



ARIAS SOCIETY

Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society

(An Autonomous Body under Govt. of Assam)

Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Asian Development Bank financed

Assam Sustainable Wetland and Integrated Fisheries Transformation (SWIFT) Project

Agriculture complex, Khanapara, G.S.Road, Guwahati-781022(Assam, Indi Tel:+91361-2332004;website:www.arias.in)

Draft Indicative Terms of Reference (ToR) Rural Finance Specialist (RFS)

A) BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT AND CONTEXT OF ENGAGEMENT:

1. The Sustainable Wetlands and Integrated Fisheries Transformation (SWIFT) project seeks to promote the sustainable management of Assam's wetland (beel) ecosystems and fisheries development by actively engaging local communities in the management process and enhancing their economic and livelihood conditions. SWIFT's integrated approach combines institutional strengthening for ecosystem conservation with the development of the beel fisheries value chain. This dual focus benefits both the environment and the local community, ensuring long-term sustainability and economic growth.
2. Specifically, the project is aligned with the following impact: income of small-scale food producers of Assam enhanced (Assam Vision 2030, Fisheries Sector); and the project will have the following outcome: beel fishery productivity and community-based sustainable wetland management enhanced in the state of Assam. Three outputs are envisaged.
3. **Output 1: Institutional capacity and regulatory framework for sustainable beel ecosystem and fisheries management strengthened.** The output aims to reform the current government system on beel management, particularly the leasing system. It will support the following activities: (i) updating relevant beel management and fishery acts, regulations, and rules for community-based management, and preparing public awareness-raising materials; (ii) preparing rules or guidelines for community-based beel management system, considering various hydrology of wetlands, channels, agro ecological situations, and providing necessary training on the subject; (iii) preparing a sustainable operational model as a project exit plan; (iv) capacity building and training of the Department of Fisheries (DoF) staff and other allied public institutions, including the state's wetland authority, in latest fisheries stocking and conservation techniques, community-based beel management best practices, and use of digital technologies; (v) supporting research and development in beel management and fisheries, including carbon sequestration benefits from beel management, climate change impacts and adaptation measures, seed production and breeding, and ex-situ conservation of endangered species; (vi) strengthening beel community-based institutions – specifically Beel Development Committees (BDCs); and (vii) operating beel management monitoring system through the development of project information system and beel fisheries knowledge platform, complementing the state wetland authority's wetland notification process.
4. **Output 2: Community-based fisheries business developed and beel community income diversified.** The project will ensure the sustainability of beel community-based institutions by enhancing their financial viability and strengthening women's and marginalized groups' participation in economic activities. The project will: (i) support the development or strengthening of the Beel Development Committees (BDCs), some of whom are or will operate as fisheries cooperatives; (ii) conduct capacity building for these BDCs through training in organizational and financial management, as well as branding, marketing and processing along the value chain; (ii) provide public sector support for the development of community-based fisheries value chain infrastructure, including fish landing sites and local aggregation

points/centers; (iii) promote private sector led fisheries commercialization by creating matching grant facilities for hatchery, feed mill, primary processing and other value addition initiatives; and (iv) support other income generation activities for self-help groups through strengthening or revitalizing self-help groups based on their needs assessment.

5. **Output 3:** Beel conservation and restoration planned and managed. The project addresses habitat loss caused by the loss of connectivity with the adjacent river and decreasing water depth, and macrophyte growth that hinders fisheries productivity in beel's. The beel restoration approaches will focus on: (i) beel demarcation; (ii) beel rejuvenation, such as de-weeding and desilting; and (iii) beel's water inflow and outflow control improvement, including desilting, constructing embankments, installing silt traps, building water retaining structures and peripheral bunds, and installing bio-filters.
6. **Implementation arrangements:** A dedicated SWIFT Project Management Unit (PMU) has been established within ARIAS Society, headed by the State Project Director (SPD), ARIASS, and is responsible for overall project execution and ensuring the achievement of project objectives. Further, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) (currently housed in the ARIAS Society) is also established under the leadership of the Director of Fisheries (DoF), Guwahati. Moreover there are, five (5) Cluster Project Implementation Unit (CPIUs) spread across the five Zonal Offices of the Fisheries Department, each headed by the Deputy Director of Fisheries (DDF). The CPIU managed by DDF shall be reporting to the PIU headed by the Director of Fisheries.
7. **Context of the Engagement:** The SWIFT Project aims to enhance the productivity, profitability, and resilience of wetland-dependent communities by promoting inclusive rural finance, enterprise development, and market-oriented beel fisheries value chains. Under Output 2 of the Project, financial support will be extended through Business Development Committees (BDCs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and other eligible community institutions in the form of start-up capital, matching grants, and other financial interventions to promote sustainable livelihood enterprises and private sector participation. The Project also envisages strengthening financial inclusion through improved access to banking, digital financial services, financial literacy, business planning, and credit linkages, particularly for women, youth, marginalized groups, and small-scale fishers. The PMU, in close coordination with the PIUs, ASRLM, financial institutions, NGOs/ Service Providers (SPs), and other technical partners, will be responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring, and managing these interventions in accordance with the Project Administration Manual (PAM), Financial Management Manual, Community Operations Manual, and the applicable policies and guidelines of the Government of Assam and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). **To provide strategic and technical leadership in these areas, the Project intends to engage a Rural Finance Specialist (RFS) at the PMU.** The RFS will lead the design and operationalization of rural finance interventions, oversee the implementation of the Business Development Fund (Matching Grant), support business planning and value chain financing, facilitate partnerships with financial institutions, strengthen financial capability of community institutions, and ensure effective implementation of financial inclusion initiatives and enterprise development activities under the Project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) has been developed accordingly.

B) OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT:

6. The overall objective of the assignment is to provide strategic, technical, and operational leadership for planning, implementing, and monitoring the rural finance, financial inclusion, enterprise development, and beel fisheries value chain financing interventions under Output 2 of the Assam SWIFT Project. The **Rural Finance Specialist (RFS)** shall facilitate access to appropriate financial services, promote sustainable livelihood enterprises through matching grants and start-up capital support, strengthen the financial and business management capacities of BDCs, SHGs, and other community institutions, and foster partnerships with financial institutions, ASRLM, NGOs/Service Providers (SPs), and private sector stakeholders. The RFS shall also provide technical oversight for business planning, financial literacy, digital

finance, value chain financing, and Business Development Fund operations to ensure that project-supported investments are financially viable, inclusive, market-oriented, and contribute to sustainable income enhancement for project beneficiaries, particularly women, youth, marginalized groups, and small-scale fishers, in accordance with the PAM, applicable Government of Assam policies, and the requirements of ADB.

C) TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

7. Coordinate the preparation and implementation of activities related to Output 2, with specific attention to facilitating access to rural finance and development of the beel fisheries value chain.
8. Provide strategic advice and technical support to promote financial inclusion and ensure that the project beneficiaries - particularly women and marginalized groups - can access financial services for sustainable livelihood development.
9. Finalize the operational guidelines for the (beel) business development fund (matching grant), monitor and manage its operation.
10. Review and assess the PIU-endorsed BDC or SHG business plans prior to their approval for financing under the start-up capital to SHGs or matching grant for private sector business development fund.
11. With the institutional development specialist, provide technical guidance and oversight for the NGO/SP and beel animators supporting BDC business development and private-sector-driven value chain development.
12. Provide expertise in all matters related to rural finance, digital finance services and payment systems and rural business planning and development.
13. Support preparations for undertaking or recruiting the SP to conduct the in-depth beel fisheries value chain study and follow-up market survey.
14. Coordinate ToT and FFS training, managing technical advisory partners/ service providers and their quality deliverables.
15. Act as key liaison with ASRLM and the livelihoods technical advisors at PIU level – collaborate to identify and promote financial literacy training and financial products suited to the needs of the target communities, particularly women, youth, marginalized groups, and small-scale fishers.
16. Work with ASRLM to develop training modules and workshops on financial planning, credit management, savings mobilization, and business development for small-scale enterprises.
17. Facilitate partnerships between financial institutions (e.g., banks, microfinance institutions, cooperatives), the BDCs and/ or SHGs to enhance financial access for livelihood development.
18. Undertake any other tasks as assigned by the DDF/DPD/DoF/SPD.

D) ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE & DESIRED SKILL:

19. Graduate degree, preferably post-graduate degree, in rural finance, economics, business administration, development studies, or a related field.
20. Minimum **10 (ten) years** of relevant professional experience, including 5 (five) years in planning and implementing microfinance, agribusiness or rural development projects.
21. Experience in working in ADB- and/or other financing agencies- is preferred.

E) DURATION OF CONTRACT, NOTICE PERIOD ETC

22. The initial contract period of the **Rural Finance Specialist (RFS) -PIU** will be for eleven (11) months and the contract shall become effective from the date of signing of the agreement by the **RFS-PIU** and the SPD, followed by the date of joining by the **RFS -PIU** and shall automatically terminate after eleven (11) months, if not terminated or cancelled or closed earlier by SPD based on the provisions of the contract agreement. The continuity of the **RFS -PIU** beyond eleven (11)

months will depend upon **RFS -PIU** performance, requirement of the position, and availability of project funds, and as decided by the SPD, ARIAS Society based on the feedback from the Director of Fisheries, Head of PIU and the decision shall be final and binding in this regard.

Note: Further, as per the Executive Order No. FEC (II).670250/5 Dated 26-02-2026 of the Finance Department, Govt. of Assam, any renewal or extension of contract for contractual personnel shall be effected only after a clear break of at least two (2) working days between the expiry of the existing contract and commencement of the renewed/extended contract and availing prior concurrence of Finance dept as per DFPR, 2022.

23. Pursuant to the provision in the contract agreement, the contract agreement with the **RFS-PIU** may be terminated by either side at any point of time during the contractual period by serving a 30 (thirty) days' notice without assigning any reason and without thereby incurring any liability to the Director of Fisheries/ Govt. of Assam/ ARIAS Society. The assignment is purely contractual in nature and shall not, under any circumstance, be extended beyond the closing date of SWIFT project. The Govt. of Assam/ ARIAS Society shall not undertake any responsibility for subsequent deployment of the incumbent.
24. The **PFS -PIU** shall not assign or sub-contract, in whole or in part, his/her obligations to perform under this ToR, except with the reporting officer's prior written consent. The **RFS-PIU** will have to serve the PIU on full time basis and report to the Deputy Project Director (DPF) under the overall command of the Director of Fisheries, Assam.
25. The assignment is purely contractual in nature and the SPD-ARIAS Society reserves the right to terminate or cancel the assignment and/or shorten its duration or extend the duration, irrespective of whether the assigned tasks of **RFS -PIU** as per the ToR has been completed or not, based on the requirements or availability of the project funds or performance and/or conduct of the **RFS -PIU** or for convenience as determined by the SPD ARIAS Society, without thereby causing any liability to the **RFS -PIU** or to the Government of Assam or the Government of India or the ADB. Whatever be the reason for termination, the **RFS -PIU** shall comply with the termination order forthwith without any reservation.

F) REMUNERATION AND PAYMENT TERMS:

26. Depending on the qualifications, experience, competency, and remuneration of the last assignment of the candidate, the consolidated fixed remuneration of the successful candidates selected for the position of **Rural Finance Specialist (RFS) -PIU** will be determined and mutually agreed with the selected candidate, which shall be within the range of **Rs.90,000/= to Rs.1,30,000/= per month**. Taxes as applicable shall be dealt with as per applicable laws.
27. In cases the successful/selected candidate's last drawn monthly remuneration is lesser than the advertised range of the consolidated fixed monthly remuneration, the offered remuneration shall be minimum of the range of remuneration mentioned above, unless otherwise approved by the competent authority based on exceptional merit and project requirements.
28. In cases the successful/selected candidate's last drawn monthly remuneration is higher than the advertised range of the consolidated fixed monthly remuneration, the offered remuneration shall be maximum of the range of remuneration mentioned above, unless otherwise approved by the competent authority based on exceptional merit and project requirements.
29. In case the successful/selected candidate happens to be a retired Government Servant, relevant rules of the Government shall be applicable and the monthly fixed remuneration of the incumbent shall be fixed based on the principle of "Last Pay – Minus – Pension" of the Government of Assam.
30. Travelling, Boarding, Lodging and Food expenses for approved official tours outside the Guwahati/PIU/HQ will be reimbursed as per the HR Policy of ARIAS Society and as provided in the contract agreement.

G) TRAVEL REQUIREMENT:

31. The **Rural Finance Specialist (RFS) -PIU** will be required to undertake field-visits and tours to the project sites with the approval of Director of Fisheries. The **RFS** may also be required to visit out of state for training/exposure as approved by the SPD.

H) REPORTING AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

32. The **RFS-PIU** will report to the Deputy Project Director (DPD), Directorate of Fisheries, Assam. The **RFS-PIU** will also be required to coordinate and report to the Sr. Civil Engineer-PMU take instructions from him. The quality of service and performance of the **RFS-PIU** will be reviewed by the DPD and the Director of Fisheries on a quarterly basis and the annual performance review will be undertaken by the SPD based on the feedback provided by the PIU.

I) FACILITIES TO BE PROVIDED BY THE DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES

33. The **RFS-PIU** will be given access to all documents, reports, correspondence, contacts available and any other information as deemed necessary for smooth accomplishments of tasks assigned.
34. The **RFS-PIU** will be provided with one office cubicle in the PIU along with computer, printer, computer/office consumables, and internet access.
35. The PIU pay the fixed monthly remuneration as per the contract agreement. No house rent allowance or any other allowance shall be paid by the PIU. No other payment whatsoever (except reimbursement of travelling expenses and project allowance) shall be paid, except as agreed between the RFS and the DoF, Directorate of Fishery.
36. Will not be provided with any clerical assistance.

Note: This is a draft ToR and SPD, ARIAS Society reserves the right to change, update or modify this ToR at any stage till recruitment process is completed.