

Request for Proposals-

Baseline Study of GIF-funded Women Participation Pilots

RFP n#: 2024-4-GIF-RDA INDIA
Location: Maharashtra and Gujarat, India
Start date: 20.05.2024
End date: 31.10.2024

Better Cotton key contacts:
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Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager



All applications must be submitted via [this form](#).

You may submit questions to tender@bettercotton.org RFP ~2024-4-GIF-RDA INDIA until 6th May 2024

Questions, requests, and applications sent after the deadline 6th May 2024 will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Description

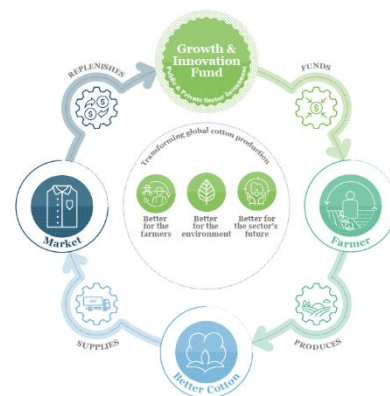
Better Cotton is the world's largest cotton sustainability programme. Our mission: to help cotton communities survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment. In difficult times, we are meeting the challenge head on. Through our network of field-level partners we have provided training on more sustainable farming practices to more than 2.9 million cotton farmers in 26 countries. More than a fifth of the world's cotton is now grown under the Better Cotton Standard and our membership network includes more than 2,400 members.

More information about Better Cotton can be found on our website: www.bettercotton.org

Background

Better Cotton Growth & Innovation Fund (Better Cotton GIF) was established in 2016 to transform cotton production globally and develop Better Cotton as a sustainable mainstream commodity. Its mission is to help cotton communities, through effective and transformative funding, to survive and thrive, while protecting and restoring the environment.

Better Cotton GIF addresses vital sustainability issues such as climate change, soil health, pesticide use, smallholder livelihood, and women's empowerment through its support of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS), which is a holistic approach to sustainable cotton production that covers all three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic.



The fund provides a mechanism for retailers and brands to make investments that can lead to a tangible impact at the field – level, which cannot be achieved alone. The Better Cotton Council, in partnership with Retailers and Brands, civil society members, and government bodies, governs the GIF. Its governance model provides contributing partners an active voice in driving the success of their investments and creating a more sustainable future for the farmers, businesses, brands, and consumers that are involved in the cotton industry. The Fund also enables public-private cooperation on an unprecedented scale – laying the foundation for successful long-term implementation.

Project information

This year GIF has awarded two 3-year women's project grants to Lupin¹ (Maharashtra) and AGA Khan Rural Support Programme India² (AKRSPI) (Gujarat); each project has a distinctive approach, but both try to support women to increase their adoption of more sustainable practices, to increase their income, and to improve community recognition of women's vital role in farming.

AKRSPI Project information:

District: Morbi and Rajkot **State:** Gujarat. **Scale:** 1000 women farmers (in 20 villages)

Impact/Outcome goals:

- Increase women's influence on decisions of what to grow, cultivation methods (land preparation, seed selection, nutrition, crop protection, irrigation), labour hiring, when to harvest, where/how to market etc.
- Increase women's access and control over farming equipment including drip irrigation and drudgery reduction equipment.
- Increase women's membership and influence within farmer producer organisations, including at Board of Director level.

¹ <https://lupinfoundation.in/livelihoods/better-cotton-initiative.html>

² <https://www.akrspindia.org.in/web/home>

- Increase women's access and control to income and savings.

Types of activities:

- Women only training, field days and demonstration plots³ on sustainable cotton farming, drip irrigation, kitchen gardens and animal husbandry.
- Support women to establish small enterprises to support both income generation and, where feasible, the production of sustainable farm inputs.
- Women farmers attended training on understand the functioning and governance of Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) and their right as FPO members.
- Engagement of women's husbands/partners/other family members and the community creating awareness on women empowerment, decision making and women's role in agriculture.

Lupin Project Information:

District: Dhule& Nandurbar **State:** Maharashtra. **Scale:** 550 women farmers

Impact/Outcome goals:

- Women have increased income levels and diversified sources of income.
- Women have increased involvement and influence on cotton farming activities and decisions.

Types of activities:

- Training of the women cotton farmers on horticulture and vegetable farming model introducing the horticulture plantation, intercropping, vegetable promotion and drip irrigation.
- Support for agri-input production unit for production of bio inputs such as vermicompost, biochar, neem / dashparni extract, which helps women entrepreneurs promote the sustainable agriculture practices Lupin is promoting to farmers.
- Training of the women farmers about gender and role of women in the cotton, climate change and impact on the farming.
- Gender training for men and mass awareness activities for the community to orient them on the concept of gender, role of women and importance of the role of women in the livelihoods.

Purpose & Scope of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to conduct a baseline study of the two GIF-funded women participation projects. The baseline study will serve as a benchmark comparison for evaluating the project's success in 2027. The baseline will also help AKRSPI and Lupin to make any needed adjustments to their project and monitoring plans for the forthcoming season.

Please note - both project partners have MEL systems in place and will conduct their own internal baselines. These internal baselines will involve partner staff collecting data using surveys and some interviews and/or focus groups. GIF sees an opportunity to engage external experts to provide additional and complementary independent insights and deeper learning of the current baseline

³ Demonstration plots are areas of land, often around 1-2 acres where cotton is grown, and the projects' promoted practices can be demonstrated so that farmers can learn via demonstrations and also see the effectiveness of the practices. The demonstration plots are in some of the villages where the project farmers are located.

situation and inform future partner monitoring activities. Further, we hope the external experts can help refine how empowerment will be assessed during the project's implementation.

Please note - GIF is particularly interested in hearing from applicants that have experience and skills that can help us and the Programme Partners to go beyond assessing empowerment through reliance on women's self-reported empowerment / decision making / control using questionnaires such as those that use a closed Likert response scale. Whilst Better Cotton recognises the benefits of using questionnaires with closed scale responses can help create general and quantified data (and hope such questionnaires form part of this external evaluation), we feel that such tools assume empowerment can be conceptualised by simple response options in a survey and that women can fully communicate their situation by selecting one of the responses.

Whilst some quantified questionnaires would be good to include (ideally the Delta Women's Empowerment tool⁴), Better Cotton would like the conceptualisation of empowerment, and subsequent data collected, for this baseline to also allow for women to use their own language and contextual understanding of their situation to identify their own sense of their current empowerment, barriers and opportunities to increasing their empowerment. **We would welcome applications from consultant(s) that have experience and skills with methods that can collect this data from women, including participatory methods, stories and in-depth interviews.**

The assignment will consist of baseline study design, data collection, analysis and reporting with the following key tasks:

- Review key project documentation (including consideration of each project's own baselines) and discuss with Better Cotton, Lupin and AKRSPI staff to clarify the project theory of change (suggesting areas for strengthening where necessary) and enable identification and agreement of suitable data collection and analysis priorities for the external independent baselines.
- Develop qualitative tools / methods that enable discussion with the women that are to be project participants, and men to a lesser extent, of women's' current situation and what they would understand as empowerment in relation to each project's desired goals. These tools should be able to collect information that describe the current baseline situation of women's empowerment, and will lay the foundations for any necessary updating of both the outcome/impact indicators and measurement tools for the two projects.
- Develop quantitative surveys/tools for the baseline data collection to produce some numerical findings relevant each projects' outcome and impact indicators. Better Cotton has been using the Women's Empowerment Delta survey tool⁵ and would be interested in some data being collected with this or a similar tool.
- Define sample size and methodology for data collection from both projects' locations.
- Design the data collection plan and quality assurance in coordination with the Programme Partner and GIF Team
- Pre-test the tools and finalise after consultation with the GIF Team
- Collect baseline data from both project locations from the sampled respondents following the agreed study methodology, using the developed data collection tools and according to the data collection plan and quality assurance protocols.
 - Note – the qualitative data collection discussions would likely best be done with the involvement of staff from Lupin and AKRSPI as both rapport with local women and an understanding of local context would be needed. Further, this process should also help

^{4,5} See point 5 in <https://www.deltaframework.org/resources/>

Lupin and AKRSPI staff understanding and agreement with the conceptualisation of empowerment and each projects' indicators.

- Undertake internal quality control procedures including verifying the accuracy of a random sub-sample of questions.
- Clean the data and deliver a final dataset to Better Cotton with verified and validated data
- Review and analyse the baseline data, develop draft reports, submit datasets, and draft reports to Better Cotton
- Identify gaps and needs related to the project Theory of Change.
- In addition to the baseline status and recommendations in the presentations and report, also propose:
 - Indicators on women's empowerment for the project's the track, plus the tools for this tracking.
 - the most suitable evaluation methodologies that could be used to undertake the final evaluation at the end of the project and provide recommendations on the data that needs to be tracked throughout the project implementation that would be useful in the final project evaluation.
- Integrate comments from Better Cotton and the Programme Partner on the draft and submit a final report.

Methodology

Better Cotton expects the study consultant to develop a framework (approach, design, and methods) based on the objectives of the baseline study. The consultant should also provide justification for proposing a particular approach and methodology with a detailed discussion in their proposal. The final decision on the approach and methodology to be used will be done in consultation with the Better Cotton team.

Deliverables

Below is the list of deliverables to be submitted by the consultant(s).

a. Inception Report and presentation

Upon the review of available documents including proposals of the Programme Partner and logframe / MEL Plans and based on an initial discussion with Better Cotton and both Lupin and AKRSPI staff, the consultant should submit an inception report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton and Lupin and AKRSPI staff. The inception report and presentation will:

- Describe the baseline study approach and methodology including sampling.
- Detailed work plan and schedule, including plans for data collection.
- Adapted tools for data collection.
- Plan for the training of enumerators, pre-testing and a detailed data collection plan.

b. First draft of baseline study report and presentation

- The consultant should present a summary of the preliminary findings of the baseline study report (findings, recommendations and proposed indicators for the projects) to Better Cotton, Lupin and AKRSPI following the agreed schedule, and the requirements mentioned in the TORs.
- A draft report will be shared with the Better Cotton, Lupin and AKRSPI for review and feedback.

c. Final reports and presentation

- The consultant should submit the final report incorporating comments from Better Cotton and other key stakeholders.
- The consultant should also hand over a complete anonymised data set including transcripts of stakeholder interviews and any other data collected to Better Cotton at the end of the assignment.
- The consultant should also submit a PowerPoint summary of the main findings and recommendations, together with proposed indicators and data collection tools in the report and give a presentation to the Better Cotton team.

These deliverables are to be prepared in English only and submitted to Better Cotton electronically via email.

High-level Timeline

Activity	Tentative Deadline
Tender date	8 th April 2024
Deadline for submission of proposals	6 th May 2024
Applications review & shortlisting / Interviews	6 th May – 17 th May 2024
Successful applicant to be notified and contracted.	17 th May
Start of assignment	20 th May 2024
Inception Report and Presentation	Week of 3 rd June 2024
Enumerators training, piloting tools and field data collection (followed by data analysis)	From 17 th June 2024
Presentation of Preliminary findings	Week of 2 nd September 2024
First draft of the baseline study report	13 th September 2024
Final draft of the baseline study report	4 th October 2024
Presentation of key findings & recommendations	Week of 7 th October 2024

Required Skills & Knowledge

Skills, Knowledge and Experience
Essential
The lead consultant and co-consultant either (individual or representing a consulting firm) must have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A postgraduate qualification in a relevant field such as gender, agriculture, research, statistics, or social sciences • The lead consultant should have a minimum of eight years of professional experience in conducting research, baseline studies and evaluations of development projects whereas the co-consultant should have a minimum of five years of relevant experience. • Experience in conducting research or evaluations in the sustainable agriculture sector • Experience in conducting research or evaluations in women’s participation, empowerment and gender • Extensive conceptual and methodological skills and experience in delivering research and evaluations including evaluation designs, and qualitative and quantitative methods • Experience and a deep understanding of the position of women in rural India, within the household and the agricultural sector. • Excellent written and verbal communication skills • Excellent report-writing skills • Fluent in written and spoken English • Excellent facilitation and coordination skills
Desirable
It would be desirable for the lead consultant/co-consultant or another member of the named team to have:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Marathi and Gujarati languages for data collection • Working knowledge of the cotton industry/sector

Application Requirements

Interested parties are requested to submit a detailed proposal including at a minimum:

- A succinct, well-documented Technical Proposal that includes:
 - A summary of the main objectives of your proposed baseline evaluation.
 - The proposed baseline approach and methodologies with justification for why this approach and method will fulfil the baseline objectives. Also, the inclusion of some brief information of the possible endline evaluation methodology.
 - Proposed activities and a corresponding timeline.
 - A clear description of the project team for each task (including data collection tool development, data collection and analysis), detailing the relevant expertise and experience of team members in relation to the baseline objectives, approach and methods.
 - CVs of the lead consultant, co-consultant and other team members.
- At least one sample of previous relevant work (the contents of which will remain confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of evaluating the submission). This sample report must be less than three years old.

- **Financial Proposal:**
Please provide a detailed budget for each task including time allocated and daily rates. All costs must be included in the detailed budget including expenses and taxes.

Consultants, either individual or firms, are invited to submit their proposals before **5.00 pm CET on 06.05.2024** through [this form](#).

We thank all applicants for their interest; however only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Better Cotton is committed to good practice and transparency in the management of natural, human and financial resources. All applications will be reviewed under the principles and subject to Better Cotton's policies on an equal opportunity, non-discrimination, anti-bribery & corruption, and conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria

- Demonstrated understanding of this RFP, and the responsiveness of the proposal to it
- Conceptual framework and methodology proposed
- Feasibility of the proposed activity plan and timeline, and appropriateness of time allocated to delivering each task
- Relevant professional experience of the proposed consultants and team members
- Quality and relevance of the sample baseline/evaluation report

Financial Evaluation Criteria

- Quality and clarity of budget provided, and level of detail included
- Alignment of the budget to the activity timeline detailed in the technical proposal
- Value for money

Budget and Payment

Payment to the consultant will be made based on the following schedule.

Upon acceptance of the inception reports and presentation and submission of the advance invoice	30%
Upon acceptance of the draft baseline study report and presentation as per the agreed timeline	30%
Upon acceptance of the final baseline study report and presentation as per the agreed timeline	40%

Published Application Question & Answers

Could you please give an indication of the total budget?

We have estimated the budget to be 45,000-55,000 Euro. Applications higher would need to be explained, whilst all applications will be assessed for costs and feasibility.

How would you organize the communication between the external consultants and the two organisations?

After introduction calls, the consultants can talk with each organisations directly (with Better Cotton cc'd or invited to ensure alignment).

Just to confirm: Do we understand correctly that the consultant would need to include the project partners' internal data (after cleaning and analysis) in the final baseline report?

Clarification - the consultants would not have to use any of the project partners' data. Use of the project partners' data is up to each applicant.

Is it possible to have different objectives and methodologies for each state, or if you would prefer the objectives for both states to be clubbed together, with both states having the same methodologies and objectives?

Yes, it is possible to have different objectives and methodologies per State/Partner. Note - we expect there to be some similarities as there is similarities between objectives.

Please cite the number of villages in which Lupin Project has been implemented as it will help us in drafting the technical and financial proposal?

It is our policy to not share the total budget. If proposals do not fall within the budgeted amount, we will reevaluate our request.

Please cite the number of villages in which Lupin project has been implemented?

We understand that the last date for proposal submission is 6th May 2024. However, we would like to seek confirmation from your end concerning the same and confirm if there would be any relaxations in the timeline.

Is there any specific proportion whereby we divide tools into quantified questionnaires and participatory methods, stories and in-depth interviews? If there is any proportion, what is that ideally?

We would suggest the Delta Women's Empowerment tool is used with a suitable sample of women in each project location. This sample is to be recommended by your application. We'd expect a notable amount of participatory data also to be collected for each project. We leave how much to you

Also do we need to use the Delta Women's tool for quantification, or we may use any other tool? Can you share some examples of such tools which would be preferred in that case??

The Delta tool can be found here. We would prefer to use it as it is sector recognised. However, feel free to suggest another suitable tool, or alternatives. [Resources – Delta Framework](#) See section 5.

Would it be preferred to base the study largely on qualitative methodologies?

We would like a blend. We'd like at least a minimum sample using a quantitative tool (this sample is up to your suggestion), and the remaining to be qualitative.

Is there any specific team size to be maintained for the assignment as the RFP only mentions of "lead consultant and co-consultant and other team members?"

The team size can be up to the applicants. It could be one consultant with some data collectors, or could be a team of multiple consultants that do some data collection themselves, plus other data collectors. It is up to you.

Will this sample of the previous relevant work be evaluated?

- a. Yes - we will consider the clarity of the layout and findings. This will help us to know how clearly you present reports.
- b. What is the weightage to each evaluation criteria in that case?
 - i. The 8 bullet points mentioned in the RFP are weighted equally.

We understand that the last date for proposal submission is 6th May 2024. However, we would like to seek confirmation from your end concerning the same and confirm if there would be any relaxations in the timeline. At KPMG, we have a stringent compliance policy requiring multilevel approvals prior to sharing proposals. Hence, any relaxations in the timeline would be appreciated?

Submission deadline - we do not accept late submissions. We first review all submissions that made the deadline. If these do not meet our requirements, then we allow late submissions.

Kindly confirm whether the beneficiary base is spread across multiple blocks within the two districts of Gujarat and Maharashtra respectively. Further, please support us with the names of these blocks. This would help us provide a scientific spread of the sample and further, estimate out of expenses accurately towards the financial proposal?

Population spread - assume population evenly spread. AKRSPI in 20 villages, Lupin in 17 villages

We seek clarification on any secondary stakeholders involved in this study that we need to consider while considering the universe for sampling, particularly beyond women farmers and their family members. This encompasses individuals such as panchayat officials, block, district, and state level government officials, representatives of implementing partners etc.?

Please suggest those stakeholders that might be felt relevant in relation to the projects' goals and outcomes. Likely number of stakeholder interviews would be 5-10 per location.

Please provide clarity of the allocated budget or budget range (without taxes) to allow us to cater the proposal as per your requirements?

We have estimated the budget to be 45,000-55,000 Euro. Applications higher would need to be explained, whilst all applications will be assessed for costs and feasibility

Which BCI legal entity would be responsible for signing the contract? This clarification is essential to accurately include applicable taxes in the financial proposal?

Better Cotton Geneva, Switzerland

While we understand that the AKRSPI project spans 20 villages in Gujarat's Morbi and Rajkot districts and the LUPIN project extends to Dhule and Nandurbar districts of Maharashtra, the specific villages were not mentioned. Could we obtain the names and numbers of villages from both project regions? This information would assist us in calculating distances, local travel time, and survey time accurately?

For Lupin, there are 17 project villages in 2 blocks. For application please assume villages are evenly spread. We are open to sampling approaches that balance costs and logistics with accuracy. The sampling approach can be revised with successful applicant during inception

Are the region/village wise beneficiaries have been decided for both the locations, if yes, please share?

For AKRSPI - District: Morbi and Rajkot State: Gujarat. Scale: 1000 women farmers (in 20 villages) - assume these villages are located evenly throughout the state.

For Lupin - District: Dhule & Nandurbar State: Maharashtra. Scale: 550 women farmers (in 17 villages, in 2 blocks)

Note - we are open to sampling approaches that you feel balance cost and accuracy. The sampling can be revised in inception with successful applicants.

Is there any estimated number of target FPOs in both the locations, if yes, please share?

We'll seek to find this information out and will update you. However, in case this information cannot be shared before deadline, assume 2-3 in each location.

Please could you share the project Theory of Change that you mention in the RFP on pages 4 & 5? Or is it the diagram shown on page 1?

Please see the project information section for each project. This lists the activities which are hoped to lead to the planned outcomes/impacts.

Could you share the framework being used by the two partners to structure the internal baseline collection process?

The Partners will collect a combination of quantitative data and qualitative data on the status of outcome and impact that are listed in the Project Information sections.
The Partners will use surveys, FGDs and interviews.
The independent baseline will complement the partners own work by being independent.

Please can you tell us when the internal baselines will be taking place?

They will be taking place over the next 3 months. The exact timing will be discussed with the winning applicant for the independent baseline. It is not yet clear if the partner internal baselines will have started, be in progress or be completed by the time the external baseline begins.

How many villages are there in the Maharashtra sample of 550 women farmers?

17 villages

Have you already identified the target villages?

Partners selected the villages based on those they felt suitable for the project. This selection choice could be assessed as part of the baseline

Are you expecting a 'control group'?

This is up to the applicant for the evaluation.

Have the two partner organisations already worked with the communities / women farmers prior to this project? Or will they be new to them?

Assume they have already done some work in the villages, but not focused on women's participation and empowerment. However, this should be clarified during the evaluation's inception.

When do the partners plan to begin work on their respective projects? Or have they already started?

The projects are starting this month (May)

What language skills will be needed for each state?

Ideally the languages native to each State

Do the partners have their own definition of what a 'woman farmer' is?

This is a woman that either owns / controls the land that the cotton is grown on, or works on the land as part of the family that own/control the cotton land.

What criteria are they using to select the target group/project beneficiaries in the proposed locations?

This information is not needed for the application. Assume that women are those based in the selected villages that showed interest in being involved in the project. The selection process can be reviewed as part of the baseline

Are the projects aiming to be gender sensitive or gender transformative?

This can be clarified during inception. The desired outcomes and impacts stated in the RFP will need to be baselines, however, the targets set to be achieved by the end of the 3 year project will be informed by the findings of the baseline. This might clarify the extent that the project can be either gender sensitive (at a minimum) or might be able to be / the extent it can be more ambitious to be gender transformative

Are there gender focal points within either partner organisations?

Yes