

## 1st Call for Proposals

### Open from 14<sup>th</sup> August to 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

The Responsible Business Fund Plus (RBF+) is a matching grant initiative running from July 2024 to June 2028, as part of the EU-backed Sustainable Livelihoods and Inclusive Growth (SLING) Action. The fund is primarily financed by the European Union, with additional co-funding from the Embassies of Switzerland and Denmark and is delivered by Inclusive Systems Myanmar and Helvetas Myanmar.

RBF+ aims to boost the growth of Myanmar's agrifood businesses while promoting environmental sustainability. The program is managed by Helvetas Intercooperation gGmbH (Helvetas Germany), which has worked in Myanmar since 2015. Inclusive Systems Myanmar Ltd. Gty., Helvetas' non-profit social enterprise registered with DICA, leads implementation on the ground, with coordination and advisory input from HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The Bern University of Applied Sciences also contributes to research, evaluation, and learning, ensuring practical and academic value.

Building on the original Responsible Business Fund (RBF) Myanmar established in 2017, RBF+ continues to champion responsible and competitive business practices among Myanmar's MSMEs. The overarching goal is to facilitate the agrifood sector in improving incomes and creating additional employment while minimizing its environmental impact.

#### Project Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Strengthen the capacity of agrifood MSMEs to adopt sustainable inputs, technologies, and services, benefiting 60 MSMEs and 20,000 farmers.
- **Outcome 2:** Improve productivity, competitiveness, and environmental performance in MSMEs, targeting EUR 4 million in cost savings, 10 million kWh of energy saved, and 1.5 million liters of water conserved.
- **Outcome 3:** Boost domestic and international sales, aiming for EUR 6 million in new sales by 80 MSMEs by project completion.

RBF+ seeks to drive sustainable, inclusive growth in Myanmar's agrifood sector, supporting the livelihoods of rural communities, who make up 68% of the country's population.

The fund operates through three grant 'Windows,' each aligned with the three main outcomes:

- **Window 1:** Supports suppliers of modern inputs, services, and technologies, including the introduction and localization of technologies for farmers and MSMEs.
- **Window 2:** Targets agrifood MSMEs, focusing on energy efficiency, renewable energy, water and waste management, occupational safety, and food safety and value-added production.
- **Window 3:** Supports organizations enhancing MSMEs' market access, including participation in trade fairs and knowledge-sharing activities with retail chains and international buyers.

The main aim of the RBF+ 1st Call for Proposals is to foster the inclusive growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in local agricultural value chains while improving environmental sustainability. Grants will help primary producer farmers raise productivity, lower costs, and reach new markets.

To meet this goal, RBF+ supports projects across nine priority areas:

1. Modern Inputs and Technologies for Farmers
2. Technology Localization for Agrifood MSMEs
3. Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy
4. Water Efficiency
5. Waste Treatment & Recycling
6. Occupational Safety & Health (OSH)
7. Food Safety & Value-Added Production
8. MSME Participation in Trade Fairs
9. Knowledge Sharing for Farmers & Agrifood MSMEs

Hence, if your enterprise throughout the agri-food value chain has been facing financial constraints that prevent you from undertaking projects in the above-mentioned areas, potentially making your business economically more resilient, competitive, and environmentally responsible, RBF+ can provide **grant support** as follows to provide an incentive for you to grow your businesses while minimizing the environmental impact of Myanmar's agrifood sector.

- **Up to 50% of the Project Cost (up to MMK 400 million) for Area 1, 2**
- **Up to 50% of the Project Cost (up to MMK 200 million) for Area 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8**
- **Up to 100% of the Project Cost (up to MMK 40 million) for Area 9 (International Market)**
- **Up to 100% of the Project Cost (up to MMK 28 million) for Area 9 (Domestic Market)**

RBF+ is an instrument to mitigate financial risk for agrifood MSMEs and primary producers, aiming to enhance their capacity and awareness of environmentally sustainable business practices, improve productivity, competitiveness, and environmental performance, and facilitate better access to both international and domestic markets.

The emphasis of RBF+ is, therefore, on supporting as many impactful projects as possible in the above-mentioned areas, with a wide geographic spread all over Myanmar across the agrifood value chain, which is vital for generating greater income and employment while reducing the impact on the climate and the environment. Special attention is given to rural agrifood MSMEs and the inclusion of underrepresented groups (women, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI, and people with disabilities). It must be noted that in line with the RBF+ Donors' interest in supporting the weaker regions/states of Myanmar, RBF+ is constrained to prioritize projects from regions beyond Yangon and Mandalay, which have received significant grant support in the past from RBF.

Hence, it is important that your proposed Project Idea qualifies on the following **Eligibility Criteria for relevant Area**

| Criteria   | Area 1 & 2         | Area 3, 4, 5 & 7   | Area 8 (Intl' Trade Fair) | Area 9 (Market Training) |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Business Case</b><br>Project helps Farmers/MSMEs improve productivity, reduce costs, access new markets                                     | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✓                        |
| <b>No Previous RBF Grant</b><br>Project has not received RBF support for the same area before  | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✗                        |
| <b>Registration</b><br>Business/Association is registered in Myanmar   | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✓                        |
| <b>MSME Definition</b> (300 or fewer staff OR < USD 720,000 paid-up capital)   | ✗                  | ✓                  | ✗                         | ✗                        |
| <b>Minimum Years of Operation</b><br>At least 2 years with most recent year externally audited   | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✓                        |
| <b>Preparedness for Project</b><br>Technology identified, suppliers shortlisted, financing for contribution raised, procurement by deadline    | ✓<br>(by Jan 2026) | ✓<br>(by Jan 2026) | ✓<br>(by end of 2026)     | ✓<br>(by end of 2026)    |
| <b>Excluded Sectors</b><br>Not operating in hard liquor, gambling, tobacco, weapons, or other excluded sectors                                 | ✓                  | ✓                  | ✓                         | ✓                        |
| <b>Business Association/Trade Fair Participant Eligibility</b><br>Both association & participant must meet registration and audit requirements | ✗                  | ✗                  | ✓                         | ✓                        |
| <b>Training Program Specifics</b><br>Training identified, trainers shortlisted, proven market  | ✗                  | ✗                  | ✗                         | ✓                        |

In case you have a project idea that fits into the above requirements, the first step to seek assistance from RBF+ is to fill-in the attached Concept Note. As the selection of projects for grant support is based on a competitive call for proposals, they will be ranked using the following **Different Evaluation Criteria**.

#### For Window 1 (Area 1 & 2)

| No. | Criteria | Method of Rating<br>Higher Preference for: | Weightage |
|-----|----------|--|-----------|
|-----|----------|--|-----------|

|              |  |   |             |
|--------------|--|---|-------------|
| 1            | Commercial viability of the investment as measured by the pay-back period of the investment  | Preference is given to projects that benefit a large group of farmers or primary producers.                                       | 50%         |
| 2            | Preparedness of the Grantee to deliver the proposed project within the indicated project period as assessed by RBF+ SEC based on the details in the Project Proposal and verified through telephone or other conversations.                              | Priority is given to projects that can serve as a model or example at the national level.   | 10%         |
| 3            | Potential for the specific investment or the technology, input, or service to improve the economic performance of agrifood sector MSMEs and provide economic benefits to primary producers, based on the description of results in the Project Proposal. | Preference is given to projects that involve greater risks and require more time to recoup investment.                            | 10%         |
| 4            | Predicted reduction of environmental and climate impacts of primary production, by agrifood MSMEs and primary agricultural producers in the relevant value chains, based on the description of results in the Project Proposal.                          | No additional preference specified.   | 15%         |
| 5            | Appropriateness of the proposed service, input or technology in the Myanmar context  | No additional preference specified.   | 15%         |
| 6            | The grantee considers GESI and conflict sensitivity in their proposal to show that they will do no harm (Up to 5 bonus points may be given for proposals that are GESI or conflict transformative)   | Preference is given to suppliers with a demonstrated history of successful implementation of similar technologies or initiatives. | Yes / No    |
| <b>Total</b> |  |   | <b>100%</b> |

### For Window 2 (Area 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

| No. | Criteria   | Method of Rating<br>Higher Preference for:   | Weightage  |
|-----|--|--|------------|
| 1   | Commercial viability of the investment as measured by the pay-back period of the investment  | Preference for projects that will benefit many farmers or primary producers.               | <b>50%</b> |
| 2   | Preparedness of the Grantee to deliver the proposed project within the indicated project period as assessed by RBF+ SEC based on the details in the Project Proposal and telephone conversations.                                      | Preference for projects that can serve as a successful example at the national level.      | <b>15%</b> |
| 3   | Track record of Equipment/Technology supplier measured by the number of years in successfully serving similar customers in Myanmar and other countries in Asia.  | Preference for projects willing to take on greater risks and accept longer return periods. | <b>10%</b> |
| 4   | Potential for the specific investment or the technology, to improve the economic performance of agrifood sector MSMEs and provide economic benefits to primary producers, based on the description of results in the Project Proposal. | No additional preference is set for this criterion.  | <b>10%</b> |
| 5   | Predicted reduction of environmental and climate impacts of primary production, by agrifood MSMEs and primary agricultural producers in the relevant value chains, based on the description of results in the Project Proposal.        | No additional preference is set for this criterion   | <b>15%</b> |

|       |  |  |          |
|-------|--|--|----------|
| 6     | The grantee considers GESI and conflict sensitivity in their proposal to show that they will do no harm. (Up to 5 bonus points may be given for applications that are GESI or conflict transformative) | Preference for suppliers with a history of successfully delivering similar technologies or projects. | Yes / No |
| Total |  |  | 100%     |

### For Window 3 (Area 8 & 9)

| No.   | Criteria   | Method of Rating<br>Higher Preference for:   | Weightage |
|-------|--|--|-----------|
| 1     | Preparedness of the Grantee to deliver the proposed project within the indicated project period as assessed by RBF+ SEC based on the details in the Project Proposal and telephone conversations.                                      | Preference for projects that benefit a large number of farmers or primary producers.                       | 60%       |
| 2     | Potential for the specific investment or the technology, to improve the economic performance of agrifood sector MSMEs and provide economic benefits to primary producers, based on the description of results in the Project Proposal. | Preference for projects that can serve as a model or reference for similar efforts across the country.     | 20%       |
| 3     | Appropriateness of the proposed service and target market in the Myanmar context.  | Preference for projects willing to take on higher risks or those with extended payback timelines.          | 20%       |
| 4     | The grantee considers GESI and conflict sensitivity in their proposal to show that they will do no harm. (Up to 5 bonus points may be given for applications that are GESI or conflict transformative.)                                | Preference is given to proposals that address gender equality, social inclusion, and conflict sensitivity. | Yes / No  |
| Total |  |  | 100%      |

Timeline for the 1st Call for the evaluation of Concept Notes/ Project Proposals and the later steps to be taken by Grant Applicant are presented below:

| Date   | Activity   |
|--|--|
| 14 <sup>th</sup> Aug to 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2024      | Opening of RBF+ Call for Proposals   |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2024                              | Last day for submission of Concept Notes by Grant Applicants   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2024          | Screening by RBF+ Secretariat  |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2024                             | Announcement of Shortlisted Project Ideas - Concept Note Stage   |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> Sept to 21 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2024     | Preparation/ Submission of Full Proposals by Shortlisted Grant Applicants  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct to 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2024      | RBF+ Secretariat conducts due diligence and submits Appraisal Notes to the RBF+ Grant Approval Committee                                   |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> Nov to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec 2024       | Assessment by RBF+ Grant Approval Committee and approval of Grant Support to selected Grant Applicants                                     |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> to 16 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2024           | Grant Approvals (e-mails) are sent to selected Grant Applicants along with draft Grant Agreements  |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2025 | Collection of baseline data, consensus on Project Indicators, followed by signing of Grant Agreements between RBF+ and Grantee             |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2024 to 17 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2025 | Grantees implement approved project activities and with their own funds and claim reimbursement from RBF+ within the deadline of 12 months |

**Concept Notes must be submitted by 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (12:00 am).**

### **Submission Instructions**

- Please submit your Concept Note through the following **Online Kobo Link**:  
<https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/HKyixfku>
- Please note that once you make a successful submission, you will receive a **notification email** from RBF+ within 24 hours.
- We suggest you to **first fill in the information in Word template of Concept Note** and later **copy and fill in the Kobo Link**.
- If you encounter any difficulties completing the form, please watch the instructional video provided below.  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OtOb9vjfdZ6SuRTt3K604R4qf\\_F92i2T/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OtOb9vjfdZ6SuRTt3K604R4qf_F92i2T/view?usp=sharing)

Any queries regarding RBF+ support can be addressed to mobile phone numbers:  
09-456876613, 09-263702397, 09-757700697, 09-5032680

Thank you for your interest in responding to the challenges of finding economically resilient and environmentally responsible business solutions to make Myanmar competitive.



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Date: 26 July 2024