

COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO		
ECOWAS COMMISSION		COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
Département Agriculture, Environnement et Ressources en Eau		Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources
ARAA / RAAF		
Agence Régionale pour l'Agriculture et l'Alimentation		Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food

CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS ON THE THEME:

SOCIAL SAFETY NETS IN WEST AFRICA

FEBRUARY 2017

*Call for Proposals in the framework of
the*
**Regional Social Safety Nets
Support Programme in West
Africa**

Financial support :



Technical support :



Organisation des Nations Unies
pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

OVERVIEW

In the framework of the operationalization of the Regional Agricultural Policy, Spanish Cooperation accompanies ECOWAS through a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 28 March 2014 in Yamoussoukro to finance the Agricultural Policy Support Project (ECOWAP / CAADP) with an overall budget of five (05) million Euros. In addition to institutional support, the project focuses in particular on the co-financing of "innovative" interventions in the field of Social Protection / Social Safety Nets in ECOWAS countries.

Indeed most countries in West Africa have very limited experience in implementing social safety nets projects and programmes in accordance with their national social protection strategies or policies. The 'Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme in West Africa – RSSNSP' of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aims at supporting its 15 member countries in their efforts to design and implement programmes on social safety nets. This programme is supported by ECOWAS' partners, especially the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

Through its Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) based in Lomé, and with the financial support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), ECOWAS intends to co-finance 'innovative' projects on social safety nets. These innovative projects will be implemented by non-profit non-governmental stakeholders including international, national and local NGOs, female and male producers, pastoralists, agropastoralists and agro-industrial federations, associations and organizations, rural women associations, the local community as well as universities and research centers. Furthermore, these projects should help strengthen the States in designing and implementing the social safety nets programmes.

In this respect, ECOWAS and AECID will provide potential applicants with a total budget of 4.4 million USD to co-finance innovative projects on social safety nets. This budget will be used through two calls for proposals. A first call for proposals was launched in January 2015 for a total amount of USD 2.2 million. This call for project proposals has a total budget of 2.2 million USD. For national projects, the minimum amount for each project is 100,000 USD and the maximum budget 200,000 USD. For 'regional' projects (that is, projects covering two or more countries), the minimum budget for each project will be 100,000 USD while the maximum amount will be 300,000 USD. The duration of the projects will cover a maximum of 12 to 24 months. In order to abide by the co-financing principles mentioned in the RSSNSP guidelines, the contribution of the applicants (or their partners) should be at least 10% of the total budget of the project proposed. This contribution may be financial in totality or in part, supplemented by a contribution "in kind". Co-financing "in kind" shall not exceed 5% of the total project budget, and co-financing in cash shall not be less than 5% of the same budget. Consequently, the activities proposed within the framework of this Call for Proposals will be covered with only up to 90% of the total budget of the project.

The two-step selection will be made by RAAF in consultation with the decision-making body of the ECOWAS-Spain programme: the first step will involve assessment of Projects Briefs only (See Annex A). The second step will be conducted based on the Detailed Proposal of selected Projects Briefs. The applicant shall also submit a complete administrative dossier prior to the signing of a Financing Agreement.

The Selection Committee endorses the projects as submitted, or in some cases, the approval is subject to conditions that the applicant should consider. In the latter case, a maximum period of one month is granted to incorporate the recommendations made by the Selection Committee.

The Financing Agreements will be signed by the ECOWAS contracting body and the organization backing the project selected.

The Call for Proposals dossier (CP) will be made available from 24 February 2017 on the following websites:

- RAAF: <http://www.araa.org/>
- ECOWAS: www.ecowas.int
- Spanish Cooperation: www.aecid.es
- Hub Rural: www.hubrural.org
- CILSS: www.cilss.bf
- CSAO/OECD : www.food-security.net

In addition to being posted on the above websites, the CP will also be published in two newspapers in each of the 15 ECOWAS member countries.

As a first step, only the Concept Note, as set out in Annex A "Project Concept Note Form", must be submitted electronically in PDF format by 12:00 GMT on **27 March 2017** at the latest. The Selection Committee will review the project notes and on the basis of the pre-established criteria, tenderers will be pre-selected to proceed to the next stage.

Short-listed bidders will have four weeks to submit detailed proposals for their projects, from the date of the pre-selection notification by the Selection Committee. Detailed project proposals and annexes will be sent in electronic format and in paper format (by mail), **date as per postmark or courier date of delivery**. It is also recommended to send a CD-ROM or Pen Drive containing the soft copies of the documents dispatched.

These should be submitted in envelopes, containing the Detailed Proposal with the documents indicated in Annex B "Detailed Proposal Form" to be sent to the following address:

Agence Régionale pour l'Agriculture et l'Alimentation (ARAA)
SUPER TACO, 83 rue des Pâtures, –
01 BP 4817 Lomé- Togo.
À l'attention de Monsieur le Directeur Exécutif

An electronic PDF version of these documents should be submitted at the latest 4 weeks after the date of notification to the holders of the pre-selected projects to the following email:

appels@araa.org

The electronic version is preferred. Any proposal arriving after the date and time indicated above will be rejected. In case only the hard copy of a project proposal is received, the applicant will be reminded to submit an electronic version within 3 days from the reminder date to send the electronic version. Failure to send the electronic version before the deadline will render the proposal inadmissible. Inquiries shall be sent no later than March 13, 2017 at 12 pm GMT by email only to the following adresse: faq@araa.org

The questions and answers provided by RAAF will be available on RAAF's website: <http://www.araa.org/>. The website will be updated regularly and the applicants are encouraged to visit it from time to time. Questions will no longer be entertained after this deadline.

NB: A Practical Guide on commonly used tools for social safety sets for food and nutrition security is available on the ARAA website, <http://www.araa.org>, and on request at faq@araa.org, to provide practical guidance in projects formulation.

The Practical Guide on social safety nets, as well as training materials, can be downloaded from the links below:

Practical guide in French: http://www.araa.org/documents/FR_Guide_pratique_Filets%20sociaux.pdf

Practical guide in English: http://www.araa.org/documents/EN_Practical_guide_Social_safety_nets.pdf

Training modules in French: http://www.araa.org/documents/Modules_EN.zip

Training modules in English: http://www.araa.org/documents/Modules_EN.zip

The following table summarizes the basic information regarding this Call for Proposals:

Topic	Innovative Social Safety Nets for Improved Food and Nutrition Security in West Africa
Innovation area	Innovation may be organizational, institutional, methodological, technical, or beneficiaries targeting method or the instruments to be used.
Overall objective	Help reduce food and nutrition insecurity among the most fragile communities in ECOWAS member countries
Specific Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support and co-finance ‘innovative’ social safety nets projects to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable households; 2. Capitalize on experiences to inform decisions on reforms that the States could initiate to establish ‘preventive’ social nets programmes
Priority issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects that facilitate and encourage ‘preventive’ social safety nets ▪ Interventions in line with ECOWAS Regional Programme to support national safety nets ▪ ‘Innovative’ actions to enhance the design and implementation of national and regional programmes ▪ Activities based on households’ vulnerability and food and nutrition insecurity
Eligible stakeholders	<p><u>Potential projects backers :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profit non-governmental actors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National and local NGOs ○ International NGOs actually present in ECOWAS member countries ○ Producers, pastoralists, agropastoralists, fishermen and agro-industrial federations, associations and organizations ○ Rural women associations • Decentralized local government • Universities and research centers <p><u>Partnerships:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International NGOs and associations will partner with national or local organizations to address the sustainability and ownership of the intervention • Partnerships with national public institutions and/or decentralized institutions are encouraged
Priority areas of intervention	The Call for Proposals is open to ECOWAS member countries. with focus on the regions most affected by the Ebola hemorrhagic fever. Moreover, ‘regional’ projects will also be encouraged. These are projects covering a zone spanning two or more countries.
Available financial resources	USD 2.2 million, of which 90% is financed by the Spanish Cooperation and 10% by ECOWAS
Grant ceiling	<p>National projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum amount of the grant: USD 100,000 • Maximum amount of the grant: USD 200,000 <p>Regional projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum amount of the grant: USD 100,000 • Maximum amount of the grant: USD 300,000
Level of co-financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 10% minimum contribution by the applicant or its partners. This contribution may be financial in totality or in part, supplemented by a contribution "in kind". Co-financing "in kind" shall not exceed 5% of the total project budget, and co-financing in cash shall not be less than 5% of the same budget
Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of the total budget is provided by the grant
Duration of the intervention	The duration shall be between 12 and 24 months.

Outline of this Call for Proposals:

Section I – General Terms and Conditions

Section II – Special Terms and Conditions

Section III – Guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals

Section IV – Criteria and scoring of the Project Brief

Section V – Criteria and scoring of the Detailed Proposal

Annex A – Project Brief Template

SECTION I – TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. General Clauses

- 1.1. The initiative aims at financing projects supported by organizations of a status specified in Section II, *Special Terms and Conditions*. These organizations shall:
- Demonstrate their ability to implement large-scale projects: only organizations with a proposed project budget representing not more than 35% of the average annual resources of the last 3 financial years available in the organization submitting the proposal;
 - Have experience in implementing development projects;
 - Have prior experience in one of the topics described in Section III *Guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals*.

Eligible organizations are specified in Section II *Special Terms and Conditions*.

- 1.2. Since groups are encouraged to submit proposals, the provisional activities and remunerations of each partner organization should be clearly indicated in the various project components.

2. Procedure

- 2.1. Through the Spanish Cooperation, RAAF plans on financing the expenses needed to implement the projects designed and formulated by the organizations for the maximum duration specified in Section II *Special Terms and Conditions*.

- 2.2. International or regional organizations that submit proposals should partner with other national or local organizations to meet the requirement of a local base for projects in order to facilitate local capacity strengthening.

- 2.3. The projects should necessarily be designed, formulated and implemented in agreement with the relevant local public institutions and their partners.

- 2.4. The applicant's minimum financial share of the total project budget is specified in Section II *Special Terms and Conditions* of the Call for Proposals, as well as the documents to be attached to the administrative dossier to guarantee the joint funding.

- 2.5. The eligibility of costs is detailed in Section III *Guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals* of the Call for Proposals. The following costs are generally considered eligible:

- Construction of buildings and rehabilitations of infrastructure;
- Procurement of vehicles;
- Costs related to the preparation and submission of the Call for Proposals;
- Expenses not directly related to the project;
- Service delivery as operators in the context of an intervention in other projects funded by RAAF or ECOWAS currently being investigated or implemented;
- Expenses for which a funding was initially granted by another donor;
- Debt and debt service charges;
- Provisions for possible future losses or debts;
- Interest expenses;
- Exchange losses;
- Loans to third parties.

- 2.6. Financing the operations of the projects selected will be done in phases (2 advance payments and a final payment) specified in Section II *Special Terms and Conditions*.

- 2.7. The applicants will cover all expenses related to the preparation and transmission of their proposals and RAAF shall in no way be liable for these costs, or required to pay them.
- 2.8. The expenses covered by this Call for Proposals will be eligible only from the date of signature of the Financing Agreement.

3. *Presentation of the proposals*

3.1. The selection will be made by RAAF based on:

- A Project Brief (See Annex A)
- A Detailed Proposal and its supporting documentation (See Annex B), for those whose Projects Briefs have been pre-selected.

3.2. The Project Briefs should be submitted in electronic version only. For those whose Projects Briefs have been pre-selected detailed Proposals should be submitted both in electronic and hard copies. The electronic version is preferred for the selection. In case only the hard copy version of a detailed proposal is received from the applicant, the latter will be reminded to submit a soft copy within 3 days from the date the reminder was sent to forward the electronic version. Failure to send the electronic copy after this deadline will render the proposal inadmissible.

3.3. Proposals shall be written in French or English or Portuguese unless otherwise specified in the *Special Terms and Conditions*. *The Detailed Project Proposal shall be placed in closed and sealed envelopes..* This envelope will bear only the address of the recipient (see general format)., and “Response to the Call for Proposals ‘Social Safety Nets’”

4. *Audit, reporting, evaluation and capitalization*

- 4.1. RAAF reserves the right to carry out (ex-ante, mid-term or ex-post) audits and evaluations of co-financed actions, by equity or specific financing, from the signing of the agreement and throughout the implementation of the project.
- 4.2. Periodic technical and financial reports on the implementation activities within the framework of the Project shall be submitted to RAAF for formal auditing before disbursing the subsequent installment of the grant. The terms and conditions will be specified in the *Special Terms and Conditions*.

5. *Currency of the Financing Agreement and currencies of payment*

The applicants are required to quote their proposal in American dollars and could add the exchange rate in the currency of the country of intervention if necessary. The budget shall be all taxes inclusive, firm and non revisable.

6. *Local knowledge and terms and conditions of the Call for Proposals*

By submitting their proposals, the applicants shall be deemed to have:

- Read and agreed to the terms and conditions of the Call for Proposals contained herein;
- A perfect knowledge of the nature and scale of the actions to be carried out, local working conditions as well as all the constraints involved in these actions;
- Read the general and special terms and conditions as well as the guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals (Section I, II, and III).

7. *Receipt of proposals*

- 7.1.** The opening and selection of proposals shall be done by the Selection Committee in Lomé, at RAAF headquarters. The opening of Projects Briefs proposals will proceed after the closing date for submitting proposals. For those whose Projects Briefs have been pre-selected, they will have four more weeks to provide full projects proposals and supporting documents. Proposals that are not received before the deadline indicated shall be automatically rejected.
- 7.2.** The Selection Committee will then verify the list of proposals received in hard copy and compare it with the list of proposals received in electronic format;
- The electronic version is mandatory for Projects Briefs submission;
 - For those whose Projects Briefs have been pre-selected, the electronic version is preferred in submitting detailed projects proposals.
 - If only the hard copy of a detailed project proposal is available, the Selection Committee will inform the applicant who will then have 3 days to submit the electronic version. Failure to submit the electronic copy after this deadline will disqualify the applicant;
 - If only the electronic version has been submitted before the deadline, the proposal shall be admitted and the applicant shall submit the hard copy before the signing of the Financing Agreement.

8. *Determining the compliance of the proposals*

- 8.1.** The applicants whose proposals are deemed non-compliant with administrative procedures (based on the list of documents constituting the application dossier), will be informed and will have 5 days to submit the missing documents in electronic version. They shall also submit the hard copy version of the missing documents before the signing of the Financing Agreement.
- 8.2.** The Selection Committee can eliminate proposals submitted by applicants who clearly lack the human, security and financial capacity to implement a project in the relevant country.

9. *Evaluating the proposals*

The evaluation criteria and scoring procedures are specified in Section IV “*Criteria for scoring the Project Brief*” and Section V “*Criteria for scoring the Detailed Proposal*”

10. *RAAF’s prerogative to reject a proposal*

RAAF reserves the right to reject any proposal and cancel the Call for Proposals process as long as ECOWAS has not awarded the grant or grants, without admitting any liability towards the applicants involved. A letter to notify applicants of the cancellation of the Call for Proposals procedure shall then be sent to all them. That letter shall state the reasons for the cancellation of the Call for Proposals or rejection of the proposal.

11. *Approval and improvement of technical and financial dossiers*

The Selection Committee approves projects as submitted, or in some cases, the approval is subject to a few conditions that the applicants have to take into consideration. In the latter case, a period of one month maximum from the date of notification to the applicant shall be granted to incorporate the recommendations made by the Selection Committee.

12. Confidentiality

- 12.1.** No information on the review, explanations, evaluation, comparison of proposals and recommendations pertaining to the awarding of the grant(s) shall be divulged to applicants or to any other person outside the review and evaluation process, until the announcement of the award of the grant(s) to the selected organization(s).
- 12.2.** Any attempt by an organization to influence the Selection Committee during the review, evaluation and comparison of proposals will lead to the rejection of that organization's proposal.

13. Information on the selection and award process

The list of organizations for which the Project Briefs shall receive the minimum score required will be published on the RAAF website (<http://www.araa.org/>). Thereafter the organizations whose Detailed Proposals are selected for the award of grants by the Selection Committee, will be informed by email.

14. Signing of the Financing Agreement

- 14.1.** RAAF will send a mail to the recipient organization to inform them of the final validation of the project, and the draft Financing Agreement for clearance before the signing.
- 14.2.** The Financing Agreement shall be signed by the organization backing the project and by the ECOWAS contracting body.

SECTION II – SPECIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

15. Total amount of the Call for project proposals

The total amount available for this Call for Proposals is 2.2 million USD.

16. Thematic coverage and target communities

16.1. The Call for Proposals aims at supporting project proposals for innovative actions related to social safety nets to improve food and nutrition security in line with the guidelines specified in Section III – *Guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals*.

16.2. The target populations are those defined in the context of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR): vulnerable farmers; agropastoralists, fishermen and pastoralists who are subjected to the effects of climatic accidents and finally impoverished workers in rural areas. See Section III – *Guidelines for responding to the Call for Proposals*.

17. Geographic coverage

The Call for Proposals aims at supporting project proposals related to social safety nets in countries of the ECOWAS region ravaged by food and nutrition insecurity due to climatic conditions but also countries that are the most affected due to the ongoing Ebola hemorrhagic fever. As such, the priority areas for interventions are in Sahelian countries and those emerging from post-endemic crises. The criteria used for this selection are the following: On the one hand, Sahelian countries have a high level of food vulnerability and malnutrition indicators (infant malnutrition prevalence rate, chronic malnutrition rate, etc.) are at alarming levels. On the other hand, the countries the most affected by the Ebola epidemic are highly vulnerable due to the loss of income, employment and livelihoods.

18. Eligible actions and co-financing mechanisms

18.1. The call for proposal aims at supporting co-financing projects. The proposals shall clearly demonstrate how the co-financing requested will enable to strengthen the ongoing operation (broaden the geographical coverage, thematic upscaling, strengthening the mechanism, covering new activities, etc.).

18.2. Consequently, in addition to the grant to be awarded by ECOWAS and AECID, the applicant shall contribute a minimum of 10% of the total budget proposed. This contribution can come from equity or from a grant awarded by another partner. This contribution may be financial in totality or in part, supplemented by a contribution "in kind". Co-financing "in kind" shall not exceed 5% of the total project budget, and co-financing in cash shall not be less than 5% of the same budget

18.3. In all cases, the applicant shall clearly state in the proposal the terms and conditions of the co-financing. For confirmed co-financing, applicants shall submit the agreement; for co-financing requests that are still in the investigative phase, a letter of intent from the potential donor should be presented. If the co-financing is provided by the applicant, a bank guarantee shall be provided; if the co-financing is provided in another form, the contribution of the applicant shall be clearly stated in the proposal.

19. Eligible institutions and organizations

The applicant or one of its partners shall be a legal entity under the law of one ECOWAS member state. The eligible actors are as follows:

- Non-state non-profit stakeholders: national and local NGOs, international NGOs effectively represented in the countries where the projects will be implemented, producers, pastoralists, agropastoralists, fishermen federations and associations as well as women associations. International NGOs and associations should partner with national or local organizations to address the sustainability and ownership of the intervention.
- Local decentralized local communities.
- Universities and research centers

The following entities are not eligible as applicants: design offices and United Nations agencies. However, these organizations can be viewed as partners and can be associated to the implementation of the projects.

20. Minimum and maximum amount of the grant

The grant allocated by project in the context of this Call for Proposals shall be between the minimum and maximum amounts below:

National (local) projects:

- Minimum amount of the grant: USD100,000
- Maximum amount of the grant: USD200,000

Regional projects (covering two or more countries):

- Minimum amount of the grant: USD100,000
- Maximum amount of the grant: USD300,000

20.2. Regional projects are those with an area of intervention covering a geographical area spanning two or more countries. Proposals with a ‘regional’ approach and/or common and coherent activities in several of the countries of this Call for Proposals will be encouraged. In that case, the maximum amount of the grant will be USD300,000 regardless of the number of countries involved.

20.3. Each applicant can present a local / national project or regional project taking into account the minimum and maximum amounts of the grant. However, the maximum number of projects is limited to two (2) for each applicant.

21. Duration of the interventions

Through the grant from the Spanish Cooperation and from ECOWAS contribution, RAAF intends to contribute to financing the expenses necessary for the implementation of projects designed and formulated by the organizations for an initial period varying between 12 months (minimum) and 24 months (maximum).

22. Financing terms

Financing the operations of the projects selected shall be carried out in three installments as follows:

- 50% at the signing of the Financing Agreement;
- 40% upon submission of a technical and financial report validated by RAAF, and after auditing the accounting documents pertaining to the use of the first installment, showing a delivery rate of up to 70%. Supporting accounting documents shall be submitted to provide evidence of the use of the first installment.
- 10% upon submission of the final implementation report and audit certifying the use of the entire first two installments and the co-financing of at least 10% by the project backer.

23. Evaluation methods

- 23.1.** The scoring the Project Briefs will be based on 100 points in line with the criteria of the Table in Section IV
- 23.2.** Scoring the Detailed Proposals will be based on 100 points in line with the criteria of the Table in Section V
- 23.3.** The procedure leading to the Financing Agreement is made in four phases:
 - **Phase 1:** Shortlisting of Project Briefs based on the criteria presented in Section IV. Only Project Briefs that have reached a total scoring of at least 60 points over 100 shall be eligible for the next phase of the selection. The evaluation of Project Briefs is used only for the selection of proposals that will be admitted to the next phases of the selection process,. Moreover, the selection committee reserves the right to review the minimal scoring of Project Briefs to be selected.
 - **Phase 2:** Assessment of the Detailed Proposals based on the criteria stated in Section V. Only Detailed Proposals with a total scoring of at least 60 points will qualify. The proposals with the highest scores will be financed within the limits of funds available.
 - **Phase 3:** The final selection of projects is subject to conditions that the applicants have to take into account. In the latter case, a maximum period of one month shall be granted to address these recommendations.
 - **Phase 4:** Contracts and information. A contract will be signed between the selected applicants and the contracting authority of ECOWAS. RAAF will organize an inception workshop with the applicants whose projects have been selected to exchange on the terms and conditions pertaining to the implementation, the format of reports, the obligations and responsibilities of stakeholders, etc.

24. Reporting

- 24.1.** Technical and financial interim quarterly reports on the project activities implemented shall be submitted to RAAF..
- 24.2.** The disbursement of the second installment (25%) will be conditional on the submission of an interim technical and financial report. It shall be validated beforehand by RAAF and shall provide the original evidence of the use of the first installment up to 70% (see terms and conditions of financing).
- 24.3.** Also, the disbursement of the last installment will be conditional on the validation of the final report by RAAF. It shall be submitted within a maximum period of 3 months following the end of the project duration.

25. Full administrative dossier

Before the signing of the Financing Agreement, the applicants selected shall provide the complete administrative dossier.

26. Language of the project proposal documents

All the documents pertaining to this Call for Proposals shall be prepared in one of the official languages of ECOWAS (English, French and Portuguese). Documents written in another language will not be selected.

27. Communication/visibility

The projects submitted shall highlight communication by describing their approaches and strategies for exchanging and disseminating results so as to inform all the actors involved in social protection and to enhance the visibility of RAAF/ECOWAS/Spanish Cooperation's intervention.

28. Intellectual property

All intellectual property rights, especially the copyright over all the materials used to implement the planned activities in the context of the financing agreement, belong to AECID and ECOWAS. Special provisions could be stated in the Financing Agreement.

29. Terms and rules for modifying the original agreement

In special cases where project implementation requires substantial modification (delay in implementing the project, expansion of the target community or area of intervention, etc.) the agreement could be modified before the end of the project. In that case, the organization backing the projects shall send a written request for modification of the Agreement. RAAF will respond to that request within a maximum period of 2 months from the date of receipt of the written request.

SECTION III – GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

➤ *Concept of social safety nets and social protection*

While social safety nets refer to non contributory transfer programmes targeting selected individuals based on poverty and vulnerability criteria, social protection is a social security policy concept which includes, in addition to social nets, other forms of contributory social aid (pensions, unemployment insurance, etc.).

Social safety nets programmes can be preventive to enhance livelihoods by addressing the structural or chronic causes of poverty, hunger, food and nutrition insecurity. They can also be reactive to provide urgent solutions to food crises. One way or the other, social nets target the poor and vulnerable who are occasionally unable to meet their own basic needs, or risk falling into poverty because of exogenous shocks or socioeconomic factors.

➤ *Mostly 'reactive' social safety nets programmes*

Even though some countries in West Africa are well advanced in designing and establishing social safety nets programmes, most of them have not yet acquired experience in the area of 'preventive social nets' in line with a national social protection strategy. Most of the actions are occasional and mainly aim at mitigating the impact of food and nutritional crises. These programmes have a limited duration and scope and do not provide a sustainable answer to the structural causes of poverty, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. To deal with urgent needs, vulnerable households are often compelled to sell their assets to cover irreducible and pressing health, education and food costs.

Over the past decades, some countries have developed social protection policies with a long term vision. However most social safety nets programmes developed in the region aimed at addressing emergencies. Despite their being necessary and efficient in avoiding the loss of human lives, emergency systems have proven limited in eradicating the processes of decapitalisation that accompany natural shocks and food crises. It is therefore important to develop programmes that enable to sustainably preserve the capacity of the most vulnerable populations for them to cope with, and resist shocks leading to food and nutrition insecurity.

When health, social protection and safety policies and measures are inadequate, very poor households do not have access to a socioeconomic or financial mechanism to help them cope with shocks but also with poverty-related vulnerability. In that regard, inclusive agricultural policies combined with appropriate social protection mechanisms can enable the most vulnerable households to enhance their resilience to food and nutrition insecurity.

➤ *Emerging preventive social nets programmes to be facilitated*

The recurring food and nutrition crises experienced in the region in 2008 and the global economic crunch of the same period, have drawn attention of policy makers on the relevance of highlighting the responses to the underlying causes of chronic or structural hunger and food insecurity. A number of programmes aiming at strengthening risk management mechanisms over time and in a predictable manner, in order to improve the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable communities have emerged. They include: the G20 Initiative launched in 2011 to reduce the volatility of food prices, and the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) officially launched in December 2012 in Ouagadougou.

Some countries have started designing social safety nets as poverty reduction mechanisms. Several states are also striving to include social safety nets in global social protection strategies and policies and emergency programmes are gradually being replaced with preventive regular interventions and social

safety nets programmes. Countries such as Ghana, Senegal and Niger work at defining sustainable national social protection strategies.

➤ ***An ECOWAS vision oriented towards preventive social nets in line with the African Union Social Policy***

To help countries in the region establish sustainable social safety nets systems, ECOWAS has developed a Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme (RSSNSP). This programme particularly highlights the ‘prevention’ aspect to protect and strengthen the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households and to subsequently improve food and nutrition security as well as productive capacity. The high vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity of women of childbearing age and children under 5, is a concern in view of its adverse effects on health and education.

ECOWAS vision hinges on two complementary objectives: (i) facilitate the experimentation of preventive social safety nets mechanisms, and (ii) establish regional standards regarding the design and implementation of social nets programmes. This Call for Proposals is linked to the first objective while the outcomes of that experience feed into the second objective.

These orientations also fit into the context of the African Union social policy which advocates for the strengthening of social protection mechanisms, to fight poverty and hunger, to create full employment and opportunities for decent work for all, improve access to education and health care services, promote gender equality and ensure the inclusiveness of the most vulnerable groups in the main development activities.

3.2 Projects that fit into the framework of existing programmes

This call for proposal fits into the framework of operationalizing the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy and contributing to the implementation of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) based on the orientations of the Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme (RSSNSP). As such, the project proposals should address the following aspects:

➤ ***Projects consistent with the Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme***

The RSSNSP is one of the thrusts of ECOWAS’ Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (RAIP) of which one of the orientations is to “ensure food and nutrition security among vulnerable communities”. The RSSNSP contributes to the implementation of the project relating to regional instruments to support national capacity in preventing and managing food crises and reducing vulnerability among the communities.

The projects proposed should comply with ECOWAS’ orientations and vision stipulated in its Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme (RSSNSP) and should also be consistent with national strategies and policies. This programme prioritizes a preventive approach in managing food and nutrition crises. It stresses the protection and promotion of the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households by providing them with support outside periods of recurring crisis, to strengthen endogenous mechanisms for managing crises and risks and thus mitigating the potential adverse effects.

➤ **Projects that fit into the framework of the ECOWAS' Sahel Strategy and contribute to implementing AGIR**

Sahelian countries are more vulnerable to the cyclical food crises that regularly hit West Africa. The Sahel strip is an area where millions of individuals are structurally exposed to hunger and malnutrition¹. Vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity and hunger wrecks havoc especially in rural areas due mainly to the aridity and unpredictability of the climate. The number of rainy days can vary by 30% from one year to the other and throw structurally vulnerable populations into severe food and social crises in a context where access to basic social services is very limited. The indicators in terms of maternal and infant health and education, especially for girls, remain alarming. Chronic malnutrition affects over 40% of the population in Sahelian countries. The rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in the Sahel has been exceeding the 10% alert threshold at least since the beginning of this century. In many regions, it regularly exceeds the 15% warning threshold. Global acute malnutrition affects 10 to 14% of children in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal. In Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad, almost half of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition. In 2011 for example, in the Sahelian strip, 40 to 45% of children younger than five years were stunted. This proportion has not significantly changed since 1990.

At household or individual level, extreme poverty, difficulties in accessing basic social services (health, education, hygiene-water-sanitation, etc.) as well as the low purchasing power have thrown many households in a vicious circle of debts and gradual decapitalisation (sale of their means of production - land, capital, including livestock-, weakening of their social standing, health) leading to the often irreversible erosion of their livelihoods.

Due to this high climate, food, nutrition and security vulnerability described above, several partners have developed strategies specific to Sahelian countries:

- The 'Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel' established by the European Commission highlights a regional, integrated and global approach to contribute to mitigating the threats on security in the Sahel
- The 'United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel' particularly highlights the need to enhance coordination; to address regional dimensions in the broad sense and to put in place efficient regional instruments and information mechanisms.
- The ECOWAS Sahel Strategy proposes, within its theme on 'Resilience and Food Security' to develop social protection measures in favor of the most deprived populations. In the long term, that strategy aims at achieving an ECOWAS region free from the plague of hunger and malnutrition.

Even though AGIR covers countries in West Africa, a special emphasis is put on the countries of the Sahel due to its higher vulnerability. This Call for Proposals contributes to the implementation of AGIR. In order to ensure coherent and coordinated activities, the project proposals should take into account the groups of vulnerable communities targeted by AGIR (See Section on Target communities). The applicants are encouraged to consult the AGIR regional road map available on the Internet at the following link: http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/AGIR%20roadmap_EN_FINAL.pdf

The projects proposed should provide a comprehensive description of how they intend to sustainably improve the living conditions of beneficiary/target populations, strengthen local institutional capacity in their area of intervention and ensure the ownership and involvement of national public stakeholders.

3.3 Projects that strengthen the key role of women in ensuring the food and nutrition security and welfare of households

¹ The Sahel area is often defined as comprising of all the areas dominated by agricultural, agropastoral and pastoral systems, located between the 200 and 600 mm isohyets.

The 2012 World Development Report on gender in the context of development, shows that poor women are often among the most deprived, especially regarding access to services. Moreover, gender inequalities in accessing livelihoods restrict food production by women. A study conducted in Ghana, showed that the insecure access to land, has led female farmers to practice shorter fallows than men, thus reducing their production, incomes and food availability for the family. In several countries, women remain deprived as compared to men since they have limited access to education, are systematically less remunerated than their male counterparts and hardly access a number of productive assets and resources (credits, access to land). Consequently, it is more difficult for women to protect themselves in case of shocks and these shocks almost always have a different effect on women and men. However, it was demonstrated that when women manage more important relative resources, they generally devote a large part to the welfare of the household, especially to the children. Thus, the activities proposed should address the specific needs pertaining to the vulnerability of women, but also exploit their key role in maintaining the food security and welfare of households.

3.4 Projects to support communities in the countries affected by the Ebola outbreak

The Ebola hemorrhagic fever has led to a huge drop in incomes for populations living in the countries the most affected by that outbreak in West Africa. That drop in incomes is related to several factors including: (i) harvest losses by farmers, (ii) less movements by populations for fear of being contaminated, (iii) restrictions imposed on movements, (iv) closing down of the offices of some governmental services, (v) laying off of workers in mines and other businesses. All these factors combined with the upward trend of prices, have significant effects on the ‘actual’ income of households whose purchasing power is strongly undermined². In addition to emergency interventions to support the populations affected and curb the epidemics, interventions that fit into social protection policies and strategies will also be indispensable after the crisis. As such, this Call for Proposals will prioritize especially interventions in communities hardly hit by the Ebola outbreak and the consequences in terms of temporary reduction of incomes and consumption of basic goods.

3.5 Innovative projects to enrich the design and implementation of national social safety nets programmes

The applicants must remember that, ultimately, the activities proposed aim at enriching and contributing to the design of national social safety nets programmes. As such, one of the objectives of this Call for Proposals is to encourage innovative practices and approaches in the design and implementation of social safety nets programmes. Most countries in West Africa do not have a long experience in this area and innovative practices (at organizational, institutional, methodological, technical levels and concerning beneficiary targeting and types of instruments to use) are needed to inform policy decisions regarding social safety nets. The innovativeness could involve the adoption of practices that have proven successful in other countries but have not yet been tried and tested in the proposed areas of intervention.

Moreover, experiences conducted in some countries have shown that the social safety nets projects can lead to policy reforms and an improved use of public resources.

The applicants are encouraged to propose mechanisms for exchanging with the ministries and other structures in charge of social safety nets. These exchanges can feed into the reflections on the use of public resources, improved targeting of populations and a greater impact.

² The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) imposed substantial loss in household incomes in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. UNDP Africa Policy Note Vol 1, N° 2 of October 2, 2014.

3.6 Organizations supporting projects focused on non-governmental non-profit stakeholders and local government

In sub-Saharan Africa, social safety nets programmes are not implemented only by the central governments. Non-governmental actors play an increasingly important role in the policy dialogue. Organizations that are eligible for this call for project proposals are international, national and local NGOs, federations, associations and organizations of producers, pastoralists, fishermen, agropastoralists and agro-industries, rural women associations, universities and research centers as well as the local decentralized government. These actors have the advantage of being experienced in conducting small-scale decentralized activities. Their proximity to communities could be an important factor for targeting of beneficiary populations but also for identifying the vulnerability and activities that could sustainably enhance food and nutrition security. These actors also play an important role in sensitizing and guiding national policies and political lobbying. Due to their proximity to the communities in vulnerable areas, local government can also play a decisive role in designing and implementing social safety nets programmes at national level. National social transfers by these actors reinforce human and technical capacities, which are often lacking, especially at the local level.

3.7 Eligible activities and topics focused on vulnerability and improving food and nutrition security

The orientation chosen by ECOWAS through the Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme calls for a change in paradigm. The approach used until now was oriented towards an emergency intervention with reactive nets. The Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme focuses on preventive social nets based on interventions that enable vulnerable communities to sustainably escape their insecurity.

The activities should be based on an analysis of vulnerability and show to what extent they can contribute to reducing it for the target populations. In this regard, the activities proposed should address the typology of vulnerability as defined in the RSSNSP. The typology identifies 3 types of vulnerability³ :

- ***Shock causing a temporary reduction in incomes and in the consumption of basic goods.*** Several studies have shown that vulnerable households affected by shocks (drought, prolonged sickness of a bread-winner, conflict) that have an adverse effect on their income, often resort to coping mechanisms that compel them to reduce their assets or food intake, or take the children out of school. This situation throws, or maintains them into poverty and food and nutrition insecurity.
- ***Chronically low levels of income and consumption of goods and services.*** Social transfers can improve the long term food security of vulnerable populations. Social transfers that enable to invest in health or education, help to avoid transmitting poverty from one generation to the other.
- ***Chronic inability to invest.*** Regular social transfers provided over a reasonably long period of time can help households maintain their consumption and invest in productive assets. It has been demonstrated that small regular transfers over adequately long periods enhance the capacity of households to acquire productive assets, produce food stuff and generate income. In Bolivia for example, social nets beneficiary households in poor rural areas have experienced an average increase of their food consumption through investment of part of the transfer in agricultural inputs.

The following table presents a summary of the types of vulnerability.

³ For more information, applicants are encouraged to read the Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme (RSSNSP) document available on the RAAF website .

Table 1: The typology of vulnerability to food insecurity

Type of vulnerability	Main objectives	Example of vulnerability
Type 1 – Shock leading to a temporary reduction in income and consumption of basic goods	Reaction / Mitigation	External shock (markets, drought, flood, earthquake, political instability) leading to a drop in incomes and food consumption of the household.
Type 2 – Chronically low levels of incomes and consumption of basic goods and services	Mitigation / Prevention	Internal factor (sickness or death), or personal circumstances (disability, old age) that temporarily or permanently reduce the possibility for the household to meet its needs, and contribute to its vulnerability to exogenous shocks.
	Mitigation / Prevention / Transformation	State of chronic poverty which restricts the capacity to access basic goods or services such as food, basic health or education, and contributes to vulnerability to endogenous and exogenous shocks
Type 3 - Chronic inability to invest (factors of production, training, etc.)	Prevention / Promotion	Limited access to productive inputs and low investment capacity related to poverty and/or malfunctioning of inputs markets and credit

Source: Adapted from : ECOWAS (2012), Regional Social Safety Nets Support Programme (RSSNSP), Abuja

3.8. Target communities

The projects proposals shall ensure synergies and complementarities with other projects, programmes and alliances involved in implementing social safety nets projects and programmes, but also initiatives relating to improving livelihoods in general (rural finance, etc.). These specifically include AGIR. The number one strategic objective of that Initiative is to “Improve the social protection of the most fragile communities and households with a view to securing their livelihoods”. Since that initiative contributes to the implementation of AGIR, the target populations are those defined in the framework of AGIR, that is:

- Vulnerable agricultural producers, most often physically remote from the markets, or poorly connected due to the lack of road infrastructure. That population is often in a situation of land tenure insecurity and is faced with the degradation of natural resources (land, pastures, water, etc.), and has limited capital to invest in the productive system. Thus, in most cases, these farming households do not produce enough to feed themselves and have very few opportunities to generate income.
- Agropastoralists or pastoralists whose livestock capital is continually threatened by recurring climatic incidents, and who have few opportunities to diversify their income.
- Poor workers in rural areas. They are communities and households mostly comprised of young people who are offered few and insecure employment opportunities. These communities are at risk of being exploited by criminal and terrorist networks.
- The communities most affected by the Ebola hemorrhagic fever.

In these categories of households, the most vulnerable groups are generally children under five years of age, and especially those under two, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

3.9 Eligible costs

Only ‘eligible costs’ may be financed by the grant. The types of eligible or ineligible costs are indicated below. Eligible costs should be actual costs supported by original documentary evidence.

To be eligible for the purposes of this Call for Proposals, costs should comply with the terms and conditions stipulated in the General and Special Terms and Conditions described above and pertaining to the eligible topics stated in Section III.

A grant may not be recommended for award if the audit prior to the signing of the Convention reveals issues requiring an amendment to the budget (for example, miscalculations, seemingly competitive costs that are actually unrealistic). RAAF may then request for clarifications, corrections, modifications or reductions. Consequently, it is in the best interest of the applicant to provide a budget that is realistic but also with a good cost-efficiency ratio.

Moreover, expenses not directly related to the project, services delivered in the context of an intervention as operators in other RAAF or ECOWAS-funded projects under investigation or implementation, as well as expenses for which a funding has initially been awarded by another donor, are not eligible.

- Only “eligible costs” can be taken into consideration in the grant. These costs are detailed below:

➤ Eligible direct costs

- Salaries of staff assigned to the intervention (including experts costs)
- Equipment needed for implementing the project
- Communication and Visibility
- Cash distributions to beneficiaries, whether conditional or non-conditional);
- Acquisition of food items;
- Acquisition of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, nutritional food additives, sires, farming equipment, improved breeds, veterinary products, etc.)
- Training and capacity strengthening for end-beneficiaries
-
- Expenses for missions and trips indispensable for project implementation in accordance with the procedures of the applicants
- Operating costs (electricity, water, rental of office space and warehouse linked to the intervention, fuel, etc.)
- Studies and technical assessment.

➤ Eligible indirect costs

- Indirect costs and administrative charges: Indirect costs are eligible only if they are incurred during project implementation. They should not be already posted to another line of the budget. Applicants can be financed based on a flat rate constituting a maximum of 7% of the direct costs to cover staff costs indirectly and temporarily assigned to the intervention (accounts, correspondence and various services not provided for in the project budget). The beneficiary of the grant is not required to provide supporting documentation to use this lump sum once the convention is signed.

➤ **Costs eligible as co-financing "in kind"**

- Additional human resources allocated to the project
- Provision of buildings or offices for the project
- Provision of vehicles for the project
- Provision of equipment not purchased by the project

➤ **Unforeseen expenses**

A reserve for unforeseen expenses corresponding to a maximum of 5% of the activities of direct eligible costs⁴ can be included in the project budget. It can only be used with the written approval of RAAF.

3.10. Ineligible costs for the grant

The following are deemed 'ineligible costs':

- Construction of buildings and rehabilitation of infrastructures;
- Procurement of vehicles;
- Costs related to the preparation and submission of the Call for Proposals;
- Expenses not directly related to the project;
- Services provided in the context of an intervention as operators in other projects financed by RAAF or ECOWAS, under investigation or implementation;
- Expenses for which a funding has been initially allocated by another donor;
- Debts and debt charges;
- Provisions for losses or future debts;
- Interests payable;
- Currency exchange losses;
- Loans to third parties.

⁴ Direct costs represent all the project costs except for flat rate administrative costs (set at 7% of the project direct costs). See Annex C- Budget template to understand how direct costs are calculated.

SECTION IV – CRITERIA AND SCORING OF THE PROJECT BRIEF

Evaluation

1. Summary and rationale of the action	Score	Mark
2. Relevance and coherence of the action	50	
2.1. a. Is the proposal relevant to the specific needs of the country/countries or region?	4	
2.1.b. Is the proposal relevant to the constraints of the target group?	6	
2.2. <i>Is the proposal relevant to one or several of the priority issues of the Call for Proposals?</i>	15	
2.3. <i>Does the proposal address the priority areas of intervention?</i>	5	
2.4. <i>Does the proposal contain innovative features?</i>	20	
3. Methodology and sustainability of the action	30	
3.1 <i>Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical and coherent with the expected results?</i>	15	
3.3 <i>Will the expected results have a sustainable impact on the target groups? Will the project have multiplier effects?</i>	15	
4. Operational capacity of the applicant and its partners	20	
4.1 <i>Do the applicant and its partners have sufficient experience in project management?</i>	10	
4.2 <i>Do the applicant and its partners have sufficient technical experience? (namely a knowledge of the issues to address)</i>	10	
OVERALL SCORE	100	

Only Project Briefs with a minimum mark of 60 points over 100 will be shortlisted.

Only the detailed project proposals of shortlisted applicants will be reviewed.

SECTION V - CRITERIA AND SCORING OF THE DETAILED PROPOSAL

Item	Score	Mark
1. Relevance and coherence of the action	30	
1.1. Is the proposal relevant to the objectives and to one or several of the priorities of the Call for Proposals?	5	
1.2. Will the proposal contribute to improving the design and implementation of national social safety nets programmes ?	5	
1.3. Is the innovativeness of the proposal relevant to the topic selected?	5	
1.4. Will the activities proposed contribute to improving the food and nutrition security of target communities?	5	
1.5. Are the target communities clearly identified and is their selection strategically relevant? Are their needs well identified and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
1.6. Does the proposal address the specific needs of women regarding the vulnerability described?	5	
2. Methodology	20	
2.1. Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, coherent with the expected results and outcomes?	5	
2.2. Is the level of involvement and participation and/or public services to the activities of the partners satisfactory? NB: In the absence of associate technical partners or services, the score should automatically be 1	5	
2.3. Is the Action plan clear and feasible?	5	
2.4. Does the proposal include adequate objectively verifiable indicators to measure the results of the action?	5	
3. Sustainability	15	
3.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on the target groups?	5	
3.2. Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects (especially the likelihood of replicability and scaling up of the results of the action as well as information dissemination)	5	
3.3. Are the results expected from the proposed action sustainable : – At <u>financial</u> level – At <u>institutional</u> level (will there exist structures to enable the pursuit of activities at the end of the action?) – At <u>policy</u> level (what will be the structural impact of the action – for example, will it result in improved laws, codes of conduct, methods, etc.?)	5	

4. Financial and operational capacity	20	
4.1. Do the applicant and its partners have sufficient experience in project management ?	5	
4.2. Do the applicant and its partners have sufficient technical expertise ? (especially knowledge and experience in implementing activities related to food security and social safety nets?)	5	
4.3. Do the applicant and its partners have sufficient management capacity ? (especially regarding the staff, equipment and capacity to manage the budget of the action)	5	
4.4. Does the applicant have stable and sufficient sources of funding ?	5	
5. Co-financing and cost-effectiveness ratio of the budget	15	
5.1. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and expected results satisfactory?	5	
5.2. Are the proposed expenses necessary to execute the action?	5	
5.3. Will the grant requested contribute to the implementation of a large scale intervention and with diversified sources of financing?	5	
Overall maximum score	100	

Evaluation

Only Detailed Proposals with a minimum mark of 60 points over 100 will be selected. The proposals will be ranked based on the score of the Detailed Proposal.