TERMS OF REFERENCE

Engagement of an IT Consultant to Upgrade the SheaMarket Platform into an E-Commerce Platform

1.0 Background

The Global Shea Alliance (GSA) is a multistakeholder association of shea value chain actors including women's groups, retailers, international oils and fats suppliers, and leading global food and cosmetics brands. Through public-private partnerships, GSA promotes industry sustainability, quality standards, policy advocacy, and demand for shea in food and cosmetics.

The GSA developed the current Shea Market Platform as a web-based business directory and information-sharing portal to improve visibility across the shea value chain by enabling GSA members to create business profiles, access market information, search and network industry stakeholders. The current SheaMarket platform is built on WordPress. The Consultant will assess it and recommend whether to upgrade it using WordPress/WooCommerce or an alternative technology, with clear justification covering cost, scalability, security and long-term maintainability.

As part of GSA's mandate to promote the utilisation of shea and increase awareness of diverse applications of shea, the GSA seeks to transform the SheaMarket platform into a one-stop e-commerce marketplace that expands consumer reach, opens new markets, and increase revenue opportunities for women-led cooperatives and SMEs trading shea-based products.

To achieve this objective, the GSA seeks to engage an IT Consultant or firm to assess the existing SheaMarket platform and develop additional features to enhance its functionality and transformation into an interactive e-commerce platform for shea-based products. The upgraded platform should provide real-time industry and market information, improve visibility of GSA members and their products, facilitate commercial transactions, and expand market access for shea businesses.

2.0 Objectives of the Assignment

2.1 Overall Objective

The selected IT consultant will advise GSA on the business and operating model required to achieve the intended outcomes of the SheaMarket platform, including increased market access, buyer engagement and revenue opportunities for women-led cooperatives and SMEs. Based on the agreed business direction and priorities, the Consultant will assess the existing platform and recommend the appropriate technology, functionality and implementation approach, and how the existing SheaMarket platform should be transformed into an e-commerce marketplace.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The selected IT Consultant will be expected to:

- Conduct review and assess the existing Shea Market Platform.
- Review the business and functional requirements provided by GSA
- Provide technical advice to GSA on the feasibility, technical implications, risks,associated with the requirements.
- Design and develop an upgraded web-based e-commerce platform.
- Develop Android and iOS mobile applications that allow buyers to browse and purchase shea products and sellers to manage their listings and orders.
- Migrate all existing users, business profiles, content and directory data from the current SheaMarket platform to the upgraded platform.
- Develop analytics, and monitoring dashboards to track platform utilization and performance
- Produce complete technical documentation covering system architecture, database structure, source code, integrations, configurations and user and administrator manuals.
- Conduct comprehensive system, integration, security, performance and user acceptance testing in collaboration with GSA.
- Transfer all source code and system ownership to GSA.
- Train GSA membership department to manage the platform
- Provide post-deployment warranty and maintenance support for twelve months following GSA's formal acceptance of the deployed platform..

3.0 Business and Functional Requirements

GSA will be responsible for defining and validating the business requirements for the upgraded platform in consultation with its members and relevant stakeholders.

The business requirements will form the basis for the technical specifications and system development.

The upgraded SheaMarket Platform is expected, subject to final validation and prioritisation by GSA, to include the following core functional areas:

3.1 Business and Seller Registration

The platform should enable eligible businesses, including women-led cooperatives and SMEs, to:

- Register and create business accounts.
- Provide relevant business and contact information.
- Upload business and product information.
- Upload relevant certifications or supporting documents where applicable.
- Manage their product listings.
- Receive and manage customer enquiries and orders.
- View relevant sales and activity information.
- Detailed product specifications covering quantity, quality, certification, origin, packaging, minimum order size and production capacity.
- Verified seller profiles with (GSA or third party) approval status and supporting documents.

GSA will define the eligibility criteria, onboarding requirements, business information and documentation required from sellers.

3.2 Buyer and Consumer Functionality

The platform should enable buyers and consumers to:

- Browse and search products and businesses.
- Filter products based on agreed criteria.
- View seller and product profiles.
- Add products to a shopping cart, where applicable.
- Place orders.
- Receive order confirmations and updates.
- View order history.
- Contact sellers through approved communication channels.

The final buyer journey and transaction model will be validated by GSA before development.

3.3 E-Commerce Functionality

The Consultant will develop the technical functionality required to support the approved transaction model.

This may include:

- Shopping cart functionality.
- Order management.
- Checkout.
- Payment confirmation.
- Order status tracking.
- Invoicing or receipts where required.
- Transaction records and reporting.
- Logistics and payments (Optional)
- RFQ and negotiation functionality so buyers can request quotes for bulk shea products and sellers can respond and negotiate.
- Commercial performance tracking: enquiries, quotations, orders, completed sales, sales value and repeat buyers.

GSA will determine the preferred applicable business rules and commercial arrangements. The Consultant will be responsible for the technical integration and implementation of the approved solution.

3.4 Business Directory and Industry Information

The upgraded platform should enhance relevant existing SheaMarket functionalities, including:

- Business directory.
- Member profiles.
- Industry information.
- Market information.
- Publications and resources.
- News and announcements.
- Search functionality.
- Networking and contact functionality.

The final functionalities to be retained, modified or discontinued will be agreed between GSA and the Consultant following the platform assessment.

3.5 Administration and Content Management

The platform should provide authorised GSA administrators with appropriate functionality to:

- Approve and manage business registrations.
- Manage users and user roles.
- Review and approve product listings.
- Manage platform content.
- Manage categories and other system configurations.
- Manage orders and transactions, where applicable.
- Generate reports.
- Monitor platform activity.
- Manage access permissions.
- Manage platform notifications.

3.6 Accessibility and Inclusive Design

The platform should include the following functionalities to enable smooth, seamless and user-friendly access for all users.

- Screen reader compatibility for impaired users.
- Voice navigation functionality.
- High-contrast display mode.
- Adjustable font sizes.
- Simplified user interface for individuals with limited digital literacy.

3.7 Analytics and Reporting

The platform should provide appropriate analytics and reporting functionality to monitor key performance indicators.

Subject to final GSA requirements, the system should be capable of reporting on areas such as:

- Number of registered businesses.
- Number of active sellers.
- Number of products listed.
- Number of registered buyers/users.
- Platform visits and user engagement.
- Product views.
- Search activity.
- Orders and transactions.
- Sales value, where applicable.

- Geographic distribution of users and businesses, where appropriate.
- Platform utilisation and performance.

The specific KPIs and reporting requirements will be defined and approved by GSA.

4.0 Scope of Work

The selected IT Consultant/firm will be responsible for conducting a comprehensive assessment, redesign, development, deployment, and handover of the SheaMarket platform into a fully functional, user-friendly digital marketplace. The upgraded platform should serve as a **one-stop e-commerce platform for shea-based products**, connecting women-led cooperatives, SMEs, buyers, consumers, and other shea industry stakeholders while providing access to relevant market and industry information.

The assignment will be undertaken in close consultation with GSA and will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Assessment of the Existing SheaMarket Platform
- Translate GSA approved requirements into technical specifications.
- Design a dashboard to capture all the KPI's
- Cybersecurity, Data Protection and System Performance
- Conduct all systems testing
- Deployment and Go-Live
- Admin onboarding and training
- Provide post-deployment warranty and technical support for twelve months

5.0 Project Review and Safeguards

To ensure that GSA can monitor progress and identify problems early, the Consultant will provide regular progress updates covering:

- Work completed.
- Work planned.
- Progress against the workplan.
- Risks and issues.
- Delays or changes.
- Defects and corrective actions.
- Decisions required from GSA.

The Consultant must immediately inform GSA of any major issue that could affect the scope, cost, timeline, security or quality of the project.

5.1 Review and Approval Points

The following review points will apply:

Stages	**Key Output**	**GSA Action**
Inception	Inception Report and Work plan	Approve
Assessment	Platform Assessment Report	Review and approve
Requirements & Design	Technical Requirements and Solution Design	Approve before development
Development	Progress Reports/Demonstrations	Review Progress
Testing	Testing and QA Report	Review results
UAT	UAT Report	Accept
Go-Live	Go-Live Readiness Report	Approve go-live
Handover	Documentation, Source Code and Training	Accept handover

The Consultant must obtain GSA approval before moving past the relevant approval stage. And also any major change to the scope, requirements, functionality, architecture, timeline or cost must be discussed and approved by the GSA before implementation.

6.0 Key Deliverables

The Consultant will be expected to deliver, at a minimum, the following:

No.	**Deliverable**	**Key Output**
1	Inception Report	Methodology, workplan, implementation approach, risks and dependencies

2	Existing Platform Assessment Report	Technical assessment, gaps, risks and recommendations
3	Technical Requirements and Solution Design	Technical specifications, architecture, integrations and design
4	Data Migration Plan and Report	Migration approach, testing and validation
5	Testing and Quality Assurance Report	Testing results, defects and resolutions
6	User Acceptance Testing Report	User Acceptance Testing results and GSA acceptance
7	Go-Live Readiness Report	Confirmation of technical and operational readiness
8	Training and Knowledge Transfer	Training sessions, user manuals and materials
9	Technical Documentation and Handover Package	System Credentials, database schemas, and source code.
10	Warranty/Support Report	Post-deployment support documentation and logs of resolved issues
11	Final Assignment Report	Summary of project activities, achievements, outstanding issues and recommendations

7.0 GSA's Responsibilities and Support to the Consultant/ firm

GSA will provide the necessary business and institutional support to enable successful implementation of the assignment.

GSA will be responsible for:

- Defining and validating the business objectives and functional requirements of the upgraded platform.

- Engaging GSA members and relevant stakeholders to identify and validate user and market needs.
- Providing the Consultant with the approved business and functional requirements.
- Providing access to the existing SheaMarket Platform for technical assessment and review.
- Providing relevant industry information required for the platform.
- Providing relevant GSA content, branding materials, images, publications and other approved information required for the platform.
- Facilitating access to relevant GSA members and stakeholders for consultations, validation and user testing.
- Providing timely feedback, comments, decisions and approvals on submitted deliverables.
- Participating in user acceptance testing.
- Providing information on the proposed business model, seller eligibility criteria, product categories, transaction processes and other business rules.
- Identifying and providing access to relevant GSA staff for training.
- Supporting the onboarding of selected businesses following deployment.
- Reviewing and approving proposed technical solutions and major changes to scope.
- Providing or approving access to relevant third-party services, accounts or integrations where required.

GSA will not be responsible for designing or implementing the technical solution. The Consultant will retain responsibility for the technical quality, security, performance and functionality of the solution developed under the assignment.

8.0 Responsibilities of the IT Consultant/ Firm

The Consultant will be responsible for:

- Review the requirements provided by GSA.
- Providing qualified technical personnel with the required expertise.
- Developing a detailed implementation methodology and workplan.
- Conducting the technical assessment of the existing platform.
- Translate approved requirements into technical specifications
- Designing and developing the approved solution.
- Ensuring that the platform is secure, scalable, responsive and user-friendly with English and French capability.
- Conducting all required testing and quality assurance.
- Supporting data migration and validation.

- Integrating approved third-party services if any.
- Providing technical advice to GSA on implementation risks and options.
- Reporting technical risks, challenges, dependencies and deviations to GSA promptly.
- Addressing defects identified during testing and the warranty period.
- Providing complete technical documentation.
- Conducting training and knowledge transfer.
- Transferring source code and agreed technical assets to GSA.
- Providing post-deployment warranty and support in accordance with the agreed contract.
- The Consultant shall not make material changes to the approved requirements or system architecture without prior approval from GSA.
- The Consultant shall not delete, disable, modify or take offline any part of the platform, data or content without prior written approval from GSA. All development shall take place on a staging environment, and changes shall be deployed to the live site only with GSA's approval.

9.0 Developer Accounts and Third-Party Services

GSA will pay for developer accounts and third-party accounts that are required and are to be registered in GSA's name.

The Consultant will be responsible for providing technical guidance, setting up, configuring and integrating these accounts as required for the project.

All accounts registered in GSA's name shall remain the property of GSA, and the Consultant shall ensure that GSA has full administrative access to these accounts.

GSA shall hold full administrative control of the domain, hosting, databases, code repositories and all related accounts from the start of the assignment. The Consultant shall not remove, restrict or change GSA's access at any time.

Where the Consultant is required to use its own existing tools, software licences or development accounts during the development process, the Consultant will be responsible for those costs unless otherwise agreed with GSA.

Any third-party service or subscription that will result in a recurring cost to GSA must be identified and approved by GSA before it is implemented.

10.0 Schedule of Payments

Payments to the Consultant will be linked to the successful completion and formal approval of agreed deliverables.

Payments	Goal	Percentage
1	Approval of Inception Report and Workplan	20%
2	Successful completion and GSA acceptance of UAT and testing reports	40%
3	Successful deployment, approval of Go-Live Readiness Report, and approval of the Technical Documentation and Handover Package	40%
Total		100%

11.0 Qualifications and Key Personnel

Applicants must submit CVs for the Lead Developer and Project Manager, and briefly describe how the other roles listed in B will be covered.

A. Firm/team requirements

- At least 3 years' experience building e-commerce or marketplace platforms.
- Experience building multi-vendor marketplaces on WordPress/WooCommerce (e.g. Dokan, WCFM), or on an alternative technology with justification.
- Experience upgrading and migrating existing WordPress sites, including users, content and directory data.
- Experience integrating online payment gateways (e.g. mobile money, cards).
- Experience building analytics and reporting dashboards.
- Experience in system, security, performance and user acceptance testing.
- At least 2 completed relevant projects with verifiable references.
- Ability to provide post-deployment warranty support, technical documentation and training, and to hand over source code and system ownership to GSA.

B. Key team members

- Lead Developer: Strong WordPress/WooCommerce experience (custom themes and plugins, REST API, PHP, MySQL, JavaScript) and a degree in Computer Science, IT or a related field, or equivalent experience.
- Mobile Developer: Android and iOS experience, with at least one published app, preferably connected to a WordPress/WooCommerce back end.
- UI/UX Designer: Experience designing accessible interfaces, including for users with limited digital literacy.
- Security Specialist: Knowledge of cybersecurity and data protection (can be in-house or a named subcontractor).
- Project Manager: Experience delivering software projects on schedule.

Application Deadline: Interested applicants should submit their portfolios and relevant supporting materials to **msakyi@globalshea.com** no later than **25th November 2026.**