

Foundation for Ecological Security

(Mid-term Assessment of the project titled, 'Strengthening Livelihood of Rural Households through Natural Resource Management')

Request for Proposal

About the Organization: As ecological security is the foundation of sustainable and equitable development, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) is committed to strengthening, reviving, or restoring, where necessary, the process of ecological succession and the conservation of land, forest, and water resources in the country.

To this end FES works towards the ecological restoration and conservation of land and water resources; undertakes work either directly, or with and through a range of democratic village institutions, their federal bodies, and civil society organizations; and ensures the ecological integrity of all efforts by working, as far as possible, with entire landscapes, and with all the interrelated communities within.

About the Project: Degradation of natural resources decreased returns from agriculture and resultant vulnerability in leading farm-based livelihoods has resulted in a decrease in soil fertility, depletion of water tables (and low moisture regimes), loss of floral and faunal biodiversity, low crop yields and returns in incomes, and endemic poverty, particularly among the rural poor.

To address this, the project (Strengthening Livelihood of Rural Households through Natural Resource Management) takes a long-term approach to address issues concerning the governance and management of natural resources and enhancing economic opportunities of the dependent rural livelihoods in rainfed areas. Aimed at increasing the income levels of farm households, the broad areas of engagement are – 1) restoration of common pool resources; 2) strengthen the commons, agriculture and livestock production systems as well as the interface between Commons and the productions systems; 3) strengthen local governance through multitudinal strategies of community cadre, women Self Help Groups (SHGs) habitation level institutions and multi-actor platforms; 4) improve planning process for improving rural livelihoods through better knowledge and information suitable to local contexts; 5) influencing the judicious use of public funds such as MGNREGA.

The project is designed to work towards saturating the intervention in 750 habitations of 5 select blocks (Bagepalli, Sidlaghatta, Bhilwara, Pratapgarh and Udaipur) by building on the work undertaken with 30,173 households across 281 habitations. For this, the project aims to saturate the selected five blocks and: (1.) strategically build up platforms of village representatives (at block level), (2.) leverage technology products for better natural resource management and access to social security entitlements, (3.) convene forums for interaction between farmers, governments, and other actors in the area to influence development processes and government programmes at the block level.

The goal is to improve the incomes by 50% (in 5 years from the current baseline) through improved natural resource management and farm-based livelihood activities and thereby contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Description of the work to be done: Based on the action plan, the mid-term evaluation intends to assess the following objectives:

- How has the initiative influenced the institutional mechanisms for the governance of natural resources from habitation to landscape (block) level, with emphasis on the inclusion of women and poor sections of the community?
- How has the initiative influenced the income and economic opportunities for rural communities?
- How has the initiative supported capacity building at the community level in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring of government programmes and schemes including MGNREGS? To what extent are the communities able to leverage public schemes like MGNREGS, NRLM and digital tools and technology?
- How have the interventions influenced the role of women in decision making processes, their access to credit opportunities and social security schemes?

The mid-term assessment should evaluate the processes, identifying the lessons learnt and make recommendations that can help the project team improve the design and implementation of the rest of the programme.

Scope of the Evaluation: The proposing agency will work to:

- Design and finalize the approach and methodology for conducting the study in consultation with FES.
- Conduct field assessments to evaluate the processes and the social, economic, and environmental changes particularly from a gender lens.
- Assess the programme design in terms of its relevance addressing the objectives of the project, relevance to addressing the SDGs, relevance to the stakeholders involved;
- Assess the quality and timeliness of inputs, the reporting and monitoring system and the extent to which these have been effective;
- Identify good practices, bottlenecks and lessons learnt with regard to the functioning of the programme;
- Identify underlying factors beyond the organization's control that affect the achievement of the project results;
- Provide recommendations to key project stakeholders for follow-up activities.

Expected Deliverables:

- 1.) A report highlighting the project's impact duly vetted by the selected agency.
- 2.) A presentation of the study with methodology and key findings.

The output will be the evaluation report in English. The length of the Report should not exceed seventy pages in total (excluding the annexes). The agency should share all the data collection during the course of the evaluation in its raw format with FES.

The report should:

- Contain an executive summary (mandatory);
- Be analytical in nature (both quantitative and qualitative);
- Be structured around issues and related findings/lessons learnt;
- Include conclusions;
- Include recommendations.

Time and Duration: The total duration of the evaluation will be 45 days commencing Nov 1, 2021 and must be completed latest by Dec 24, 2021 (deadline).

Action plan: At the primary stage, the agency is expected to acquaint themselves with the project, and other project-related documentation. They should design a detailed methodology, methods for collecting data (qualitative and quantitative) for analysis. They are also expected to hold regular meetings with the Project team for updates and seek clarification, when required.

At the secondary stage, they are expected to brief the project team on the process, data collection practices, and later, present the preliminary results to the project team and other relevant stakeholders.

At the tertiary (final) stage, they must complete and share the draft report for comments and suggestions, incorporate the comments and suggestions received, finalize, and submit the report.

Budget: To be proposed by the proponent based on the initial discussion. The budget should not include any equipment expenses. It may have travel, accommodation, human resource fee of the researchers employed, taxes and overheads. All costs arising out of preparation of the proposal will be borne exclusively by the proponent.

Evaluation Criteria: Proposed agencies will be evaluated mainly based on experience, merit, and relevance as per the following evaluation criteria:

- Past experience in the field of such assessments (including reports/publications of similar previous work).
- Number of projects completed in the last five years.
- Knowledge of monitoring and evaluation protocols.
- Demonstrated understanding of issues at the intersection of livelihoods, NRM (natural resource management), gender inclusion, SDGs, and economic empowerment.
- Fluency in oral and written English and working knowledge of Hindi and Telugu.

Proposals should include:

- Background of the Agency
- Methodology
- Documentation approach
- Specification of data/information collection instruments and procedures to be used for the collection of information
- Implementation Plan including action plan for the field visits, consultation, and documentation
- Analysis Plan (Primary and Secondary data)
- Documentation plan
- Timelines
- Profile of the permanent key personnel at the proposing organization/profile of the consultant (Project Team and brief CVs)
- Contact person, designation, and official address for communication
- A realistic budget proposal including total consolidated cost of the assignment with costing details of number of persons proposed to be engaged, number of years of experience, their level of effort (LOE) in terms of man-days for proposed assessment and per man-day cost.

Proposal Submission:

The interested applicant may submit their proposal to Mr. Naveen Babu Isarapu through FES email at naveen.isarapu@fes.org.in; with the subject line as *“Proposal – Midterm Impact Assessment of ABF supported project – 2021-22”* on or before 25/10/2021 by 17:30 hrs. Proposal received after the due date and time shall not be entertained.

All queries/correspondences pertaining to this RFP should be sent to FES email i.e. naveen.isarapu@fes.org.in with as the subject line.

Disclaimer: The information provided to the Proponents through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), or the provision of any subsequent information whether provided verbally or in documentary form, shall be subject to the terms and conditions stipulated in the RFP.

This RFP is not an agreement; it is merely an invitation for submission of proposals. FES reserves the right to reject all or any of the submitted proposals, in whole or in part, without assigning any reasons whatsoever. FES shall not be liable for any assumptions, assessments, statements, or information made within this RFP. Proponents should conduct their own investigations and verify the completeness, accuracy or adequacy of the information contained in this RFP. During evaluation of the proposals, FES may, at its discretion, ask applicants for clarifications on their proposal. FES reserves the right to update, modify, supplement, or cancel this RFP at any stage, without assigning any reason.