



AGA KHAN RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME (INDIA)

A PROGRAMME OF THE AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

1. Instructions

All proposals must be submitted in writing in English and must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the bidder. Bidders must follow the guidelines provided in this RFP.

2. Validity

Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of forty-five (45) days from the Bid Deadline. This validity period must be clearly stated in both the technical and financial proposals.

3. Costs of preparing bid

The bidder shall bear all costs incurred in preparing and submitting the bid, and none of these costs will be reimbursed. Likewise, if proposed experts are interviewed or invited to make a presentation, the bidder shall bear all associated costs.

4. Ownership of bid

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) retains ownership of all bids received under this bid procedure. Accordingly, bidders are not entitled to have their bids returned.

5. Alteration or withdrawal of bids

Bidders may modify or withdraw their bids by written notification before the stated deadline for bid submission. No bid may be modified after this deadline. Any withdrawal must be unconditional and will terminate the bidder's participation in the bid procedure.

6. Opening of bid

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) will open the bids within 15 days of the bid submission deadline. Any attempt by a bidder to influence the evaluation committee during the examination, clarification, evaluation and comparison of bids, to obtain information on the

progress of the procedure, or to sway the contracting authority's decision on the award of the contract will result in the immediate rejection of that bid.

7. Submission of bids

The bid must be submitted in accordance with the prescribed annexure on or before **23rd October 2026**, to dhammadip.gajbhiye@akdn.org.

7.1 Technical and financial proposals should be submitted at the same time, with the RFP reference and a clear description of the proposal (technical or financial), by the date and time specified in this document. If the emails and email attachments are not marked as instructed, AKRSP(I) will not be responsible for the misplacement or premature opening of the submitted proposals.

7.2 The body of each email should state the name and address of the bidder and describe the proposal (technical or financial). The technical email must not contain any pricing information, and the financial email must not contain any part of the technical proposal.

7.3 The technical proposal must not contain any details of the financial proposal or budget. Any financial information included in the technical proposal will be invalidated in the proposal.

8. Request for Clarification

All queries regarding the preparation of proposals must be submitted in writing (by e-mail) to dhammadip.gajbhiye@akdn.org by **12th October 2026**. Responses will be shared with all interested organizations by **16th October 2026** through email (or as may be feasible, depending on priority). The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) is under no obligation to consider or respond to queries that are not received on time.

9. Content of bids

Each bid must consist of a technical offer and a financial offer, each of which must be submitted separately in a single email. The technical offer must include the technical proposal with a detailed methodology and timeline based on the project details given, while the financial offer should be provided as a separate sheet containing the financial details.

10. Evaluation of bids

All proposals will be evaluated by the review committee on the extent to which they meet the selection criteria. Where deemed necessary, negotiations may be held with the highest-rated

bidders. In evaluating proposals, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) will apply Quality and Cost Based Selection through a three-stage value selection procedure. The most economically advantageous bid will be determined by weighing technical quality, including understanding of the scope of work, proposed methodology and approach for completing the assignment, organization profile, experience in conducting studies, research and publication, and timeline, against price.

11. Terms and Conditions

1. All proposals satisfying the requirements of this RFP will be evaluated to establish which of the applicants best fulfils the needs of AKRSP(I).
2. Financial negotiations: Financial negotiations should be carried out in order to reflect any change in financials due to change in scope of work. Under no circumstance, the financial negotiation shall result in to increase in the price originally quoted by the consultant/agency. Unless there are exceptional reasons, the financial negotiations will involve neither the remuneration rates for staff nor other proposed unit rates.
3. Confidentiality: Information relating to evaluation of Proposals and recommendations concerning awards shall not be disclosed to the bidders who submitted the Proposals or to other persons not officially concerned with the process, until the publication of the award of Contract.
4. The information provided in this RFP is intended to give bidders an overview of the project and its requirements. It is indicative and not exhaustive. AKRSP(I) reserves the right to modify, add, or remove elements of the scope as deemed necessary during the tender process or subsequent stages.
5. AKRSP(I) reserves the rights to alter the terms & conditions and alteration on Scope of Work.
6. AKRSP(I) reserves the right to accept/reject the proposal without assigning the reason whatsoever.

PROJECT DETAILS

BASELINE STUDY FOR WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN SAKRI AND AKKALKUWA, MAHARASHTRA

About AKRSP(I):

The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme India (AKRSPI) is a non-profit organization committed to advancing sustainable rural development. Since its establishment in 1983, AKRSPI has worked across several states in India, empowering rural communities through participatory approaches. Its key areas of intervention include natural resource management, agriculture, women's empowerment, livelihood enhancement and water resource management. AKRSPI places emphasis on capacity building, the creation of community-based institutions and the promotion of self-reliance among vulnerable groups. Through innovative solutions, the organization addresses challenges related to poverty, climate resilience and social inclusion. By partnering with government bodies, donors and private sector entities, AKRSPI delivers impactful and scalable outcomes. Guided by a commitment to equitable development, AKRSPI continues to transform lives and enable rural communities to thrive.

- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) intends to engage a consulting agency to carry out an external baseline study in one of its project regions in Maharashtra, covering Sakri Block (Dhule District) and Akkalkuwa Block (Nandurbar District). The study will be conducted for the programme titled **“Watershed Development and Water Resource Management Programme for Water Security and Climate-Resilient Livelihoods”**. The study aims to establish a robust baseline on water availability, groundwater conditions, irrigation, farm incomes, migration and community water governance across the 40 programme villages, against which the programme's progress and impact will be measured. A brief description of the project is provided below.

Project Background

The proposed study will be undertaken as part of the three-year project (1st August 2026 to 31st March 2029) **"Watershed Development and Water Resource Management Programme for Water Security and Climate-Resilient Livelihoods."** The project is primarily focused on water-related initiatives and covers 2 themes:

1. Water resource development, groundwater recharge and water governance
2. Climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods

The project will cover 40 villages in Sakri Block (Dhule District) and Akkalkuwa Block (Nandurbar District), with the aim of restoring water security and building climate-resilient livelihoods for 4,700 tribal farming families. It brings together watershed restoration, water storage and groundwater recharge structures, efficient irrigation, climate-resilient and natural farming practices, and community-led water governance through Village Development Committees, Water Management Committees and Water User Groups. The intended results are year-round water availability, the enabling of rabi cultivation, and a reduction in distress migration after the monsoon.

Project Rationale:

Sakri (Dhule) and Akkalkuwa (Nandurbar), which lie across the Sahyadri foothills and Satpura ranges, are among the most water-stressed and socioeconomically vulnerable tribal landscapes in Maharashtra. Basalt geology restricts groundwater recharge, and intense but short monsoon rainfall drains away rapidly, with an estimated 60 to 70% lost as surface runoff. Existing check dams and other water structures have silted up, tube wells drilled to depths of 200–700 feet often fail, flood irrigation is widespread, and villages lack systematic data on rainfall and water levels for planning. Agriculture is largely rainfed and subsistence-oriented, and in Sakri's western tribal belt (Paschhim Patta) more than 60% of families migrate seasonally after Diwali. A reliable baseline is therefore essential to inform site selection and programme design, and to measure change over the three-year programme period.

Objectives of Project:

1. To create and restore 7,15,000 cubic metres of water storage capacity across the 40 villages by renovating defunct water harvesting structures and constructing new ones, thereby improving groundwater recharge.
2. To improve year-round water security for farming households by expanding water harvesting and recharge infrastructure, thereby reducing dry-season water stress and seasonal migration.
3. To promote efficient and sustainable water use in agriculture through micro-irrigation and on-farm water management practices.
4. To support 4,700 farming households in adopting climate-resilient farming systems that consume less water.

5. To strengthen community-led water governance institutions (Village Development Committees, Water Management Committees and Water User Groups) in all 40 villages.

The Baseline Study:

The proposed study seeks to establish the baseline for the project covering 40 villages across two blocks of north-western Maharashtra, targeting 4,700 tribal farming households. The programme's locations are detailed below.

District	Block	Nos. of villages	Numbers of households to be covered
Dhule	Sakri	20	2,200
Nandurbar	Akkalkuwa	20	2,500
Total (2 districts)	2 blocks	40	4,700

The study will include a **random 20% sample** of beneficiary households drawn from each of the 40 villages with results aggregated at **block and programme level** to form the baseline for the endline evaluation.

Scope of studies:

The agency is expected to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring that the sample represents households at all levels. The study is to be carried out in the first quarter of the programme and should cover: (i) seasonal water availability and groundwater table depths (using existing CGWB data and fresh measurements); (ii) crop area under irrigation versus rainfed cultivation; (iii) crop yields and net farm income; (iv) incidence and seasonal duration of migration; (v) women's participation in water resource decisions; (vi) livelihood options and (vii) the status of existing water harvesting structures. The agency should also develop the overall study design, covering questionnaire preparation, sampling, data collection, data entry, data analysis and report writing.

Key area to focus:

1. Review of all project documents.
2. Finalize the sampling method, ensuring that all categories of households across both blocks are represented.
3. Finalize and develop the data collection tools (FGD, questionnaire and interviews).

4. Prepare the questionnaire in Marathi and English, with data collectors able to administer it in local tribal dialects (e.g., Ahirani).
5. Train the data collectors on the project objectives, interview techniques and an overview of the tools, to ensure error-free data collection.
6. Pilot test the data collection tools.
7. Submit an inception report.
8. Submit a report outline.
9. Submit the first draft report, which will include an executive summary, a brief description of the programme and its design, the study design and methodology, findings on the six baseline areas, conclusions and recommendations, and detailed tables in the annexure.
10. Revise the report based on AKRSP(I)'s comments.
11. Submit the final report and a dissemination brief to AKRSP(I).
12. Present the major findings to AKRSP(I).

Expected outcome from the study:

The baseline study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current situation in the 40 programme villages, with a focus on water availability, groundwater conditions, irrigation, farm income, livelihood options, migration and women's participation in water governance. The datasets and report will serve as the reference point against which the endline evaluation will measure change and will include key recommendations that can be incorporated into the programme to achieve better outcomes.

ANNEXURE: GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL AND BUDGET

The technical proposal must be written in English, typed, single-spaced, with pages numbered consecutively. The maximum page limit for each component of the technical proposal is indicated below:

A. Technical Approach (not to exceed 5 pages)

The proposal should describe in detail how the agency will approach and complete the scope of work, including:

1. How the agency will develop the sampling strategy and tools.
2. How the agency will safeguard data ethics, data control and data rights.
3. A draft analysis plan aligned with the project's key performance indicators.
4. A detailed timeline for the commencement and expected completion of the study, including the expected timing of the draft and final reports.
5. How the agency will ensure the quality of data collection (including a description of ongoing monitoring and quality control procedures for interviewers and other project staff).
6. How the agency will ensure the quality of data management, including handling of hard copies of surveys, quality assurance of data entry, and cleaning of the database.
7. How the interviewers will be selected and the content of their training.

B. Proposed project personnel (not to exceed 3 pages, excluding resumes)

The applicant should propose the personnel who will be responsible for carrying out various aspects of the project, such as the project lead and manager, technical support, interpreters/translators, interviewers, data entry and analysis personnel, and other key staff. A current resume for each key person must be included in the proposal.

C. Management and Supervision (not to exceed 2 page)

The applicant should describe its management, supervision and administrative arrangements for executing this project, including the functions and responsibilities of the proposed project team. The applicant should explicitly describe how the project lead will manage the project, how the person responsible for fieldwork will monitor study progress, the nature and frequency

of communication with the data collectors, and how data will be managed during data collection.

D. Capability Statement (not to exceed 3 pages)

A statement of the agency's capabilities, including:

1. A background summary of the organization outlining its areas of expertise.
2. A description of key agency personnel.
3. A current list of clients and any direct experience the agency has in conducting relevant evaluations.

E. A timeline/implementation plan (not to exceed 2 pages)

The proposal should include a Gantt chart illustrating the timeline/implementation plan, covering the major activities in the scope of work and showing how the work will be completed within the allotted time frame.

F. A detailed budget submitted in INR

The budget should cover staff and consultant salaries, study-related travel, transportation and accommodation, training, and any other direct or indirect costs. The consultant should hold a GST registration, and the budget should include GST.
