

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

<b>Project Name</b>	Supporting the Digital Transformation of Social Protection Systems Globally towards Achieving the Goal of Universal Social Protection 2030
<b>Assignment</b>	Consultant for Status Quo and Gap Analyses of Digital Social Protection Systems and Cross-Border Portability of Benefits in CARICOM
<b>Contract's Duration:</b>	16 June 2025 – 31 March 2026
<b>Work Days</b>	40 Days

## Background

The Digital Convergence Initiative (DCI) is a collaborative effort to support achieving the goal of Universal Social Protection by 2030, by furthering the digital transformation of social protection and improving interoperability through advanced digital solutions and systems. Funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), this initiative is jointly implemented by key partners, including GIZ, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the Foundation for the Internationalization of Public Administrations (FIAP) and Expertise France, in close collaboration with the International Social Security Association (ISSA) and other partners.

In an era of increasing labour mobility and regional economic integration, ensuring the portability of social protection benefits across borders has become a critical priority for policymakers worldwide. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is characterized by high levels of intra-regional migration, with workers frequently moving across borders in search of employment opportunities.

The CARICOM Agreement on Social Security, signed in 1996, is a multilateral agreement among member states of the Caribbean Community that ensures the

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protection of social security rights for people who have lived and worked in multiple CARICOM countries. It facilitates the portability of benefits by allowing workers to totalize their contribution periods across participating states, ensuring they qualify for pensions and other long-term benefits. The agreement applies to benefits such as old-age, invalidity and survivors' pensions, promoting greater social protection and labour mobility within the region. The Agreement is pivotal in promoting the free movement of labour within the CARICOM Single Market, applying to all individuals who have worked or are working and contributing to social security in two or more countries.

Despite the framework established by the Agreement, significant challenges remain in ensuring efficient administrative and digital coordination for seamless benefit portability. Disparities in national regulations, administrative processes, data formats, ID systems and technological infrastructure across CARICOM member states hinder the effective totalization of contributions and the timely realization of benefits. Many social protection systems in the region operate in isolation, with limited digital infrastructure and inadequate administrative mechanisms, making cross-border portability of benefits complex and inefficient.

To address these challenges, the ILO and ISSA under the DCI are undertaking a project to assess, analyse and propose recommendations for strengthening cross-border portability of social protection benefits through system interoperability across the CARICOM region. This project aims to evaluate the current digital and administrative landscapes, identify existing gaps and develop an actionable roadmap to enhance the data exchange and interoperability of social protection systems within CARICOM. By focusing on digital solutions and harmonized administrative processes, the initiative seeks to strengthen the CARICOM Agreement's implementation, thereby promoting greater labour mobility and social protection.

DCI is currently seeking to engage a consultant with expertise in digital social protection systems and cross-border data exchange to conduct the Status Quo and Gap Analyses for the CARICOM project. The consultant will work under the leadership of the CARICOM Project Steering Committee, in close collaboration with the Technical Working Group, and provide expert technical guidance in evaluating existing systems and data exchange mechanisms within CARICOM social security institutions.

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## Objectives

The consultant will lead the Status Quo and Gap Analyses by designing and implementing data collection tools, including surveys and interview templates, to assess cross-border data exchange mechanisms and readiness of social protection system interoperability in CARICOM. The analyses will also identify key challenges, gaps and barriers from legal, institutional, administrative and technical perspectives. Findings will be consolidated into a comprehensive report format to inform the next phase of study. As part of the process, the consultant will organize and facilitate regional workshops with CARICOM social security institutions to validate preliminary findings and gather further insights.

## Outputs and Timeline

Four (4) outputs are expected from the expert under this contract:

### **OUTPUT 1 – Development of Research Tools and Methodology, 5 working days, by 31 July 2025**

1. Develop Research Tools based on the ISSA ICT Guidelines, including:
  - Surveys for baseline data collection, ensuring coverage of legal, institutional, administrative and technical aspects, with a focus on digital data and digital exchange, communication and interoperability.
  - Interview templates for institutional consultations, tailored to extract insights into governance structures, operational workflows and data-sharing practices.
  - Evaluation criteria for assessing data exchange mechanisms, focusing on interoperability, security and compliance with CARICOM Agreement on Social Security and other international standards, including ILO Conventions and Recommendations.
  - Institutional capacity assessment framework for implementing interoperability in CARICOM, identifying legal, institutional, administrative and technical gaps and constraints.
2. Validate the methodology and tools with the Technical Working Group through consultations and pilot testing to ensure relevance and applicability.

### **OUTPUT 2 – Data Collection for Status Quo and Gap Analyses, 10 working days, by 31 September 2025**

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1. Distribute surveys to all CARICOM social security institutions to collect data on:
  - Alignment of data and information needs of social security agencies for benefit portability with existing forms and provisions of the CARICOM social security agreements.
  - Existing data sharing agreements, their scope, effectiveness and legal frameworks.
  - Current digital systems in use, their capabilities and gaps in service delivery.
  - Data exchange workflows and interoperability capabilities, including technical and policy-related bottlenecks.
  - Technical infrastructure and adherence to international standards, such as data security and encryption protocols.
  - Challenges faced in implementing the CARICOM Social Security Agreement, particularly in relation to cross-border benefit portability.
  - Legal, institutional, administrative and technical gaps and barriers affecting interoperability and claims processing.
2. Provide technical support to institutions in completing the surveys, ensuring clarity and consistency in responses.
3. Conduct virtual or in-person interviews with key institutional and beneficiary representatives to:
  - Clarify survey responses and address ambiguities.
  - Gather additional qualitative insights on legal, institutional, administrative and technical gaps and challenges.
  - Understand existing capabilities including digital data storage, digital data management and exchange systems, as well as capacity constraints, regulatory limitations and resource needs to facilitate benefit portability.
  - Explore good practices and lessons learned from institutions with advanced digital interoperability frameworks.

**OUTPUT 3 – Drafting of Status Quo and Gap Analyses Report, 20 working days, by 31 December 2025**

1. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of social protection systems interoperability readiness and data exchange mechanisms in CARICOM, consolidating findings from surveys, interviews and institutional consultations.
2. Conduct a detailed comparison of current practices against international interoperability frameworks.

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3. Summarize key observations, covering:

- The existing landscape of social protection systems interoperability readiness in CARICOM.
- Level of legal, institutional, administrative and technical capabilities across institutions.
- Level of institutional readiness, infrastructure and governance frameworks across institutions.
- Gaps, constraints and barriers affecting cross-border data exchanges.
- Key challenges and gaps in achieving seamless digital interoperability and legal compliance.

**OUTPUT 4 – Regional Validation and Stakeholder Engagement, 5 working days, by 31 March 2026**

1. Organize and facilitate at least two virtual, hybrid or in-person regional workshops or meetings to:
  - Present and explain the agreed data collection tool and research methodology and train participants how to administrate them.
  - Present preliminary findings from the status quo and gaps analyses to CARICOM institutions and key stakeholders.
  - Engage institutions in discussions on opportunities and key challenges of the current systems in place.
  - Collect stakeholder feedback to refine the status quo and gap analyses and inform the development of recommendations and roadmap development.
2. Prepare workshop or meeting summary reports, capturing:
  - Major discussion points and feedback from participating institutions.
  - Preliminary consensus on key challenges and opportunities.
  - Recommendations for strengthening data-sharing agreements and system interoperability.

## Contract Duration

The duration of the assignment of this contract is from 16 June 2025 to 31 March 2026. The work will be completed and delivered no later than 31 March 2026.

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## Qualification and Experience

The consultants should have the following qualifications and experience:

- Advanced degree in social policy, public administration, economics, information systems or a related field.
- At least 10 years of professional experience in social protection, digital transformation and data exchange systems, with a strong focus on interoperability and system integration.
- Demonstrated expertise in cross-border benefit portability, digital identity and the governance of social protection information systems.
- Proven experience in conducting research, policy analysis and developing case studies, preferably in the context of developing regions or multi-country initiatives.
- Strong knowledge of institutional frameworks, legal and administrative governance structures and digital infrastructures supporting social protection integration.
- Experience working with government institutions, regional organizations and multilateral agencies in the context of social security and digital governance.
- Previous experience working with CARICOM and its member states or knowledge of digital social protection and cross-border benefit portability in the CARICOM region would be a strong asset.
- Excellent analytical, communication and technical writing skills in English, with the ability to synthesize complex information into clear, actionable recommendations.

## Application Procedure

Interested candidates are invited to submit the following documents to [xiaol@ilo.org](mailto:xiaol@ilo.org) by **2 June 2025**, with the subject line: "Application: Consultant for Status Analysis of Digital Social Protection & Cross-Border Benefit Portability in CARICOM":

- **Detailed CV and Portfolio:** Highlight relevant experience, past projects and achievements that demonstrate your qualifications and expertise.

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- **Technical Proposal:** Outline the understanding of the assignment objectives and proposed approach.
- **Financial Proposal:** Provide proposed fee structure (in USD) for completing the assignment.

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