

# Innovation Challenge Fund



## About Research into Use

The Research into Use (RIU) programme aims to maximise the poverty-reducing impact of the DFID-funded natural resources research produced under the Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

It will also draw out lessons to increase understanding of how the use of this research knowledge can be sustained and how such research systems can be made to work more effectively.

The 10 research programmes funded through the DFID RNRRS were designed to generate new knowledge that addressed the needs of poor people living in a range of agro-ecological zones. Through a variety of funding mechanisms, one of which is the Innovation Challenge Fund, RIU will identify what conditions can best support the significant use of natural resource knowledge for the direct or indirect benefit of the poor in many different contexts. RIU will fund initiatives designed to maximise the investments already made in the RNRRS programmes<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with existing initiatives which contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. We will not consider funding stand-alone RIU projects that do not propose to collaborate with already-existing initiatives. Proposals that include the scaling up of research knowledge generated by other agencies, as well as the RNRRS, are encouraged where synergies with the RIU purpose are clearly demonstrated and it can be shown that value is added.

### Research into Use vision

The RIU has adopted an innovation systems approach to explore (1) how research knowledge can be used more effectively in efforts to reduce poverty, (2) the nature of the partnerships needed, and (3) the enabling conditions that are required for the horizontal and vertical up-scaling of knowledge<sup>2</sup>. This approach shifts the focus of attention away from the generation of new knowledge to the ways in which knowledge that already exists can be put to productive use. By innovation we mean the use, adoption, uptake or commercialisation of existing knowledge.



The innovation systems approach moves away from a traditional linear research and development model in which research is completed and results are passed on to users through extension. Instead, it emphasises the need to nurture the demand for knowledge and technologies among a range of actors, not just researchers and primary producers like farmers. Policy makers, private sector companies, entrepreneurs, non governmental organisations (NGOs) and other intermediary organisations, for example, should all be encouraged to demand relevant knowledge. The innovation system is made up of a set of factors (social, political, organisational, institutional, and legal) which shapes the behaviour of these actors. The flow of knowledge between these key actors in an innovation is critical in getting research into use.

The RIU Innovation Challenge Fund will initially operate in six countries in Asia: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Cambodia and Vietnam. Another Challenge Fund will be extended to selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa in late 2007.

<sup>1</sup> For details of the RNRRS outputs see database on [www.researchintouse.com](http://www.researchintouse.com).  
<sup>2</sup> **Horizontal scaling up** is extending the use of research outputs to larger groups in either the same or a different environment.  
**Vertical scaling up** is influencing and effecting institutional and policy changes.





## Research into Use in the Asian context

A range of different economic and political contexts exists in the six DFID Public Service Agreement (PSA) countries selected in South and South East Asia. All except Nepal are experiencing strong economic growth of 6-8.5% per annum. This economic growth is largely due to the expansion of service industries, manufacturing (including the production of textiles, garments and machinery), information and communication technology services, and the provision of substantial remittances by nationals working overseas.

In general the contribution that the agricultural sector makes to gross domestic product has diminished in all these countries. This is a major concern, since the livelihoods of approximately 60% of the workforce in this region still depend heavily on this sector.

Another major social and economic problem in the region is the persistence of extremely high levels of gender inequality and the emerging feminization in agriculture. In most of these countries women tend to fare poorly compared to men. Gender-based inequality in these countries is evident not only in the fact that opportunities for women to develop skills and talents are lacking, but also because at more fundamental levels—such as nutrition, health and survival—women fare worse than men. South Asia is the second-worst region in terms of social indicators, scoring very low on both the UN's Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure.

A search through the RNRRS database (available on the RIU website at [www.researchintouse.com](http://www.researchintouse.com)) indicates that RNRRS research outputs exist which have the potential to contribute to efficient, equitable and sustainable rural growth in South and South East Asia. Some of these outputs have been designed specifically to address the immediate needs of poor women, while others may contribute indirectly. The development challenge we face now is to find out how best to stimulate rural growth and poverty reduction in the poorer areas of these countries where large proportions of the population are disenfranchised. What we must ask is: how can the knowledge from the RNRRS and other natural research programmes contribute to this task and how can an innovation systems approach contribute in getting research outputs into use for these groups under such conditions?

## Objectives of the RIU Innovation Challenge Fund: Phase 1 Asia

**The purpose of the Innovation Challenge Fund is to provide financial support to take promising research, funded by DFID (and other agencies where appropriate), to the next stage of use.** The initiatives will contribute to RIU's purpose by delivering **significant use** of RNRRS and other natural resources research outputs for the benefit<sup>3</sup> (direct or indirect) of poor men and women in different contexts.

Funds will be available for one or more of the following tasks:

1. To support service delivery or the commercial production of research products by means of market testing, prototype development or other mechanisms in areas beyond the original pilot/testing locations
2. To support and strengthen 'knowledge brokering services' that make it possible for people to access new knowledge which can help poor people, especially women, to innovate and create livelihood opportunities
3. To strengthen the ability of users to define their needs for particular research-based knowledge, particularly the ability of the poor and their agents
4. To improve the policy environment necessary for innovation which benefits the poor (and poor women in particular), by enhancing employment, nutritional, enterprise-development, and other livelihood opportunities.

**NOTE: Preference will be given to those initiatives that cluster a number of RNRRS outputs within or across an RNRRS programme or other programmes.**

<sup>3</sup>'Benefit' here means poverty reduction or livelihood improvement.



## Who can apply?

**The innovation systems approach suggests that successful innovation requires contributions from a wide range of different actors.** In the context of RIU, these actors will not only consist of farmers, extension services and researchers, but will also include entrepreneurs, businesses, NGO agencies, policy makers and journalists.

**NOTE: Preference will be given to those proposals that involve a range of different types of actors in an effective coalition or collaborative arrangement.**

At least one of the partners must have a **proven track record of up-scaling** knowledge and/or services to poor communities and/or creating relevant institutional or policy change for the benefit of poor people.

National/regional coalitions of partners from more than one of the selected countries can apply.

**Synergy:** The initiative that you propose must be linked to an existing project or programme that is either directly or indirectly involved in improving the livelihoods of the rural and urban poor.

**RIU Coalitions:** These must contain the relevant actors needed to support the use of the research knowledge being applied. In addition, at least one of these actors must have a proven track record of up-scaling.

The list below gives an indication of the groups and actors that may be included in a coalition. Please note, however, that this list gives examples and should not be viewed as exhaustive. No limit is set on the number of partners but their role and value to the consortium must be clearly described and evidence of their agreement to work together should be provided with the application.

- **Producers, farmer organisations and community groups** - Small- or large-scale producers might be involved in such groups.
- **Marketing stakeholders** - This category would include multinationals, as well as small to medium-sized enterprises, trade organisations, and processors who transform



commodities into new products sought by consumers. Those women's groups and farmer groups that transform products to produce new products would also fall into this category.

- **Infomediaries** - This category contains service providers who work to make knowledge available; this may include health and skills-related knowledge, as well as natural resource knowledge. These infomediaries frequently act as knowledge brokers linking producers and markets and some supply micro-credit. Examples include national and international non-governmental organisations, national extension services, social entrepreneurs, journalists, and communication organisations.
- **Financial institutions** - Agencies which supply micro-credit, financial advice, business advice, etc. These agencies may involve national and international NGOs which also supply other services and knowledge from other sectors.
- **Other private sector actors** - Examples include suppliers of inputs and outputs (such as seeds, fertilisers, pest control, vaccines), as well as manufacturers and traders.



## Who can apply? *continued*

- **Policy makers and implementers** - These actors are essential to any efforts to scale up successful processes and policy options generated vertically by individual activities. They have the ability to interact with all actors in an innovation system.
- **Researchers** - These are frequently those partners who led the RNRRS research initiatives which were supported by DFID. However, they may include others.

**Lead organisations: Please note that preference will be given to initiatives led by national/regional organisations based in Asia or to those initiatives with a large proportion of resources allocated to such organisations.**

The lead organisation should have a proven track record of handling funds, and will be asked to demonstrate this if selected to develop a full proposal. Stress is placed on this since the lead organisation will take responsibility, on behalf of the coalition, for any funding awarded. This will make them accountable for the handling of project finances, the maintenance of accounts, and the agreed presentation of financial and progress reports.

Given the shift towards coalitions of user groups, partners from advanced research institutes and international research centres who were largely involved in the generation and adaptation of RNRRS research knowledge will mainly provide capacity strengthening and technical backstopping in the RIU coalitions. Such research partners may manage their own project-related finances if this option is shown to be cost-effective and practical.

**Shared vision:** To work together effectively, all partners must have a shared vision of what needs to be achieved and what the outcomes of the initiative will be. They must also value the lesson-learning opportunity afforded by RIU participation. All partners involved **must**, therefore, participate in the design of the initiative, including its activities and budgets. All partners must also be involved in the implementation of the initiative. This includes having a say in any changes made to activities. A letter from each named partner is required with the Concept Note to show that the named parties support the initiative and have contributed to the

development of the Concept Note. Such documentation should be included with this application. Coalitions which are selected to produce full proposals will receive funding to strengthen their team and its vision.

## How do you apply?

**To apply, you need to complete (in English) the Concept Note Form which can be downloaded from our website ([www.researchintouse.com](http://www.researchintouse.com)).** Alternatively, you can request a form by writing to [riuinfo@rint.co.uk](mailto:riuinfo@rint.co.uk).

## Funding available

**The total funding available for the RIU Asian initiative is £4.5 million over 3 years.** Research into Use will only fund a maximum of 70% of the total cost of a project, as contributions from other sources are required. The ceiling for contributions from Research into Use is £400,000 per application over three years.

## What should your application contain?

**Please note that the RIU Concept Note application form must be used when applying.**

The Concept Note should clearly place the opportunity **in context**.

1. List the project's objectives and provide for each a short description that explains how the scaling-up activities will contribute to poverty reduction, describing which client groups will benefit direct/indirectly (see Section 2, Q 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 of the Concept Note).
2. Describe how RIU investment will add value to existing initiatives and how demand for the initiative was articulated (see Section 2, Q 2.3, 2.8 of the Concept Note).
3. Describe clearly the **partners involved and the roles that they will play** in project design and implementation. Such activities may include decision-making, reporting,





## What should your application contain?

*continued*

implementation of activities, knowledge sharing, and advocacy, etc. (see Section 1 and Section 2.9 of the Concept Note form).

4. Outline how the project will be implemented. This outline must describe the steps needed to meet the project's objectives within a three-year period. It must also include your proposed budget (see Section 2, Q 2.11 and 2.17 of the Concept Note).
5. Outline the monitoring system for tracking progress and learning. At least 10% of the budget must be allocated to monitoring and evaluation of the activities, including collection of baseline information (see Section 2, Q 2.12).
6. Consider what environmental impacts the proposed scaling-out activities would have (see Section 2, Q 2.13 of the Concept Note form) and how the resilience of the poor to climate change will be strengthened (if applicable) (see Section 2, Q 2.14).
7. Outline the communication strategy (Section 2, Q 2.15).
8. Describe how intellectual property rights (IPR) issues will be addressed if relevant (see Section 2, Q 2.16).

**Finally**, supporting documentation should include scans of letters from partners confirming their participation in the development of the vision and partnership in the coalition.

## How will the applications be scored?

All applications will be scored based on the following criteria:

### 1. 80% on relevance and quality of outputs and partnerships

- **Relevance to RIU purpose** - we will consider whether the proposed up-scaling of interventions will maximise the investment made in RNRRS knowledge and lead to significant use of such knowledge. Such a definition of 'significant use' would include trans-national applications that are tailored to the needs and opportunities of poor communities.
- **Quality and feasibility of the activities** - we will consider the design of activities and the likelihood of achieving the proposed outcomes within the three years

that the RIU funding is provided for.

- **Relevance to the international development agenda and national poverty reduction policies** - we will also consider how the proposed initiative will improve the evidence base on how gender impacts on development.
  - **Added value and exit strategy for progression/sustainability after RIU** - we will consider how the initiative links with existing initiatives and whether it includes a sustainable plan for continuing after the RIU programme ends.
  - **Track record of partners** - we stipulate that at least one partner must have experience of the scaling-up of initiatives on a large scale and at least one partner must have an in-depth knowledge of the research knowledge to be scaled up.
  - **Partnership quality** - we wish to see evidence of co-operation through letters of agreement demonstrating the quality of the coalition and its shared vision and purpose.
  - **Environmental relevance** - applications must adopt environmentally sound and sustainable practices in all activities. This must include awareness of major environmental issues at the global, regional, and national levels.
  - **Quality of engagement strategy** - we will consider the quality of communication initiatives developed to promote outputs and lessons learnt.
  - **Learning/monitoring and evaluation plan.**
  - **Appropriateness of capacity-strengthening initiatives** - we will assess the appropriateness of the capacity-strengthening initiatives described in the implementation plan.
- ### 2. 20% on value for money
- **Appropriateness of costs and spending** - we will consider the proportion of the budget spent on staff costs, overheads, travel costs, national versus international costs, and the contribution from other sources. Capital equipment will be assessed carefully. Note, however, that **purchase of vehicles will not be permitted** under any circumstances.



## In what form should you submit?

**We will accept only electronic copies of the Concept Note forms in English and scans of letters showing current agreements between coalition partners.** Please **DO NOT** send us hard copies or any other materials other than those requested here, as we will not look at them. If we need any more information we will contact you.

All applications are made at your own risk. We will not be liable for any loss, damage or costs arising directly or indirectly from (1) the selection process, (2) the decision not to award you a grant, or (3) your efforts to manage a grant if you are awarded one.

All applications must be received by 12 noon, UK time, on **30th September 2007.**

### Contact details for submission of Concept Notes

Lucy Nickoll  
L.nickoll@nrint.co.uk

## What happens next?

We will acknowledge all applications by e-mail.  
We will check that all applications conform to the guidelines and are complete.  
We will check the eligibility of your organisation.  
We will check that your proposal meets with the RIU criteria set for this fund.

Once the Concept Notes and letters have been reviewed by an expert panel, successful coalitions will be invited to enter the second stage to develop their concepts into full proposals. Funding will be available to develop detailed activity and budget lines for the first year and indicative budget lines for the following 2 years. These coalitions will also have to submit details of their proposed management structure. Applications for funds to prepare the full proposal can be requested once the successful Concept Notes have been selected.

Approval of Concept Notes is the responsibility of the Director of RIU who will use an expert panel to peer review the submissions. The Programme Advisory Board (PAB) will see the titles of all Concept Notes and can request proposals for review. The shortlist of proposals will be made available to all PAB members.





## What will happen when?

Date	What will happen	What you need to do
August 2007	Launch of Challenge Fund	Contact putative coalition partners, select lead organisation and begin filling in your Concept Notes
End of Sept 2007	Closing Date	Get your entry to us by noon on 30th September 2007
October 2007	We write to confirm receipt of your Concept Notes and will then review them	Wait to hear from us
End of October 2007	We write to all applicants Those who have been shortlisted will be asked to develop full proposals and to submit budgets for developing their proposals	Wait to hear from us
November 2007	Funding will be released to support the development of the full proposal	Stakeholder meetings organised in November and December and proposals submitted by deadline end of December
January 2008	We write to confirm receipt of proposals Full proposals are reviewed and queries raised	Stakeholder meetings organised in November and December and proposals submitted by deadline end of December
January 2008	Final list selected Those selected will be issued with contracts	Activities start

