

Note on Selection Process of CSOs for Implementation of High Impact Mega Watershed Project 2.0 in Chhattisgarh

1. Background

The MGNREGA Cell of the Department of Rural Development, Government of Chhattisgarh, along with the Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation and Axis Bank Foundation, has signed an MoU to implement the second phase of the High Impact Mega Watershed Project in Chhattisgarh. Building on the success of the first phase (2018–2024), this new phase will span from 2024 to 2028 and aims to expand coverage to additional blocks within the state.

The primary objective of this phase is to enhance the incomes of 250,000 small and marginal households through the development of natural resource management assets and the promotion of income-enhancing livelihood practices. The project will be implemented through the engagement of Civil Society Organizations that have a strong track record, long-standing presence in the project areas, experience in watershed management, skilled human resources, and strong governance and management practices.

For the second phase, eligible CSOs will be selected to implement the project in 8 blocks across 6 districts in Chhattisgarh. Depending on the internal capacities and resources, the block allocation will be done. CSO having higher capacity may get multiple blocks to implement the project.

2. Role of CSOs

CSOs will play a significant role in this project by facilitating participatory planning, community mobilization, and building capacities for the PRIs and frontline functionaries of MGNREGS and other flagship schemes. The CSOs will build the capacities and facilitate the Gram Panchayats in developing village-wise or panchayat-wise watershed development plans to be included in the shelf of work. Each CSO will have one or two blocks to implement the project.

Below is the key role to be performed by the selected CSOs:

- Selected CSOs will serve as catalysts and facilitators, fostering an environment for comprehensive development within villages.
- Motivate villagers to actively participate in MGNREGS programs to ensure that individual benefit schemes provide maximum advantages to households.
- Liaison with block MGNREGS functionaries and other line departments to ensure that sustainable livelihood opportunities are layered on the assets created through MGNREGS and other schemes for ongoing income generation.
- Engage with Panchayati Raj Institutions and build their capacity in watershed planning, using ridge-to-valley and Integrated Natural Resource Management principles, to support livelihood development.
- Assist PRIs and community members in developing detailed project reports (DPRs) for each panchayat, and ensure these reports are submitted to the competent authorities for approval.
- Monitor the implementation of schemes planned under DPRs, ensure their inclusion in MGNREGS's Annual Action Plan (AAP), and provide on-site technical support to enhance execution.
- Work in close coordination with the SPMU and Regional Coordinator to ensure all communications are timely, and fulfill reporting requirements for progress updates and meeting summaries required by the SPMU

3. CSO Selection Process

Civil Society Organizations with strong track records, extensive experience in watershed management, a long-standing presence in the project region, high-quality human resources, and effective governance and management systems are invited to submit an Expression of Interest. The selection of CSOs will follow BRLF's established due diligence process, conducted in collaboration with the Chhattisgarh state government. Since CSOs and state governments are required to work together, it is essential for the state government to be involved in selecting CSO partners.

3.1 Call for EOI

To avoid any arbitrariness and to ensure a high standard of transparency for the selection of the best CSO State Govt and BRLF will invite EOI from the eligible organizations. For better reach and to get maximum applications from the eligible CSOs, the EOI will be published in the prominent daily newspaper of Chhattisgarh; besides this, it will be uploaded to the BRLF website. The EOI would be submitted online through a link created in the BRLF MIS portal.

The applicant organization should fulfil the following criteria to apply:

- The applicant organization must have at least 5 years of experience and a proven track record in sustainable rural livelihoods, community mobilization, and building local institutions, particularly focusing on tribal communities and women.
- Preferably, the CSO should have been present in Chhattisgarh State for the last five years and have implemented developmental projects in the State. However, CSOs with multi-state operations in similar types of interventions are encouraged to apply.
- Preferably the applicant CSO has implemented the project in collaboration with the State Government.
- The organization should have prior experience in implementing watershed projects.
- The organization should be capable of preparing high-quality Detailed Project Reports for suitable water conservation structures in 50-60 micro-watersheds per block within a limited timeframe.
- The organization must demonstrate sufficient capacity to support effective implementation and monitoring of activities across these 50-60 micro-watersheds.
- The organization should be able to deliver water conservation measures along with livelihood interventions or structures, as outlined in the DPRs and annual plans, within a 4-year period.
- The applying organization must be registered under Sections 12A and 80G of the Income Tax Act of 1961.
- The organization must not have been blacklisted by any government department or donor agency.
- The applicant should have had an annual turnover of at least Rs. 50 lakhs in any of the past three years and must have documented financial and organizational systems in place to fulfil their project responsibilities.
- Organizations seeking BRLF support must also demonstrate their capability and willingness to work in partnership with Gram Panchayats.

A comprehensive EOI format is developed that will capture the organization's brief profile, the history of its previous work, and experience in watershed management. To submit the EOI, the applicant CSO has to answer and provide responses specified in the EOI format.

The EOI format is divided into five sections:

Section – A: Organization Profile

Section – B: Organization’s previous experience in watershed implementation

Section – C: Capacity building efforts and gaps

Section – D: Working experience with Panchayati Raj Institutions

Section – E: Working experience with Government Departments

3.2 Proposal Screening Process

Once the applications are successfully submitted to the MIS portal, BRLF will conduct a detailed screening process as per its Grant Management Policy.

Step – 1

Pre-funding Appraisal: During this initial appraisal stage, a preliminary assessment is conducted to ensure that the potential partner organization meets the basic eligibility criteria established by BRLF. This evaluation is carried out systematically, and meeting these compliance requirements is mandatory. Organizations that do not fulfil these basic criteria will be disqualified from submitting their Expression of Interest application.

A compliance check is made against the following parameters-

S. No.	Item
1.	Whether organization budget reached Rs 50 lacs in any of the previous three years
2.	Whether the organization focus is on tribal, especially women’s empowerment
3.	Organization would be assessed on following parameters - <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Registration Status – 12 A/80 G- Date of Section 12A registration- Whether the organization has been in operation for the past 5 years- Major grants received from different sources in the past 3 years- Current organizational budget- Annual reports of the past 3 years- Copies of audited statements of the accounts of the past 3 years- Names and contact details of members of EC/GB/ Board of Governance- Diversity profile of the organization governance- Brief profile of the team members executing the project
4.	Does the organization comply with section 13 (1) (a) of the IT act 2014
5.	Apart from this it would be checked whether the organization meet the EOI eligibility criteria

Step – 2

Once an organization qualifies in the pre-funding appraisal stage, it will be granted access to download the Expression of Interest format. The applicant organization must complete all sections of the EOI format, as each section is mandatory. After completing the form, the organization must upload the filled EOI format into the system before the submission deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted, as the system will close for EOI submissions after the deadline.

Once all applications are received, the BRLF team will compile a list of successfully submitted EOIs and share it with the State Government for record-keeping. The BRLF team will then begin screening the EOIs.

Organizations that submit incomplete forms will be disqualified at this stage. During screening, each response in the EOI format will be graded, and organizations will be ranked based on their scores. The top 10 highest-scoring organizations will move to the next round of selection, while the others will be eliminated. The top 10 organizations will then undergo a field-based due diligence process by the BRLF-appointed external evaluators.

Step – 3

A selection committee will be formed, including representatives from the State Government (particularly members from the MGNREGA cell), and BRLF. The committee will be chaired by the Commissioner of MGNREGA. The selected 10 organizations will undergo on-site evaluations to assess their credentials, including organizational background, founding members, key projects implemented, experience in watershed and natural resource management, success in leveraging resources from government flagship programs, and team composition.

Based on these evaluations and the organization's presentation, the committee members will make recommendations and final decisions on which organizations to select or reject. BRLF will then compile a list of the selected organizations and share it with all committee members for ratification.

3.3 Rejection on Specific Ground

Apart from the above scrutiny and due diligence process organization would be rejected if they do not meet the below criteria:

- Good and satisfactory working relationship with the State Government. State Government may reject any applicant CSO whose performance in the previous project and overall conduct was not satisfactory
- Proposals received after the deadline of the EOI will not be entertained
- Organizations that do not comply with the financial due diligence conducted by the BRLF finance team

Name of the Districts and Blocks:

District	Block
Bastar	Bastanar
Dantewada	Geedam
Surguja	Sitapur
Balrampur	Rajpur
Surajpur	Ramanujnagar
Jashpur	Kunkuri
Jashpur	Duldula
Jashpur	Pharsabahar

Registration Link - <https://mis.brlf.in/login>

Last Date to Apply – 20 December 2024

For queries, please contact - 011 4606 0935