



## **ACTION RESEARCH ON SUPPORT SYSTEMS: FORMAT FOR APPLICATION**

### **1. Background**

#### **1.1. Organisation's background**

Short background about the work that the organization is doing, particularly with regard to water, soil-improvement, seeds and agriculture; reference, if any, can also be made to livestock and inland-fisheries (if such a focus exists in any of the programmes by the organisation). The background should include the *institutional presence* of the partner through its network and position within the State and Central advocacy domain, its strengths (especially with regard to micro and/or macro analytical capabilities, research, positioning, etc.) in taking the central argument on mainstreaming rainfed agriculture.

*Annexure 1 can list out current projects / programmes on any or many of the aspects mentioned in the background.*

#### **1.2. Project background**

The proposal should specify the need to integrate work on the four basic and two allied themes mentioned in the background. It should also lay down the importance of a *comprehensive pilot* that includes work on at least three or four core themes. Moreover, it should provide a generic description of the *scale of the project, the overall approach and the need for specific inputs from thematic nodes*. Training and facilitation needs, networking with other organisations from the area/region and the overall process should be mentioned. Project background should also include the potential benefits to the organisation because of running the comprehensive pilot. The organisation should lay down a short, but strong *problem analysis* with regard to bottlenecks related to production and livelihoods of rainfed areas / rainfed farmers. Gaps between successful initiatives and mainstreaming these into the domain of public policy should also be mentioned.

### **2. Goals, objectives and activities (5 page limit)**

#### **2.1. Project Goal**

The proposal should specify the goal of the pilot - *A comprehensive pilot in the Himalayan region will have a different goal from that in Gujarat, for instance.*

#### **2.2. Project objectives**

Project objectives should be aligned to specifics of activities under each of the core themes (Water and Soils as the mandatory aspects and possibly inclusive of Seeds, Livestock and Crops) (inland fisheries could be the add-on). *The objectives may also encompass the purpose of improving livelihoods of marginalized farmers (most of whom depend on rainfed cropping), the inclusion of women in such a programme and its ripple effect in bringing about transformation at various scales.*

### 2.3. Project activities

(Broad guidelines while developing the project activities)

1. The background for each pilot will be rainfed agriculture. The focus of a comprehensive pilot will be an integrated management of soils (primarily the sustained fertility of soils), seeds, water resources (protective irrigation and management of soil moisture), livestock management and diversified crop systems. The inputs from each of these disciplines should result in improved rural livelihoods (again with agriculture and allied activities as the primary focus), nutrition (rural household focus) and better risk mitigation (externalities, including Climate Change).
2. Each comprehensive pilot will attempt to bring a 'multidisciplinary perspective' to rainfed farming, bearing in mind the specifics of a location. These specifics will have a clear reference to eco-geography, units of land (watersheds / landscapes) and scales (river basins to microwatersheds to farms). *Scales can be variable for different agro-climatic zones.* Diversity in rainfed lands and variability in conditions that define each eco-geography should be considered in this process.
3. The comprehensive pilots will have two basic dimensions (these need to be kept in mind while listing out activities):
  - a. Robust practices that improve conditions of rainfed lands and farmers depending upon rainfed agriculture.
  - b. An upward linkage to the domain of policy, with a view to drive home reforms in agricultural investments.
4. Activities can be divided under *action research, capacity building, implementation (trials), documentation (with clearly spelt out communication and research strategies) and advocacy (the advocacy element here should be aimed at feeding into the RRA Network's centralised advocacy effort, hence data coming out of the comprehensive pilot will feed into a publicly accessible website at the RRA Secretariat in Hyderabad).*

### 3. Project benchmarks

Project benchmarks, described below, attempt to give an idea about the pilot as a process, and also the performance of individual components of the process. The benchmarks are listed at three levels (in the form of a framework table), namely:

- Activities (process and outputs)
- Objectives (outcomes)
- Goals (impacts)

### 3.1. Process and outputs from activities

No.	Activity	Process milestones	Outputs
1.			
2.			
3.			

### 3.2. Outcomes

The outcomes from the project must be linked to the specified objectives and may have the following *reference bullets*:

- Improved planning, implementation and follow-up actions in rural development projects – especially with regard to agriculture. *Improvements may accrue in the form of approaches to the watershed programme, processes adopted for planning in different projects, use of science and technology or development of a strong research input in managing rainfed agriculture.*
- Improved approaches to specific programmes / projects after infusion of thematic inputs.

- Magnitude and nature of investments required to institutionalise rainfed agriculture – the amount and nature of investment required for peoples’ institutions and support institutions to sustain the work undertaken under the pilot, on scale.
- Best practices and specific protocols for managing water, soils, seeds, crops, livestock and fisheries, emerging through an Action Research mode, including documentation as research papers / publication.
- Improved knowledge, practices and interface with community especially in managing natural resources with regard to making improvements in rainfed agriculture.
- How will students, practitioners and policy makers directly or indirectly benefit from the pilot.
- Documentation – going beyond qualitative narratives – scientific documentation, economic and social indicators; plus documentation of best-practices, especially with regard to different typologies.

### **3.3. Impact**

Impacts must be specified with regard to the goal(s) stated upfront and should:

- Be specific to the region / agro-ecology represented by each comprehensive pilot.
- Have an overarching impact that has reference to a more centralised ‘advocacy’ and ‘policy.’

<b>Stated Goals</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Indicators of impact</b>

### **3.4. Start and end dates of the project**

The comprehensive pilot will be overlaid on an ongoing programme and an indicative period of 2 to 3 years can be considered.

## **4. Evaluation plan (1 para)**

Evaluation can be participative and should be more ‘facilitative’ than ‘auditory’. The evaluation team can be constituted of two experts, one internal to the RRA network, the other an external evaluator. A suggested plan could include a mid-term and project-end evaluation.

## **5. Organisational profile (1 – 1.5 pages)**

### **5.1. Brief profile of organisation and date of foundation**

### **5.2. Project leader / anchor and person from organization responsible for project (her/his brief profile)**

**5.3. Organisation’s purpose and major activities**

**5.4. Organisation’s past accomplishments and significance in the field**

*(Provide a list of salient projects / initiatives that have a direct bearing on this proposal)*

**5.5. Organisation’s annual opening budget for the last financial year and related activities within the budget**

**5.6. Current funders with amount for four years**

*Attach separate table – Annexure 2*

**5.7. Organisation’s website**

**6. Geographical area where project will be implemented**

**7. Detailed budget**

*Separate Excel File should be provided with all line-items – Annexure 3*

**8. Summary budget**

*Table showing main budgetary heads should be inserted here*