

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Baseline Study – Financial Wellness EWA Plus Pilot

Location: 01 Northern Province & 01 Southern Province

Duration: 6 weeks (Early March – Mid-April 2026)

Reporting to: Portfolio Manager, MEAL Advisor, Research & Learning Specialist



Since 1989, CARE Vietnam has actively cooperated with many partner organizations to implement more than 300 projects in Vietnam. We recognize that the key to equitable and sustainable development lies in addressing the root causes of poverty, social injustice and inequality. We always work with our partners to support women smallholder farmers, workers, and women small and micro-enterprise owners in enhancing their capacity and confidence to participate in economic development activities, adapt to climate change, and increase resilience after natural disasters or major disasters. Together, we aim for a society that develops fairly and equitably for everyone.

Project Information

The Financial Wellness – EWA Plus Pilot is an initiative of CARE Vietnam, implemented in partnership with International Garment Brand and EWA fintech partners. The pilot addresses persistent financial insecurity among garment workers, where CARE's 2025 research indicates that 45% of workers report dissatisfaction with income, 73% express anxiety about emergencies, and 70% desire company-led financial solutions.

The pilot operates in two garment factories with a combined workforce of approximately 5,000 workers (at least 60% women). The intervention follows a two-pillar approach:

1. Enhancing workers' financial literacy through participatory, gender-responsive training;
2. Improving access to responsible financial services through Earned Wage Access (EWA) platforms that allow workers to access earned wages before payday without creating debt.

The pilot is designed to generate actionable evidence on the relationship between financial health, worker well-being, productivity, and retention, while contributing to CARE Vietnam Strategy 2026-2030.

Rationale and Purpose

- **Baseline Study Purpose**

The baseline study establishes pre-intervention benchmarks to enable rigorous measurement of the pilot's impact. It serves multiple purposes:

1. **Establish Baseline Metrics to enable the measurement and comparison of project progress and achievements at baseline and endline:** Document current financial behaviors, knowledge levels, well-being status of workers, and relevant factory-level indicators (retention, absenteeism, productivity) before intervention begins.
 2. **Inform Program Design:** Generate insights on workers' financial needs, digital readiness, and literacy levels to tailor training content and EWA onboarding
- **Research Questions**

The baseline study will address the following research questions:

1. **What is the current state of workers' financial wellness prior to the intervention?** Including financial knowledge, financial behaviors, access to services, and levels of financial stress and well-being.
2. **How do workers currently manage income volatility and financial shocks between pay cycles?** Including coping strategies, borrowing practices, and use of formal and informal financial mechanisms.
3. **What motivates or discourages workers from adopting EWA and other digital financial services?**
4. **How do gender dynamics influence workers' financial situations, decision-making power, and access to financial services?**
5. **What is the current factory context for EWA adoption, and what HR/business metrics may be affected by workers' financial wellness?** Including management understanding of EWA, existing policies that enable or constrain adoption, retention, absenteeism, and salary advance data.

Methodology

1. Geographic Scope

The baseline study will cover two participating factories in the Ho Chi Minh City/Binh Duong industrial area, with a combined workforce of approximately 5,000 workers.

2. Stakeholder Scope

The study should capture perspectives from relevant stakeholder groups at the factory level, including workers (prioritizing women) and management/HR representatives. The consultant should propose the specific informant groups and justification in their technical proposal.

The baseline study will employ a mixed-method approach combining quantitative surveys with qualitative data collection to ensure comprehensive understanding of workers' financial situations, behaviours, and needs.

Quantitative Methods

1. Structured Survey with Workers

A standardized questionnaire will be administered to a representative sample of workers across both factories, covering key themes aligned with the research questions (financial knowledge, behaviours, well-being, digital readiness, and gender dimensions). The consultant should propose the detailed survey content, structure, and data collection modality (online/face-to-face/hybrid) in their technical proposal.

The consultant should propose a sampling strategy that balances statistical rigor with operational feasibility in a factory setting. The proposal should include:

- Sample sizes and rationale for quantitative data collection
- Approach to qualitative data collection (FGDs, KIIs, and/or in-depth case studies) with clear justification
- Criteria for participant selection that captures diverse perspectives (e.g., gender, tenure, migrant/local status, family circumstances) recognizing that different life situations may lead to different financial behaviors and coping strategies

- Consideration of how to capture both the "what" (through surveys) and the "why/how" (through qualitative methods) of workers' financial experiences

2. Factory HR Data Collection

To establish business-case metrics for factory impact assessment, the consultant will work with factory HR departments to collect relevant baseline data (for the 12 months prior to pilot start). Key areas of interest include: retention and turnover, absenteeism patterns, salary advance practices, and other HR metrics that may be affected by workers' financial wellness.

The consultant should propose in their technical proposal which specific data points to collect, potential data sources, and approach to working with factory HR/Finance teams. Data availability will vary by factory; the consultant should document what data exists and its quality to inform realistic endline comparisons.

Qualitative Methods

The consultant should propose appropriate qualitative methods to complement the quantitative survey, ensuring the study can answer both "what" and "why/how" questions. The proposal should include:

- Proposed qualitative data collection techniques and rationale for each informant group
- Thematic areas to explore aligned with the research questions
- Approach to capturing diverse worker experiences and gender dynamics

Secondary Data Review

CARE Vietnam will provide relevant background documents for desk review, including existing research, the EWA pilot concept note, and available factory data. The consultant should identify any additional secondary data needs in their proposal.

Ethical Considerations

The baseline study must adhere to the following ethical standards:

- Informed consent from all participants with clear explanation of study purpose and data usage
- Confidentiality and anonymity in data handling and reporting
- Do-no-harm principles, particularly regarding sensitive financial information
- Gender-sensitive and inclusive data collection approaches
- Compliance with CARE's Global Data Protection Policy and Vietnam's Decree No. 13/2023/NĐ-CP
- CARE safeguarding policies compliance

Key deliverables

The consultant/research team will produce the following outputs:

| No. | Deliverable | Description |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 1 | Inception Report | Detailed study design including refined methodology, sampling plan, analysis plan, ethical considerations, quality control plan, data collection tools, work plan, team roles and responsibilities and timeline |

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|---|-----------------------|---|
| 2 | Data Collection Tools | Survey, FGD guides, and KII protocols in Vietnamese and English |
| 3 | Draft Baseline Report | Comprehensive report with findings across all research questions, disaggregated by gender and factory |
| 4 | Final Baseline Report | Final report incorporating CARE feedback with actionable recommendations for program design |
| 5 | Executive Summary | Standalone 2–3 page summary suitable for sharing with partners and factory management |
| 6 | HR Data Baseline | Compiled factory HR metrics (retention, absenteeism, costs, salary advances) |
| 7 | Raw Data Package | Cleaned datasets (Excel/SPSS), interview transcripts (anonymized), and analysis documentation (syntax/do-file, analysis outputs file) |
| 8 | Presentation | PowerPoint presentation of key findings for sharing with CARE, Lululemon, and factory partners |

Tentative Timeframe

The baseline study is expected to be completed within 6 weeks, from early March to April 2026:

| No. | Phase | Activities | Timeline | LOE |
|--------------|----------------------------|---|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | Phase 1: Inception | Desk review, methodology finalization, tool development, inception report | 15 – 20 March | 3 |
| 2 | Phase 2: Tool Finalization | Tool review with CARE, pilot testing, finalization | 20 – 30 March | 5 |
| 3 | Phase 3: Data Collection | Field visits to two factories, surveys, FGDs, KIIs | 1 – 15 April | 6 |
| 4 | Phase 4: Analysis | Data cleaning, analysis, draft report preparation | 16 – 28 April | 10 |
| 5 | Phase 5: Finalization | CARE review, feedback incorporation, final deliverables | 4 – 10 April | 4 |
| Total | | | | 28 |

Note: Final dates to be confirmed jointly with CARE Vietnam and factory partners.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **CARE Vietnam**
 - Provide strategic oversight and technical guidance throughout the study
 - Facilitate factory access, introductions, and coordination with factory partners

- Share all relevant program documentation and background materials
 - Review and validate tools and reports
 - Ensure safeguarding compliance and risk management
 - Provide logistical support for field visits
- **Consultant / Research Team**
 - Lead methodological design and develop all data collection instruments
 - Recruit, train, and manage the data collection team (enumerators, interviewers, note-takers)
 - Conduct field execution including all data collection activities
 - Implement quality assurance for the data collection process
 - Collect, analyze, and triangulate data from multiple sources
 - Maintain ethical, gender-sensitive, and culturally appropriate practices
 - Produce all deliverables to agreed standards and timelines
 - Ensure compliance with CARE safeguarding and ethical guidelines
- **Factory Partners**
 - Facilitate access to factory premises and workers during data collection
 - Support participant mobilization for surveys and FGDs
 - Share relevant HR data and documentation

Selection Criteria

1. Required Qualifications

Master's degree or higher in social sciences, economics, development studies, or related field

- Minimum 5 years of experience in research and evaluation, with demonstrated experience in baseline studies
- Strong experience with mixed-method research approaches (quantitative surveys and qualitative methods)
- Experience conducting research in factory or workplace settings
- Fluency in Vietnamese required, English proficiency essential
- Excellent data analysis and report writing skills

2. Preferred Qualifications

- Experience with financial inclusion, financial literacy, or fintech-related research
- Prior experience in the garment/textile manufacturing sector
- Experience with gender-sensitive research methodologies
- Previous work with CARE or similar INGOs in Vietnam
- Experience with digital data collection tools (ODK, KoboToolbox, etc.)

Application Procedure

Interested candidates should submit the following documents in English, clearly stating the title "Baseline Study – Financial Wellness EWA Plus Pilot":

- **Technical Proposal:** Including understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology, sampling plan, analysis plan, ethical considerations, quality control plan, data collection tools, work plan, team roles and responsibilities and timeline
- **Financial Proposal:** Detailed budget with breakdown by activity and team member
- **CV(s):** For lead consultant and all proposed team members
- **Sample Work:** At least one example of similar baseline or research reports
- **References:** Contact information for at least two references from similar assignments

Applications should be submitted to procurement2@care.org.vn by 3 March 2026. Please note that RAR file format is not supported by our system. Submissions should be provided in ZIP format, or alternatively via a download link if the file size exceeds email limitations.

CARE is an equal opportunity employer committed to a diverse workforce. Women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Thanks for your interest in CARE! We are committed to each other and to the protection of the people we serve. We do not tolerate sexual misconduct within or external to our organisation and embed child protection in all we do. Protection from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child protection are fundamental to our relationships, including employment, and our recruitment practices are designed to ensure we only recruit people who are suitable to work with other staff and the people we serve. As well as pre-employment checks, we will use the recruitment and reference process to ensure potential new consultant/supplier understand and are aligned with these expectations. To find out more, please contact the Human Resources Team Leader.