

The sections of the proposal

Different donors may have different proposal frameworks and application forms to complete or guidelines to follow. Most donors, however, expect a proposal to contain the following sections:

- *A title page or front cover*
- *A summary of the proposal*
- *The project justification:
the problem addressed by the project
the way the project plans to address it*
- *The applicants*
- *The goal and beneficiaries*
- *The work plan*
- *The management arrangements*
- *The budgets*
- *Monitoring and evaluation plans*
- *Sustainability*
- *Appendices containing supporting information*

On the following pages some notes and suggestions are given for each section, illustrated by some examples from community investment projects.

Title page

This page is the cover to the proposal and it should include:

- the title of the project;
- the name and address of the group or committee submitting the proposal and the contact person for the group or committee;
- the location and duration of the project;
- the date that the proposal is being submitted.

MULUNDU VILLAGE WATER SUPPLY

MULUNDU VILLAGE
CHEMBE DISTRICT
NORTHERN PROVINCE

Contact: Mary Kabaso - Box 7502 - Kazembe
Date of proposal: 27 July 2002

Summary

This page must highlight the key features of the proposal. It is the only page that some busy officials will read, so it is important to be clear, concise and convincing in the summary. It should be written last when all the other sections are complete and it usually should not be more than one page long. It should briefly describe the following aspects of the project:

- the problem being addressed
- what the project is
- the goal or main objectives
- who will benefit
- the implementation period
- the funding strategy:
 - community contribution
 - proposed grant
 - proposed loan

Project justification

This section is used to convince the donors that the project is really necessary. The information gathered during the participatory appraisal can be used to write this. The project justification explains precisely why there is a need to undertake this project, which food and nutrition problems the project is planning to address, and how the proposed project will improve household food security and nutrition.

Box 17: Example of a problem

Women in Mulundu village spend two hours a day during the dry season to collect water for the household. As a result, less time is available for child care and food preparation and less water is used, resulting in poor hygiene, tiredness and less food.

The specific problem that the project has chosen to address should be summarised here.

Box 18: Example of a proposed microproject

The people living in Mulundu village propose to identify a suitable site for a tube well, organize the construction of the well with appropriate technical assistance and install a hand pump. A water committee will be established to ensure that community members contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the well and pump. One member will be trained in maintenance and repair work.

This section should simply describe what is going to be done.

The goal and beneficiaries

The goal of the microproject should be clearly stated, along with any short-term objectives. The people who will benefit from the project must be identified.

The work plan

This section is best presented as a table showing the activities that make up the microproject, who is responsible for each task, what resources are needed for each one and when they will be undertaken. The preparation of a work plan is fully explained in Part 2.

The following examples illustrate different types of microprojects and different formats for work plans.

Chart 1: Work plan for a vegetable production and marketing project

WHO	ACTIVITY AND TASKS	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		
		*Q3 '01	Q4 '01	Q1 '02	Q2 '02	Q3 '02
	ACTIVITY 1: VEGETABLE PRODUCTION					
Men	A. Select uncultivated hillsides	■				
Men	B. Survey with A frames, make contours	■				
Youth	C. Remove rocks, other debris	■				
Committee	D. Buy seed, tools, fertiliser	■				
Men	E. Dig irrigation ditch		■			
Youth	F. Plant ipil ipil tree barriers		■			
All	G. Plant varieties of vegetables		■			
All	H. Cultivate, weed, fertilise, irrigate			■	■	
All	I. Harvest, and pack vegetables for sale, distribute vegetables for home consumption				■	
	ACTIVITY 2: MARKETING OF VEGETABLES					
Committee	A. Identify outlets in nearby urban centres			■		
Committee	B. Negotiate wholesale prices				■	
Committee	C. Rent lorry				■	
Perez Family	D. Transport vegetables to buyers					■
Committee	E. Collect and distribute income					■
* per quarter						

Chart 2: Work plan for establishing and maintaining a village store

PROJECT TASKS	TIME PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Clear land, collect building materials	January 1-15	Husbands of women's group members
2. Training course in store management and record keeping	January 7-12	Women's group members
3. Build store	January 15-February 15	Husbands
4. Buy products for store	February	Women's group members
5. Establish prices for products	February	Women's group members
6. Set up accounting books	February	Executive Committee of women's group
7. Develop work schedule	February	Women's group members
8. Sale of products	March onwards	Women's group members
9. Monthly review meetings	First week of April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November	Women's group members
10. Monitoring visits from donor	July and December	Donor and community members
11. Loan repayments to credit programme	June, September, December	Chairwoman and Treasurer
12. Quarterly progress report for donor	End of June, September, December	Executive Committee of women's group
13. Quarterly financial report for donor	End of June, September, December	Executive Committee of women's group

Chart 3: Work plan for establishing and maintaining a village well

TASK	WHO WILL DO IT?	WHAT IS NEEDED?	WHEN WILL IT BE DONE?
<i>Establish Water Committee rules</i>	<i>The whole village Committee</i>	<i>Book to record decisions</i>	<i>By 31 July</i>
<i>Obtain technical advice on siting and construction</i>	<i>The Water Committee Water Engineer from Council</i>	<i>Book to record advice</i>	<i>By 15 August</i>
<i>Select site and secure village agreement</i>	<i>The Water Committee Village Headman All other people in village</i>	<i>Book to record decisions</i>	<i>By 25 August</i>
<i>Dig well</i>	<i>Community members organized into groups Supervisor from Committee</i>	<i>Spades / Pickaxe Buckets Wheelbarrows Rope</i>	<i>By 30 September</i>
<i>Etc.</i>			

Management arrangements and organizational profile

This section should outline the system the community or group has developed for making decisions, controlling resources and overseeing the progress of the microproject.

Typical information will include:

- the name and address of the organization, group or committee
- the names of the main contact persons
- its goals
- the structure of the organization, group or committee, i.e. details of membership, responsibilities assigned to each member, group constitution or rules, paid or voluntary staff
- when the group or committee was formed
- any previous or development activities, i.e. what was under taken and what were the results
- the type of resources or assets that it has
- bank account details, arrangements for storing resources or petty cash



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Budget

Most donors require that you follow a special format for this. If not, use a format similar to the one presented in the following examples.

When preparing the budget make sure that you:

- clearly indicate the community's contributions to the project;
- present yearly, as well as total, budgets for projects that span more than one year;
- discuss in a cover note the community's or group's plans to ensure that the project is self-sustaining.

When preparing a budget, it is important to include the costs of all the activities in the microproject.

In the case of a **community investment project**, there should be:

- full cost estimates of all resources required;
- a summary of the community contribution;
- a summary of the external contribution(s) required;
- a cash flow projection.



In the case of an **income-generating project**, there should be:

- a budget showing the expected profit when the enterprise is in full operation;
- a financing plan, which specifies the capital which will be contributed by the group members and the grant and/or loan needed to carry out the enterprise;
- a cash flow budget covering the start up period and a period of normal operation, which shows:
- the proposed group contribution as an opening balance (see Part 2);
- any proposed grant contribution as income; and
- any proposed loan and its repayment plan.

Table 2: Example of a budget for a community drinking water system

BUDGET CATEGORY	AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM DONOR	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY COMMUNITY	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY OTHERS	TOTAL
PERSONNEL 2 skilled labourers community labour 1 engineer 1 overseer 1 local consultant TOTAL	\$2,000 \$2,000 \$4,000	\$500 \$500	\$2,000 \$400 \$2,400	\$6,900
EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS ** Non-local construction materials Local materials: bricks, sand and rocks Land Tools and equipment TOTAL	\$3,800 \$3,800	\$300 \$1,500 \$1,800	\$1,500 \$1,500	\$7,100
TRAVEL 10 trips to and from village (skilled labourers and overseer) 10 trips to and from the village (engineer) TOTAL	\$200 \$200		\$200 \$200	\$400
ADMINISTRATION Telephone calls Postage Paper, pens, tape TOTAL	\$100 \$50 \$150	\$20 \$20		\$170
GRAND TOTAL	\$8,150	\$2,320	\$4100	14,570

** Engineer will provide detailed design and cost estimates for water system.

Table 3: Example of a budget for a vegetable production project

BUDGET CATEGORY	GRAND TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM DONOR	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY COMMUNITY	AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY OTHERS	TOTAL
PERSONNEL <i>Community labour</i> <i>Marketing specialist</i> <i>Government extension workers</i>	<i>\$1,000</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$400</i>	
TOTAL	<i>\$1,000</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$400</i>	<i>\$1,900</i>
EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS <i>Seeds and fertiliser</i> <i>Vehicle (loaned)</i> <i>Tools and equipment</i> <i>Land</i> <i>Training materials</i>	<i>\$1,500</i> <i>\$450</i>	<i>\$350</i> <i>\$800</i>	<i>\$80</i>	
TOTAL	<i>\$1,950</i>	<i>\$1,150</i>	<i>\$80</i>	<i>\$3,180</i>
TRAVEL <i>Petrol</i> <i>8 trips to and from the village (government extension workers)</i> <i>10 trips to market (marketing specialist and chairman of committee)</i>	<i>\$175</i> <i>\$100</i>		<i>\$50</i>	
TOTAL	<i>\$275</i>		<i>\$50</i>	<i>\$325</i>
ADMINISTRATION <i>Postage</i> <i>Stationery</i>	<i>\$100</i> <i>\$50</i> <i>\$150</i>			
TOTAL	<i>\$8,150</i>	<i>\$1650</i>	<i>\$530</i>	<i>\$150</i>

Monitoring and evaluation

Describe what indicators will be monitored, when, how and by whom. Don't forget to mention the collection of baseline data that describes the situation before the project. Also describe the evaluation process, if there is to be one.

Sustainability

It is important to explain to potential funders the reasons why and how the microproject will continue to have an impact in the long term. For example, if the microproject proposes to build community facilities, this section should summarise the arrangements to ensure the maintenance and repair. If the project is for income-generating enterprises, it should summarise how markets will be developed. Perhaps there are long-term plans for more training or expanded facilities that should be mentioned. This information helps to emphasise the long-term future of the proposal.

Appendices

Additional materials, which could strengthen the overall proposal, can be attached to the proposal. Possibilities include:

- Community maps
- Previously developed material about the group
- Statistics that support the proposal
- Quotes for prices of materials needed in the project
- Previous projects or relations with donors

Checking the draft proposal

Before proceeding, it is wise to review the proposal against the following checklist - or, better still, have someone else read and evaluate the proposal against the checklist.

1. The proposal is presented clearly and legibly.
2. The proposal is concise, not too long.
3. The problem the project addresses is stated clearly and represents the perspective of the community.
4. The goal statement offers a solution to the problem described.
5. Project objectives will help reach the project goal and are limited in number.
6. Project objectives are measurable and time bound.
7. If all objectives are met, the problem will be resolved.
8. Project activities and tasks are clearly described.
9. Project activities and tasks are realistic, given available resources, local organizational capacity, level of commitment, and previous experience.
10. Clear indicators of success have been defined.
11. The means of measuring change has been defined.
12. A budget is prepared and provides a breakdown of local and external contributions.
13. If the project is for more than one year, a budget is provided for each year along with a total budget.
14. All major budgetary items are realistically estimated and are justified.
15. The proposal explains how the project will become self-sustaining after donor assistance expires.
16. After reading the proposal, most of the reader's questions about the project are answered.
17. The proposal meets the formats and guidelines of the donor to whom it is being sent.

What else needs to be done before finalising the proposal?

Now that the draft of the proposal has been completed, it is important that its contents be discussed again with the community or group. A meeting should be held with all the stakeholders to review what has been written and to solicit any last minute comments or revisions. If any reservations emerge, this would also be an appropriate time to address and resolve these with the community or group. These discussions play an important role in continuing to build community or group ownership in the project development and implementation process.

Depending on the outcome of this discussion, minor changes may need to be made to the proposal. If discussions are heated and result either in dissent or a large number of important changes, one might want to reconsider whether the community or group is really ready to submit a proposal. Perhaps it needs to return to the planning stage.

Local authorities should be kept informed as much as possible of the progress of the proposal.



Submitting the proposal

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Once the final revisions have been incorporated in the proposal, a cover letter to the potential donor should be written. This letter should state very briefly (in one or two paragraphs) the purpose of the proposed project, what the project consists of, its duration and the beneficiaries. It should also mention that the group or committee is available to provide any additional information that might be required. This letter should be signed by the person who will sign the contract if the proposal is funded. Usually this is the chairperson of the group or committee, but sometimes other people are designated to do this.

Proposals can usually be submitted to donors at any time of the year. Some donors, however, make their funding decisions only at set times in the year. And some donors only make funding decisions once a year. It is worth checking beforehand whether proposals are reviewed throughout the year or only at designated times. If it is the latter, it is essential to make sure that the proposal reaches the donor at least three weeks before it starts reviewing and selecting proposals for funding. If the proposal arrives too late, it might not be considered for quite some time. This will not only cause delays, it might also affect the timeliness of the intervention. If the delay is too long, the community may have to ask itself if this still the most appropriate approach. A long delay could also frustrate the expectations of the community and have a negative impact on the participation of the community in the process.

What to expect after submitting the proposal

Donors have their own procedures to complete when they review a proposal. In some cases, they may review the project in their office

and in other cases they will send a representative to talk to the community members. Some donors do both. Based on these reviews, the donor may ask the community or group to explain aspects of the budget or the project design. Sometimes their questions can be answered in a letter or conversation. However, it may also require rewriting the proposal.

It is essential that the community is aware that the process is likely to be a lengthy one in order to avoid discouragement. When deciding to ask for external support, people should not expect “quick fixes”. Donor procedures can be quite lengthy and so one should not expect to hear anything about their decision for quite some time. Some donors even take as long as six months to make their final decision. Then, if the project is approved it will probably take another few weeks for the contract to be prepared for the community or group to sign. In the case of many of the World Bank’s Social Funds, a “Project Launch Workshop” must be held after the community has received the contract or financial agreement, but before it has signed it. This workshop is facilitated by appropriate government officers. It is intended to ensure that the community is clear about the responsibilities it has agreed to undertake in the project.

After the contract is signed, there may be an additional delay in the release of the funds. Donors usually release the funds in instalments, rather than all at once. They have a specific procedure for releasing the installments. In many instances, the community or group will need to provide an accounting of the funds received before more funds are released.



Developing and writing a good proposal is a challenging process, but one well worth the effort. Once the project is funded, the community can begin to transform its ideas into action, and start the process of solving its household food security and nutrition problems. Microprojects for improving household food security and nutrition are an important means to alleviate poverty. They can help vulnerable households to have sustainable access to healthy foods and basic services. They also offer a unique opportunity to strengthen the

organizational skills of the community, and particularly of women's groups - and help it make the best of available resources.

This manual should also contribute to the effectiveness of a variety of microfinance programmes and policies aimed at assisting poor communities, by building the capacity of development workers in the design and formulation of sustainable projects at community level.

Glossary

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Activity: An entire component of a project, made up of a number of tasks or steps.

Baseline data: Information gathered to show the status of the community prior to the start of the project.

Budget: A realistic estimate of the costs needed to implement the project.

Goal: What the community expects the project setting to be like after the project has solved the problem.

Household food security: Year-round access by the household to the foods needed for an active and healthy life.

Impact: The effect of the project on the problem being addressed.

Indicator: Measurable changes in conditions or behaviours that let observers know whether the project is or is not having the desired effect.

Investment costs: Expenses needed to start a project.

Objective: A series of specific accomplishments designed to address the problem. An objective describes what needs to be achieved.

Operating costs: Expenses needed to run and maintain the project after it has been started.

Output: The amount of something produced by the project. Outputs are considered necessary in order for the project to have an impact.

Participatory appraisal: Appraisal of the community's food and nutrition situation conducted with the active participation of the community.

Problem: The situation that the community hopes to remedy with the project.

Resources: What goes into the project, such as money, labour, material, time, expertise, training. Resources are also referred to as inputs.

Task: Steps needed to be taken to complete an activity.

Work plan: Describes the tasks that need to be accomplished in the project, who is responsible for each task and by when it should be completed.