001fontaines is a French-registered non-profit organization that has been committed for over 20 years to **ensuring sustainable access to safe drinking water for underserved communities**. While it is legally an NGO, it operates as a social enterprise, relying on an innovative **decentralized service model** designed to guarantee water quality at the point of use, particularly in contexts where populations face significant health risks related to unsafe drinking water. Today, 1001fontaines operates in Cambodia, Madagascar, Bangladesh, and soon Nepal, reaching over **one million clients.**

The model is based on the installation of **locally anchored water purification units** that treat available raw water to meet WHO standards. Safe drinking water is distributed in reusable 20-liter bottles and sold at an affordable price, ensuring both **quality control** and **convenience** for households.

Sustainability is central to 1001fontaines' approach. Depending on the context, services are either implemented through the creation of a dedicated local entity or through strategic partnerships with existing local organizations. In both cases, 1001fontaines works to progressively strengthen the technical, operational, and managerial capacities of its local partners, enabling them to deploy and manage the service autonomously over time.

The economic model is hybrid: **philanthropic funding** typically supports initial capital expenditures and early-stage development, while **water sales** progressively cover operational costs, with the objective of reaching long-term financial viability. Governance and financial mechanisms are adapted to each national context and partnership structure.

B. BANGLADESH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Context in Bangladesh

Southwest Bangladesh faces a severe, structural drinking water crisis despite the country's rapid economic growth over the past decade. National data highlight strong disparities, with only **18.1% of the population** accessing drinking water free from fecal contamination at the point of use (Bangladesh MICS 2019). The crisis is also compounded by widespread **arsenic contamination** of groundwater, which remains a major public health threat: it is estimated that around 50 million people are at risk of exposure through contaminated drinking water[1]. **Climate change** further aggravates water quality. As one of the countries most vulnerable to

[1] Ahmad SA, Khan MH, Haque M. Arsenic contamination in groundwater in Bangladesh: implications and challenges for healthcare policy. Risk Manag Healthc Policy. 2018 Nov 30;11:251-261. doi: 10.2147/RMHP.S153188. PMID: 30584381; PMCID: PMC6281155.

climate change, Bangladesh is increasingly affected by saltwater intrusion into groundwater, driving up salinity levels, degrading raw water quality, and heightening hypertension risks, therefore **rendering traditional sources unreliable**.

In response to rising demand, **small-scale water providers** - public, NGO-supported, or private - have emerged across the region. However, these initiatives remain fragile due to inconsistent water quality monitoring, underestimated maintenance costs, uncertain service continuity, and rare long-term sustainability.

Partnership with Uttaran and Launch of the Project

In this context, **Uttaran** - a well-established Bangladeshi grassroots NGO dedicated to empowering disadvantaged communities in addressing social, environmental, health, economic, and cultural challenges - launched the **Uttaran Paani** project in early 2023, with initial support from Aqua for All. With nationwide reach and stronghold in southwest Bangladesh, particularly the Khulna division, Uttaran is ideally positioned for local impact. Its revenue-generating activities, including Uttaran Paani (both the safe drinking water project and commercial brand), are managed through the social enterprise **Uttaran Communities (UC)**, a registered private company limited by shares .

The first production facility, established in **Tala upazila** (300,000 inhabitants), began operations in January 2023, adopting a **market-based approach** to distribute safe drinking water in 20-liter jars directly to households. Within a few months, daily sales exceeded 1,000 jars confirming **strong market traction**.

Recognizing the potential of this locally driven solution, 1001fontaines partnered with Uttaran in late **2023**. Combining Uttaran's deep local roots with 1001fontaines' two decades of experience delivering safe drinking water, the two organizations aim to scale this solution to progressively reach up to **one million people** in southwest Bangladesh.

Project Overview

An initial **two-year pilot** phase was designed to consolidate and structure Uttaran Paani as a **reference safe drinking water solution for southwest Bangladesh**. The partnership aimed to reach 8,000 households while demonstrating a credible pathway toward financial sustainability, strengthening quality capabilities, and preparing a robust business plan for Phase 2 expansion. Originally scheduled for 2024-2025, the pilot has been **extended by one year** to address field-level constraints and strengthen operational results. **Total Budget: USD 850,000.**

The project pursues three interconnected specific objectives (detailed logframe and concept note will be available to consultant):

1. **Expanding the operational model developed by Uttaran.** Scale from one to three production facilities progressively operationalized across Khulna Division, with reinforced quality control protocols, upgraded logistics, and standardized operating procedures. Distribution mechanisms are adapted to serve both densely populated and remote rural areas. Social programs are explored to reach targeted beneficiaries, in addition to regular clients.
2. **Confirming impact and self-sustainability of the model.** Structured monitoring tools and management systems are deployed to improve performance tracking and

decision-making. Facility- and project-level financial analyses assess cost structures, pricing strategies, and revenue trajectories, with the objective of approaching 80% operating cost recovery through sales. Consumer and non-consumer surveys provide evidence on socio-economic targeting, behavior change, service satisfaction, and barriers to adoption.

3. **Preparing for larger-scale deployment.** Market assessments and geographic analyses identify replication potential and define optimal catchment areas. These inputs feed into a detailed business plan and Phase 2 roadmap, clarifying governance arrangements, partnership strategy, and financial projections. The ambition is to establish the institutional and operational foundations required for large-scale deployment toward a long-term target of one million beneficiaries.

Current Status of the Project

Tala 1 (the first production site) has been operating around full production capacity (1,200 jars/day) since January 2023. Despite significant external disruptions in 2024 — including nationwide protests, two cyclones, and prolonged roadworks affecting plant access — sales remained stable and began increasing following the launch of the second production site in **Debhata** in 2025. Construction of **Tala 2** (third production site) has been completed, with commissioning scheduled for April 2026.

Beyond infrastructure development, the partnership has focused on **consolidating operational systems**. Key advances include improvements in technical design (supplier selection, iron treatment upgrades, preventive maintenance), water quality monitoring (laboratory partnerships, staff training), operations (SOPs, monitoring dashboards), financial tracking (monthly P&L follow-up), and impact measurement.

Through the end of 2026, priorities include **optimizing production units**, **refining distribution strategies**, and **validating pathways to breakeven**. Major milestones include the Tala 2 launch (April), internal operational and financial reviews (July), and this external evaluation (September), all of which will inform the development of the Phase 2 strategy.

C. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This external evaluation will review the full **2024–2026 pilot phase** with a dual objective: to accurately **document the project's evolution** — including achievements, constraints, and adaptive decisions — and to **inform strategic choices for Phase 2** and broader regional expansion.

The assessment will be structured around four interrelated pillars: (i) the relevance and effectiveness of the Uttaran–1001fontaines **partnership**; (ii) the project's **impact**, including progress against logframe targets and observed social and behavioral outcomes; (iii) its operational and economic **sustainability** at both facility and project levels; and (iv) its **scalability** potential, including institutional readiness, replication conditions, and structural constraints. Across these dimensions, the evaluation is expected to generate concrete, forward-looking recommendations to guide programming, governance, and investment decisions.

D. FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

Partnership

The consultant will assess the Uttaran-1001fontaines collaboration's design, execution, and added-value.

1. To what extent does the partnership effectively leverage the complementary strengths of Uttaran (local expertise, community networks) and 1001fontaines (technical and operational know-how)?
2. Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood across governance, operational management, financial oversight, and decision-making processes?
3. How effective has the transfer of 1001fontaines' know-how been (SOPs, operational tools, quality control systems, financial monitoring tools such as P&L and dashboards)?
4. To what extent has Uttaran/UC developed operational autonomy and managerial maturity (routine execution, compliance with procedures, problem-solving capacity)?
5. Are financial, technical, and human contributions from each partner balanced and aligned with expected results?

Impact

Impact covers expected/unexpected outcomes for consumers (households and small businesses, hereafter called B2C and B2B), staff, and communities. The consultant will build on indicators reported through the project monitoring framework (e.g., consumer and non-consumer surveys) and collect additional qualitative data through field visits and key informant interviews.

1. To what extent have the quantitative objectives (operational facilities, households reached, water quality compliance, staff recruitment/training, social program delivery) been achieved or adapted relative to initial targets?
2. What behavioral changes have occurred among consumers (shift from unsafe water sources, sustained adoption, retention rates)?
3. What is the socio-economic profile of B2C beneficiaries, and does it confirm that vulnerable populations are effectively reached?
4. Who are the B2B beneficiaries of the project, and how do they relate to the pilot's social impact objectives? Additionally, what improvements could be made to monitor social impact in this B2B/B2C mix?
5. How reliable and resilient is the service (water quality beyond E. coli compliance, continuity of the service, delivery performance)?
6. What socio-economic effects can be observed for beneficiaries and local teams (health, environmental benefits, income stability, skills development)?
7. To what extent do gender dynamics (e.g., intra-household decision-making, consumption practices, behaviors) influence access to and use of the service? Would a more gender-sensitive approach enhance the project's impact?

Sustainability

The consultant will draw conclusions on the long-term viability at both the facility and project levels by critically reviewing the pilot outputs provided by 1001fontaines (project reports, P&L

statements, economic sustainability analysis) and complementing them with additional analyses as needed.

1. How does actual implementation (timeline, expenditures) compare with the original plan? What explains major deviations?
2. Is the project progressing toward economic viability at facility level (cost recovery trajectory, break-even outlook, 80% cost coverage target)?
3. Are cost structures and pricing strategies optimized relative to volumes and market conditions?
4. Does the project demonstrate a clear added value compared to alternative safe water solutions (e.g. piped networks, household filters)?
5. Are governance, compliance, and "license to operate" conditions (land access, water rights, regulatory relationships) secure for long-term continuity?

Scalability

The consultant will critically review the scalability assumptions provided by 1001fontaines and offer strategic recommendations to inform the design of the post-pilot phase.

1. Optimal production and distribution setup: Assess the different approaches tested and the scenarios drafted (by 1001fontaines) with respect to their scaling potential.
2. Identification of next areas for replication: Qualify potential expansion zones based on shortlisted scenarios and help refine feasibility criteria (e.g., population density, socio-economic profiles, technical considerations).
3. Partnership strategy: Identify the optimal partnership structure between 1001fontaines, Uttaran, and other stakeholders, including considerations for partnerships, funding, and collaboration mechanisms to unlock growth. Highlight potential barriers and risks to the scale-up plan and propose mitigation measures.

E. METHODOLOGY AND EVALUATION

The evaluation will include the following steps:

Desk review and preparation

The consultant will:

- Review key project documents (logical framework, budget, stakeholder reports, management updates, consumer/non-consumer survey) and deep dive into 1001fontaines and Uttaran modus operandi,
- Analyze the context and water access sector (institutional framework, sectoral report),
- Finalize the detailed methodology and develop the relevant tools to perform data collection and evaluation.

On-site data collection and analysis

In order to complement the project information which will be provided by 1001fontaines and Uttaran, the consultant will:

- Conduct key informant interviews in the field, including consumers and non-consumers (B2C and B2B), delivery staff, plant operators and managers, and relevant community or local authority representatives.
- Observe the operating model of the production units and distribution system (treatment process, quality control, loading and delivery routines, customer interactions).
- Explore current project areas and propose a rapid market assessment approach for relevant upazilas to evaluate scalability potential (e.g., local context analysis including competing water options, pricing/quality perceptions, community vulnerabilities, institutional landscape, demand signals, water access challenges, and replication feasibility).

Based on the information and data collected the consultant will then perform their analysis according to the methodology, and formulate recommendations.

Evaluation restitution

A **full evaluation report**: a comprehensive evaluation report intended for internal use by 1001fontaines and Uttaran. The report should be approximately 20-30 pages, excluding annexes. It will present the full analysis and evidence base and will include:

- The evaluation methodology and approach;
- The analysis of evaluation findings and supporting evidence;
- Conclusions regarding the performance, sustainability, and scalability of the intervention;
- The consultant's recommendations for future strategy and programming.

An **external summary report**: a concise summary version of the evaluation intended for external dissemination. This document - maximum 5 pages - will synthesize the mail elements of the evaluation, including:

- Context and objectives of the evaluation
- Key findings and lessons learned
- Main conclusion
- Strategic recommendations.

F. Required expertise and qualifications

The consultant must have the following expertise and qualifications:

- At least 5 years of professional experience in evaluation of development programs, preferably in Bangladesh or South Asia;
- Proven experience working with international organizations, NGOs, and donors on WASH or similar projects;
- Strong knowledge of the Bangladeshi WASH sector (safe drinking water, salinity and climate-related challenges, rural markets), and demonstrated experience with market-based and entrepreneurship approaches, including assessment and strengthening of their financial viability;
- Fluency in English with excellent written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to conduct interviews with local stakeholders in Bangladesh, either through fluency in Bangla or through collaboration with a qualified translator/interpreter;
- Experience working with local communities in Bangladesh, with strong knowledge of the local context and prior experience in Khulna and/or Satkhira divisions;
- Assets: prior work with decentralized water solutions or franchise models.

G. Timeframe for the project

The evaluation will be conducted between the end of June and July 2026. The consultant is expected to submit a proposed workplan and timeline covering the following suggested phases:

Timeline	Activities	Place
June/July 2026	Desk review and preparatory work	Remote/TBD
June/July 2026	On-site data collection and analysis	Bangladesh
June/July 2026	Evaluation report and restitution	Remote/TBD

H. How to apply

Candidates must submit the following documents by email:

- **Technical proposal**: Full description (max 5-10 pages) of why you are best suited for this assignment, including a high-level methodology addressing the evaluation questions (partnership, impact, sustainability, scalability).
- **CV**: Personal CV (and key team members if applicable) highlighting relevant experience, with contact details (email/telephone).
- **Financial proposal**: All-inclusive fixed total contract price with cost breakdown (daily rate, travel, accommodation, etc.).

Deadline: 15 May 2026

Please ensure your application is sent to the following email addresses:

- ucltala@gmail.com, mehedigece@gmail.com
- naia.messie@1001fontaines.com

I. Selection Criteria

The offer will be evaluated by using the best value for money approach (combined scoring method). Below is the breakdown:

Criteria	**Weight**
Understanding of evaluation scope	20%
Proposed methodology and approach	30%
Relevant experience and expertise	25%
Timeline alignment	10%
Detailed financial proposal	15%