Solution-oriented Research for Development Programme

# Solution-oriented research for development (SOR4D) programme

## Call Document

19 January 2026

Updated timeline of the call: 29. September 2026

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Swiss National Science Foundation

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# 1 Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposes a broad and ambitious plan for global action on sustainable development to address the threats resulting from adverse social, economic and environmental conditions. The achievement of the SDGs asks for new ways of thinking, improved technologies and innovative forms of social practice. To contribute to addressing this challenge, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) are launching a second phase of the Solution-oriented Research for Development (SOR4D) programme. New insights and innovative approaches are needed to reduce poverty and to implement the 2030 Agenda in the Global South and East. Joint efforts by international transdisciplinary research partnerships can make a difference. The SOR4D programme aims to generate new knowledge and innovative solutions for poverty reduction, humanitarian aid and sustainable development; promote the application and scaling up of knowledge and solutions; build the capacity of researchers and their institutions in partner countries (localisation); and contribute to measuring the impact of international development cooperation.

The SOR4D programme adheres to the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28 and is aligned with its four priority objectives (Human development; Sustainable economic development; Climate and environment; Peacebuilding and governance) and priority regions and countries, including Sub-Saharan Africa. It is also aligned with the Dispatch on the Promotion of Education, Research and Innovation (ERI Dispatch 2025-28) and with the 2025-2028 Research Concept for the Development and Cooperation Policy Sector and the SNSF multi-year programme (2025-2028).[1]

# 2 Objectives of the Solution-oriented Research for Development programme

The overarching goal of the SOR4D programme is to produce knowledge and innovative solutions through needs-driven, transdisciplinary research that have an impact and open up new ways for accelerating the achievement of the sustainable development goals and reducing poverty in least developed, low and lower middle-income countries. It contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and its 17 sustainable development goals by fostering partnerships, co-creation of knowledge and innovation.

The SOR4D programme has three specific objectives:

1. Researchers and non-academic actors jointly generate in their respective geographical contexts needs-based solution-oriented scientific knowledge and innovative solutions for addressing systemic and complex sustainable development challenges and poverty reduction in least developed, low and lower middle-income countries in the Global South and East.
2. Project partnerships and networks test and validate research results with impact potential in the respective contexts and explore scaling pathways. They disseminate research findings and engage with relevant stakeholders in order to reach optimal impact at scale.

[1] See International Cooperation (IC) Strategy 2025–28; ERI Dispatch 2025-28; SNSF multi-year programme 2025-2028

3. Researchers and non-academic actors through cross-border research partnerships enhance their competences in conducting solution-oriented transdisciplinary research in transformative, complex development settings.

# 3 Characteristics of the SOR4D programme

## 3.1 North-South partnerships

To achieve its objectives, the SOR4D programme funds international collaborations between Swiss researchers and researchers and non-academic actors from least developed, low income and lower middle-income countries in the Global South and East.

The research partners must demonstrate high expertise and interest in needs-based research as well as readiness to put research in service of practice. The non-academic actors are actors from policy and practice being part of the public or private sector in the local context where the projects are implemented. These actors must be experienced in societal, environmental and economic development contexts and be well connected and experienced with local, national and/or regional governmental, political, civil society or business contexts in order to ensure that the solution-oriented research addresses on-site needs and sensitivities. The non-academic actors are expected to contribute to defining the research needs/questions, to the research activities and to the dissemination and application of the research results at a larger scale.

The “Guide for Global Research Partnerships” developed by the Swiss Alliance for Global Research Partnerships (GRP-Alliance; formerly Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE)) serves as a frame of reference for these international partnerships.[2]

## 3.2 Transdisciplinary research and knowledge utilisation

The SOR4D programme promotes transdisciplinary research for development among researchers and non-academic actors that is demand-driven and relevant to the local context and of global relevance. Transdisciplinary research (TDR) refers to a research approach in which scientific and societal actors collaborate to understand complex, real-world problems and develop practical, relevant solutions and facilitate transformation. This takes place in a co-creative process, where problem definition, goal setting, and solution development are carried out jointly. The aim of TDR is not only to develop knowledge to understand the issues, but also to find ways to effectively address, solve or prevent problems.[3]

The SOR4D programme applies a multi-step “funnel” approach allowing to assess the potential of research initiatives to reach meaningful impact at scale. In the beginning of the research for development process it looks out for many potentially promising ideas, which are then narrowed down through two-step evaluation process, close follow-up and transition and implementation at scale. This allows to simultaneously balance risks and financial investments along the process, building on strong evidence and impact orientation.

[2] Guide for Global Research Partnerships | Swiss Alliance for Global Research Partnerships (GRP-Alliance)
[3] As the Network for Transdisciplinary Research (td-net) points out, there is a plurality of definitions of TDR: https://en.transdisciplinarity.ch/transdisciplinarity/what-is-td.

### 3.3 Thematic focus and objectives

The SOR4D programme is open to all disciplines from the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, health and life sciences. It particularly encourages interdisciplinary collaboration between research domains where such collaboration is appropriate.

Proposals must explicitly aim for systemic and transformative solutions that simultaneously address several of the 17 SDGs. The SOR4D programme funds proposals which address one or several challenges in relation to the four objectives of Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy for the 2025–28 period:[4]

- **Objective 1: Human development**: Saving lives, alleviating human suffering and supporting access to high-quality basic services for the most disadvantaged. Specific objectives include: (1) Creating conditions and prospects for safe and regular migration, improving integration and protection, and strengthening the contribution of migration to sustainable development; and (2) making health systems more resilient and facilitating equitable access to quality health services for vulnerable populations.
- **Objective 2: Sustainable economic development**: Creating decent jobs through appropriate framework conditions, a dynamic local economy and the private sector. Switzerland supports developing countries in their transition to a formal economy, in the development of the private sector and in the implementation of structural changes at the regional, national and local levels, and supports their integration into the global economy. Specific objectives include: (1) Strengthening local SMEs so that they have access to adequate financing solutions and global markets and contribute to high-quality training programmes; and (2) Making public institutions more efficient and improving economic conditions.
- **Objective 3: Climate and environment**: Guaranteeing a development that is environmentally friendly and resilient to climate change and to natural hazards for the benefit of the most disadvantaged. Climate change and environmental degradation are among the most pressing challenges of our time and affect all regions, threatening lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems, while vulnerable populations suffer most. Swiss IC responds with two complementary approaches: strengthening developing countries' resilience and adaptive capacity, and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. It promotes risk reduction measures, the sustainable use of natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems and related functions. Water management, food systems, and energy solutions play a central role in this context. Therefore, innovative research initiatives that address the specific following challenges are sought:
  - Climate and disaster resilience for people and livelihoods: Advance climate adaptation strategies, integrated risk management and climate services to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities and livelihoods
  - Inclusive clean energy transition: Explore pathways for equitable access to renewable energy, productive uses, and improved efficiency.
  - Healthy ecosystems and biodiversity: Promote the conservation, restoration, sustainable management and valorisation of landscapes, and advance nature-based solutions to sustain critical services and support people's resilience and livelihoods.
  - Green Finance: Advance mechanisms for international collaboration in green finance to strengthen biodiversity and climate change mitigation efforts.
  - Within Objective 3 (Climate and Environment), partnerships with the private sector that can play a pivotal role in closing financing gaps, de-risking sustainable solutions, or developing innovative payment schemes are encouraged.

[4] International Cooperation (IC) Strategy 2025–28

- **Objective 4: Peace and governance**: Resolving conflicts, promoting peace, democracy and the rule of law, upholding human rights. Specific objectives include: (1) Promoting democratic processes and institutions at local and national levels and supporting accountability mechanisms; (2) Strengthening and promoting participatory rights and gender equality (concept of inclusiveness); and (3) promote the rule of law, good governance and the separation of powers.
  - Within objective 4 (Peace and governance) a special allocation is made for project(s) in West Africa (Chad included), preferably in Least Developed Countries. The focus is on projects that deal with safeguarding and fostering democratic space and explore the "champ des possibles": innovative and proven approaches that consider traditional, 'home grown' or self-determined structures and processes such as:
  - (Local) governance processes based on principles of inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability;
  - Civic space: participation, engagement of citizens, civil society, media;
  - Public dialogue and the voicing of people's priorities and concerns, in view of fostering social cohesion.

### 3.4 SOR4D programme budget and timeline

The second phase of the SOR4D programme has a duration of six years (2025-2030) and a total budget of 22.4 million Swiss Francs.

Selected research projects will be funded for a period of up to four years. Projects with high potential for scaling-up, application and transformation can be funded for additional 24 months (maximum) with Transformation Accelerating Grants (TAG).

The programme timeline is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Launch of call | 19 January 2026 |
| Submission of pre-proposals | 18 May 2026, 17.00 CET |
| Evaluation of pre-proposals | May-Aug 2026 |
| Invitation for full proposals | 9 October 2026 |
| Preparatory grants | Mid-October 2026 – February 2027 |
| Submission of full proposals | 29 January 2027, 17.00 CET |
| Evaluation of full proposals | February-April 2027 |
| Funding decisions by Research Council | Ende April 2027 |
| Start of projects | May-October 2027 |

# 4 General conditions

### 4.1 Applicable law

Applications must be in line with the regulations outlined in this call document. In addition and if no specific provision is formulated in the present call, the regulations of the SNSF apply, in particular the SNSF Funding Regulations and their General Implementation Regulations.

### 4.2 Two-stage selection procedure

Proposals are submitted and selected in a two-stage procedure: pre-proposals are submitted first, followed by an invitation to submit a full proposal if selected in the first evaluation round. Pre- and full proposals must be written in English.

### 4.3 Eligibility of consortium

SOR4D projects are steered by a transdisciplinary consortium consisting of researchers and non-academic actors who share equal responsibility for the project. The individual members within the consortia form the core of an applying team and will be evaluated during the selection of the research projects. The minimum requirements for an eligible consortium are:

- One researcher holding a position at a Swiss higher education or research institution, as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA);
- At least one researcher holding a position at a higher education and research institution located in an eligible partner country/countries;
- At least one non-academic actor located in the country/countries where transdisciplinary research is being conducted.

The corresponding applicant is a researcher employed for the entire duration of the project at a Swiss higher education or research institution, as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA).[5] Non-academic actors and researchers that are based in an ODA recipient partner country (see eligible countries under 4.4.) act as co-applicants. Additional researchers that are based at a research institution in the Global North (except Switzerland) and non-academic actors from the global North can act as project partners.[6] Additional researchers that are based at a Swiss research institution can be part of the applying team as co-applicants (if they fulfil the same eligibility criteria as the corresponding applicant).

### 4.4 Eligible countries

Eligible countries for SOR4D research partnerships are those listed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as Official Development Assistance recipient countries. The focus lies on countries in the categories Least Developed Countries, Low Income Countries and Lower Middle Income Countries. The regularly updated OECD-DAC list is the reference. Projects in Swiss International Cooperation priority regions and countries, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, are encouraged.[7]

### 4.5 Gender awareness and equal opportunities

SOR4D projects must demonstrate gender and intersectionality awareness and contribute to equal opportunities and the principle “leave no one behind” of the 2030 Agenda.

Gender, intersectionality and equality are considered at various levels of the programme: gender balance in applying teams is taken into consideration for the selection of projects; gender and intersectionality with regard to the research subject in form of gender analysis, mainstreaming or research methods is an evaluation criterion for project selection; research projects in the field of gender equality are welcome, while not systematically preferred to other issues.

[5] Swiss higher education or research institution: a Swiss university, a federal institute of technology, a university of applied sciences, a university of teacher education or any other research institution or non-commercial research centre outside the higher education sector. See https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/de

[6] See definition according to Art. 11 of the SNSF General Regulations: Funding Regulations (snf.ch)

[7] SDC countries of intervention

### 4.6 Project management

The SOR4D programme is conscious of a historical North-South imbalance in research for development. It thus encourages fair shares in responsibility, careers opportunities and working conditions in consortia to act as a small contribution to redressing it.

International transdisciplinary research partnerships are usually complex and require coordination skills and experience. It therefore requires dedicated staff and regular coordination meetings (especially in multi-country settings or with a large number of partners). Coordination tasks of a project can be assumed by members of partner institutions or by the Swiss institution. Adequate funding for coordination has to be made available for these positions (cf. eligible personnel costs).

### 4.7 Project length and budget frames

Transdisciplinary research projects within the framework of the SOR4D programme may last 36 (3 years) or 48 months (4 years). The maximum budget is the number of project years times CHF 250’000 (e.g. for a three-year project max. CHF 750’000 and for a four-year project max. CHF 1’000’000). Projects should start no later than 6 months after the funding decision (i.e. between May and October 2027).

The SOR4D programme will launch calls for Transformation Acceleration Grants (TAGs) during the course of the programme. TAGs are awarded on a competitive basis to SOR4D projects to make use of the knowledge, tools and technologies developed within their projects through translation and implementation initiatives jointly with non-academic stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, the private sector, development practitioners). TAGs can be attributed for a maximum duration of two years. The yearly budget for a TAG is maximum CHF 150’000.

### 4.8 Financial conditions

Three financial conditions apply for SOR4D project grants:

1. At least 60% of the total project budget must be spent in the least developed, low income or lower middle income partner country/countries.
2. At least 20% of the total project budget must be allocated to the non-academic actor(s).
3. At least 10% of the total project budget must be spent for communication and dissemination, incl. transition to scale, activities to enable interaction and knowledge utilisation (i.e. website, workshops with stakeholders, production of flyers, policy briefs, training material for target groups etc.).

Financial conditions must be carefully monitored by the team of grantees. A project activity can fulfil more than one condition at the same time. The three financial conditions must be met. Applicants must budget sufficient staff resources for financial reporting and accounting at all partner institutions.

In case of deviations in the financial conditions, imbalances have to be corrected. The SNSF Administrative Office has the right to withhold financial tranches to recuperate funds such that conditions (1) through (3) are met.

### 4.9 Eligible costs

The following costs are eligible in SOR4D projects:

- Salaries:
  - PhD students, post-docs, project coordinators and other employees working on the project

    - Co-applicants from ODA recipient countries
- Communication and dissemination activities (e.g. workshops, conferences, video, trainings)
- Research/project funds: consumables, travel costs (compulsory emissions offsetting), room and board costs, field expenses
- Material costs: Equipment of enduring value (only eligible for partner countries)
- Overhead costs for co-applicants (research partner and non-academic actor in ODA recipient countries) can be included in the project budget and must not exceed 10% of their total budget

Overhead costs for Swiss higher education or research institutions are not eligible. The salaries of Swiss applicants and Swiss co-applicants are not covered.

The salaries of Swiss researchers comply with the currently valid SNSF rates. For researchers and non-academic actors based in ODA partner countries, the local prevailing salaries apply.

### 4.10 Reporting

Results- and solution-oriented progress reports and financial reports are due every 12 months. Reporting must comply with the guidelines issued by SOR4D programme management. Throughout the project duration, teams will engage in two feedback sessions with the SOR4D review panel to review progress, assess impact and address challenges.

Output data for each project has to be updated regularly for the SNSF Data Portal (https://data.snf.ch/grants) and up to two years after completion of the project.

### 4.11 Open access principle

Research results created by a SOR4D project must comply with the SNSF open access principles as outlined in the regulations. Further information can be found here: Open access: information for researchers.

### 4.12 Open research data

SOR4D projects must comply with the SNSF principles regarding open research data as outlined in the regulations. More information can be found here: Open Research Data

## 5 Submission and selection procedure

### 5.1 Online submission on mySNF online portal, mySNF user account

Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted to the SNSF electronically via the mySNF online platform (www.mysnf.ch) by the corresponding applicant. Corresponding applicants need to register as mySNF users before they can submit an application. Corresponding applicants can provide editorial rights to work in the application on the mySNF online portal to co-applicants and collaborators. User accounts obtained in the past remain valid and provide access to all SNSF funding schemes. It is advisable to request new user accounts as early as possible via the mySNF online portal. Validating a new mySNF user account may take up to one week. For technical questions: mySNF support (German/French/English: +41 31 308 22 00; Mon - Fri, 8.30 to 11.30 / 13.30 to 16.30 Swiss time / support portal: https://snsf-ch.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portals).

## 5.2 Selection

The evaluation process for SOR4D projects takes place in two stages: pre-proposals followed by full proposals. The Review Panel evaluates the pre-proposals based on the selection criteria outlined below (first stage). On the basis of the evaluation of pre-proposals by the evaluation panel, consortia that are selected will be invited to submit a full proposal.

The full proposals are evaluated by the review panel on the basis of external reviews by at least two independent external reviewers from the scientific and development cooperation community. The review panel and external reviewers award marks according to the Unified Evaluation Procedure of the SNSF. Marks range from 1 (low quality) to 9 (high quality). Thematic sub-panels with ad hoc panel members can be constituted by the review panel. The review panel might invite the applicants to present their project to the review panel in an (online) interview, where details of the full proposals can be discussed (applicants will be informed in the ruling if this is the case). The panels submit funding recommendations to the Programme Committee Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research of the SNSF Research Council.

The selection process is structured according to the figure below. The indications of time between each step are approximates.

## 5.3 Submission of pre-proposals

Pre-proposals must be submitted via the mySNF online portal.

The deadline for the submission of pre-proposals is 18.05.2026, 17:00 Swiss local time.

In addition to the administrative data that needs to be entered directly in mySNF, the following documents must be uploaded in PDF format:

- **Project plan:** must use the template for pre-proposals provided on the mySNF online portal under “Information/documents” (cf. Annex B). The project plan must not exceed 5 pages, excluding cover page and bibliography.
- **CVs of all applicants and project partners** according to the SNSF CV format. Non-academic actors use the template provided on mySNF under “Information/documents” (cf. Annex A)

### 5.4 Submission of full proposals

Full proposals must be submitted via the mySNF online portal.

The deadline for the submission of full proposals is 29.01.2027, 17:00 Swiss local time.

In addition to the administrative data that needs to be entered directly in mySNF, the following documents must be uploaded in PDF format:

- **Project plan:** must use the template for full proposals provided on the mySNF online portal under “Information/documents” (cf. Annex C). The project plan must not exceed 20 pages, including references.
- **Letter of intent** from each consortia member’s host institution to support the application and its implementation.
- **Cover Letter:** describing how panel recommendations (if applicable) were addressed in the full proposal.
- **CVs of all applicants and project partners** according to the SNSF CV format. Non-academic actors use the template provided on mySNF under “Information/documents” (cf. Annex A)
- **Detailed and realistic budget** reflecting the financial conditions.

### 5.5 Preparatory grants

The teams that successfully passed the pre-proposal stage are invited to submit a full proposal are offered a preparatory grant of max. CHF 5’000. The purpose of this grant is to promote the collaborative elaboration of a full proposals through consortium meetings/workshops or other preliminary work for the preparation of a full proposal such as generating baselines for indicators intended to assess the impact of the project or analysis of research field and what is lacking.

### 5.6 Evaluation criteria

Scientific quality and relevance for development are of equal importance for projects funded in the SOR4D programme. Research projects need to address a development need in one or several ODA eligible country/countries and demonstrate the potential impact on improving the quality of life of poor people in the respective countries.

Pre-proposals are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Relevance, originality and topicality of the project in addressing the programme objectives; in particular, research should be need-based;
2. Scientific quality, suitable methods
3. The research project generates innovative solutions and new knowledge for impact, systemic change and scaling;
4. Qualifications and complementary expertise of consortium members, adequate distribution of tasks and shared responsibility, partnership approach and involvement of relevant stakeholders in all project stages.
5. Proposal demonstrates gender sensitivity (including gender balance in the project team), intersectionality and social inclusion and how these will be ensured throughout the project.

The evaluation of the full proposals consists of the five criteria above (1-5) plus the additional one below (6):

6. Proposal has an explicit and realistic theory of change, a clear Logical Framework contributing to the programme objectives, and a scale up strategy.

# 6 Organisation

## 6.1 Review Panel

An independent Review Panel, composed of experts from science and practice, is responsible for the evaluation of the pre-proposals and full proposals.

**International experts**

- Dr. Marjolein Dieleman, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Dr. Frank Eyhorn, Independent Consultant, Associate Advisor Helvetas, Switzerland
- Selina Haeny, UBS Optimus Foundation, Switzerland
- Dr. Karuna Onta, Independent Consultant, Nepal
- Prof. Priti Parikh, University College London, UK
- Dr. Smita Premchander, Sampark, Amhmedabad, Gujarat, India
- Dr. Bernadette Resurrección, Queens University, Canada
- Prof. Leon Tikly, University of Bristol, UK

**SDC delegate**

- Dr. Manfred Kaufmann, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland
- Dr. Jonathan Demenge, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Switzerland

**SNSF delegate, member of the Research Council**

Prof. Dr. Martin Lengwiler, University of Basel, Switzerland (Panel chair)

## 6.2 Contact persons and technical support

For questions concerning the submission and evaluation procedure for pre-proposals and full proposals, please contact SOR4D programme manager, Dr. Cornelia Hett and Dr. Philipp Walch, sor4d@snf.ch, 031 308 2490.

SOR4D programme website: https://www.sor4d.ch. For specific questions, please also consult the FAQ section on the SOR4D website.

For questions on financial matters (salaries and eligible costs), please contact the Head of Finances Thematic Research, Roman Sollberger, roman.sollberger@snf.ch, 031 308 2105 or 031 308 22 22.

Hotline for technical help with mySNF and electronic submissions:

Tel. + 41 31 308 22 99 (Français)
Tel. + 41 31 308 22 00 (Deutsch)
Tel. + 41 31 308 22 88 (English)

mySNF website: www.mysnf.ch
SNSF website: www.snf.ch
mySNF support portal: SNF Service Portal

# 7 Annexes

Annex A: Template CV non-academic actor

Annex B: Template for pre-proposal project plan

Annex C: Template for full proposal project plan *(full proposal only)*

Annex D: Guidelines for designing a Theory of Change *(full proposal only)*

Annex E: Template Theory of Change *(full proposal only)*

Annex F: Guidelines for designing a Logical Framework *(full proposal only)*

Annex G: Logical Framework *(full proposal only)*

# Annex A: Template CV non-academic actor

*This serves as a template of the CV for the SOR4D non-academic actors. Fill in the fields highlighted in grey. You may add or remove milestones in education and employment. The maximum length of the CV should not exceed two pages.*

First Name Family Name
Current position(s): Role XY

## Education

| Degree | Organisation | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Degree XY | Organisation XY | MM.YYYY - MM.YYYY<br>n year(s) n month(s) |
| Degree XY | Organisation XY | MM.YYYY - MM.YYYY<br>n year(s) n month(s) |

## Employment

| Role | Organisation | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Role XY | Organisation XY | MM.YYYY - MM.YYYY<br>n year(s) n month(s) |
| Role XY | Organisation XY | MM.YYYY - MM.YYYY<br>n year(s) n month(s) |
| Role XY | Organisation XY | MM.YYYY - MM.YYYY<br>n year(s) n month(s) |

*In the form of a narrative CV, explain in the following section "major achievements" your specific expertise relevant to the project. The information provided is part of the evaluation of the expertise of the project team.*

## Major achievements

Please provide at least one and maximally three major achievements.

# Annex B: Template for SOR4D pre-proposal project plan

*The pre-proposal must fulfil the following criteria for a successful submission:*

- *The project plan must be written in English,*
- *The project plan must **not exceed 5 (five) pages**, excluding cover page and bibliography,*
- *A minimum of point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing must be used,*
- *The project plan must **not contain any annexed documents**,*
- *The project plan must be submitted using this form through mySNF until the respective deadline of the call.*

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# Pre-proposal: Cover page

| | |
|---|---|
| **Corresponding applicant**<br>Name, First name | |
| **Co-applicant(s)**<br>Name, First name | |
| **Project title** | |

Please indicate the main thematic focus for your project:

- ☐ **Human development**
- ☐ **Sustainable economic development**
- ☐ **Climate and environment**
- ☐ **Peace and governance**

**Please list** five research outputs from third parties (not yours) considered relevant as stepping stones for the transdisciplinary research envisaged:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

## Project plan

### 1. Broader context, state of knowledge in the field, relevance and originality of the project

- Set out the contextual background and problem that your project will address. Explain the rationale for the country and/or context selection.
- Explain the need to perform transdisciplinary research on the topic you propose, related to the current national and international development debates and policies.
- Highlight the gap your research will bridge and the novelty of the topic, approach or method you propose.

### 2. Objectives, main research questions, methodology and envisaged impact

- Specify the objectives that you aim to achieve.
- Formulate the main research questions.
- Outline the methods by which the research process will be structured.
- Provide a short narrative describing the contribution the project can make to society and highlighting the impact envisioned by the project.

### 3. Implementation and stakeholder engagement

- Describe how project partners and relevant practitioners and the public (including end-users) will be involved in the project.
- Specify responsibilities within the transdisciplinary research team (cf. GRP-Alliance Guide for Global Research Partnerships).
- Describe the implementation and scaling envisaged.

### 4. Gender, intersectionality and equality

- Describe how gender, intersectionality and equality are addressed in your project

**Bibliography** – The references must be part of the document, but are not to be counted in the 5 page limit (cover page not counted).

# Annex C: Template for SOR4D full proposal project plan

*The submission of full proposals is upon invitation by the Review Panel only.*

*The project plan must fulfil the following criteria for a successful submission:*

- *The project plan must be written in English,*
- *The project plan must **not exceed 20 (twenty) pages**, including cover page, tables, illustrations, theory of change, logical framework and the list of references*
- *A minimum of point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing must be used,*
- *In general, the project plan **must not contain any annexed documents**,*
- *The project plan must be submitted using this form through mySNF until the respective deadline of the call*

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# Project plan: Full proposal

| | |
|---|---|
| **Corresponding applicant**<br>Name, First name | … |
| **Co-applicant(s)**<br>Name, First name | … |
| **Project title** | … |

## Project plan full proposal

### 1. Broader context, state of knowledge in the field, relevance and originality of the project

- Set out the contextual background and problem that your project will address. Explain the rationale for the country and/or context selection.
- Explain the need to perform transdisciplinary research on the topic you propose, related to the current national and international development debates and policies.
- Highlight the gap your research will bridge and the novelty of the topic, approach or method you propose.

### 2. Objectives, main research questions and methodology

- Specify the objectives that you aim to achieve and the potential impact of your project.
- Formulate the main research questions.
- Outline the methods by which the research process will be structured.

### 3. Implementation and stakeholder engagement

- Describe how project partners and relevant practitioners and the public (including end-users) will be involved in the project.
- Specify responsibilities within the transdisciplinary research team (cf. GRP-Alliance Guide for Global Research Partnerships).
- Outline the role of communication and dissemination and the interactions with target groups in your knowledge utilisation approach.
- Present your scale-up strategy

**4. Gender, intersectionality and equality**

- Describe how gender, intersectionality and equality are addressed in your project

**5. Timeframe and milestones**

- Indicate a schedule for the work to be carried out within the project.
- Highlight the most important milestones in the project duration.

**6. Theory of change and relevance for development (cf. Annex E)**

- Explain how results emerging from your project could contribute to solving problems or could provide concrete solutions in ODA recipient country contexts.
- Share your assumptions how results could be validated and valorised in policy or practice and/or upscaled to other contexts.

**7. Logical Framework (cf. Annex F)**

- Provide in an overview table the Logical Framework of your project (template below). Please make sure to use SMART indicators.

**8. Bibliography** (references must be part of the document and included in the 20-page limit).

# Annex D: Guidelines for designing a Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) and the Logical Framework are closely interconnected but complementary. The ToC explains the logic and assumptions behind how change happens because of a project, while the Logical Framework structures this logic into measurable objectives and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. The project plan of a SOR4D full proposal should describe each of them separately.

**What is a 'Theory of Change' about?**

A Theory of Change is a framework that describes how and why a particular activity, intervention or a project is expected to create change. It maps out the causal connections between activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, while making explicit the assumptions behind those connections. A ToC provides a roadmap for achieving transformative goals and helps stakeholders understand the steps needed, the conditions required, and the evidence that progress is being made.

Development impact takes place in many forms, for instance in real changes of people's knowledge, behaviours, practices, skills, decisions, livelihoods and institutions. The ToC describes how research seeks to contribute to a process that supports solving development challenges and improving the people's lives by strengthening sustainable (social, economic, *and* environmental) development. It should detail the activities which will help develop potential economic, societal, and environmental impacts.

A ToC is not expected to predict impact, but to describe the transformation that a project envisions, making it grounded in a sound logic model, thus encouraging researchers and development actors of a project consortium to explore the potential contribution that their transdisciplinary research can make to society by increasing the effectiveness of institutions, services, policy making and practice at the national, regional and global level, and the resources required to carry out appropriate and project specific activities.

**Conceptualising the link between activities/output and impact**

A project's ToC needs to be explicit in describing the logic on how the impact might be achieved to build long-term sustainable benefits for people living in poverty as well as for those who risk being left behind. The design of the *pathways to impact* should entail four inter-linked components:

*Outputs*

Outputs are the direct and measurable products of the project activities, for instance new data, new knowledge, workshops delivered, participants trained, or materials distributed. The outputs (and activities) are in the *Sphere of Control* of the project, where an organisation or a project can directly manage them. Taken together, outputs describe what the project produces as immediate results that are relevant for the envisioned transformation.

*Outcomes*

Outcomes are the short- to medium-term changes that result from the activities and outputs of a project. They capture shifts in knowledge, skills, behaviours, practices, or conditions among the people or systems targeted. For instance, participants may use new knowledge, apply new skills they learned,

organizations may adopt new policies, or communities may become more engaged in decision-making. The outcomes are part of the *Sphere of Influence* of the project, where they can be shaped and influenced by the project, but they cannot be controlled. Outcomes represent the meaningful changes that indicate progress toward broader goals.

*Impact*

Impact is the long-term, sustained change that occurs at a broader level as a result of the outcomes achieved. It often relates to systemic improvements in social, economic, environmental, or health conditions, such as reduced poverty, improved public health, or preserved environment. Impact reflects the ultimate vision of the project and the change it seeks to make. Impact is part of the *Sphere of Interest* and is typically more difficult to measure directly because it emerges over time and is influenced by multiple factors.

*Causal assumptions*

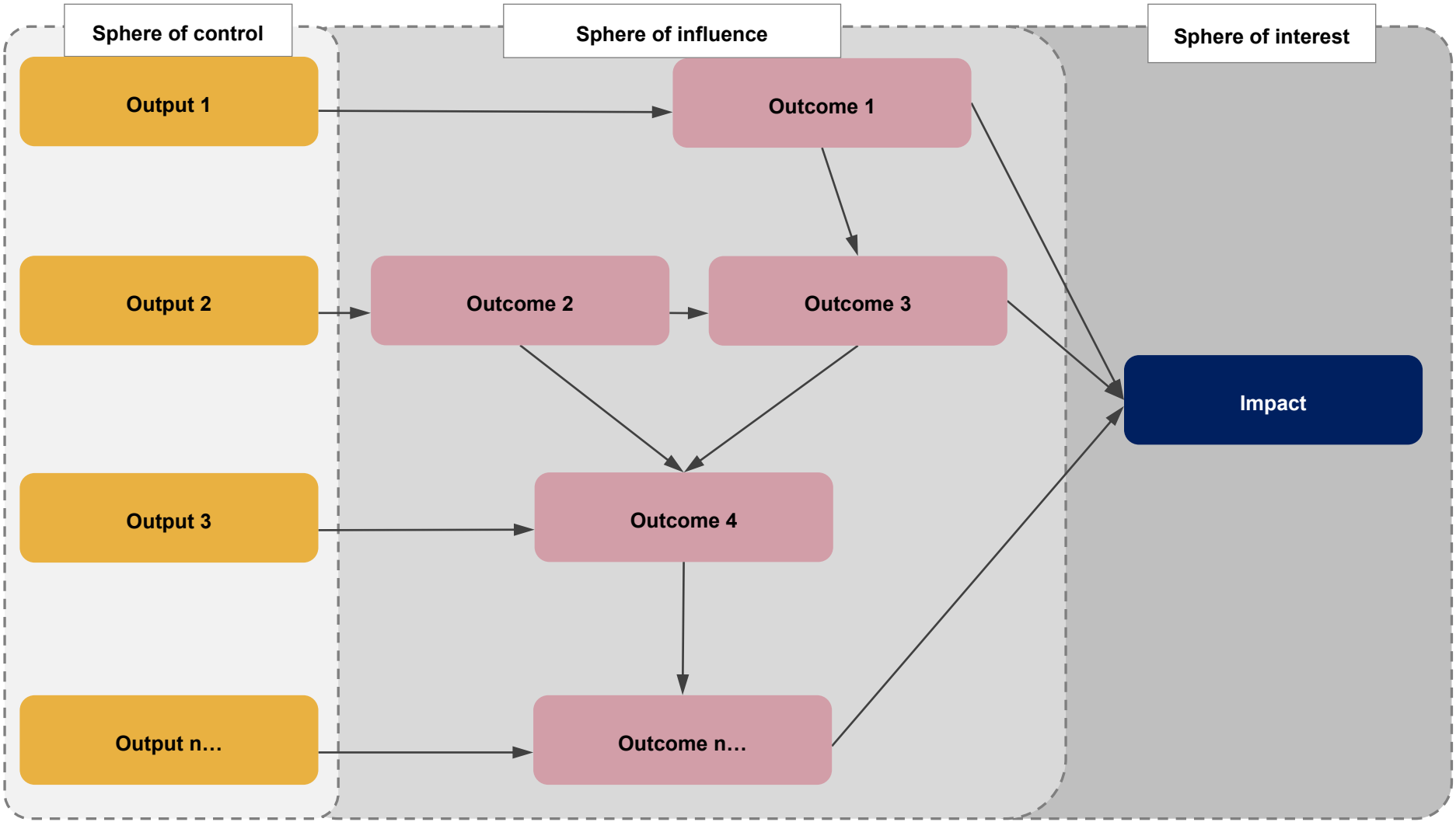
Causal assumptions are the links connecting the changes that a project seeks to make, explaining how and why activities and outputs will lead to outcomes, and how those outcomes will contribute to long-term impacts. These links explain the conditions that need to be in place and the reasons for change to happen. They do not have to be “proven”, but should be supported by reasoning. By making these assumptions explicit, a theory of change highlights the risks, potential hurdles (or accelerators), dependencies, and contextual factors that influence the change the project seeks to achieve, helping to test and refine their approach over time.

**Online resources about theory of change**:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYfSwXfVjw0

https://naturalsciences.ch/co-producing-knowledge-explained/methods/td-net_toolbox/theory_of_change

## Annex E: Template Theory of Change



# Annex F: Guidelines for designing a Logical Framework

### What is a Logical Framework?

The Logical Framework approach is a systematic approach to present the logic of a strategy and to guide its subsequent management, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that intended results / objectives have the greatest opportunity of being achieved.

A Logical Framework is an explicit articulation (matrix, or summary) of results / objectives expected from a particular intervention – project (e.g. research project), programme, or development strategy. The Logical Framework captures the essential elements of the logical and expected cause-effect relationships among inputs, outputs, immediate and intermediate outcomes, and impact.

Defining cause-effect linkages for an intervention (e.g. research project) lays the groundwork for a Logical Framework. Thus, the development of a good Logical Framework requires clarity with respect to the Theory of Change – the reasons why a project will lead to the outputs; why those outputs are likely to lead to the immediate or intermediate outcomes; and how those outcomes are (at least hypothetically) linked with longer-term outcomes or impact. The Theory of Change also requires knowing or estimating how long it will take to achieve each stage of the programme and how much of the outcome is likely to be achieved.

### What is a Logical Framework used for?

A Logical Framework is both a planning and management/monitoring tool, with additional benefits in terms of communication and reporting.

**Planning**. Using the Logical Framework approach can help you identify appropriate objectives by ensuring that important questions are asked and answered at an early stage (e.g. “can objectives be measured? If not, are they appropriate? What will be sufficient to achieve the goal/objectives? What assumptions is the strategy relying on?”). It also provides a framework for collaborative work between different types of partners (e.g. academics, development actors) for building shared ownership of objectives and approaches.

**Management/Monitoring/Review**. A Logical Framework can fill the role of a performance framework for a project strategy. It provides a project-level framework to monitor progress towards the achievement of results and, if necessary, to adjust activities accordingly. Reviews and other more comprehensive project-level assessments should be more straightforward and effective as the Logical Framework provides a rigorous structure through which a strategy’s performance can be tested.

**Communication and reporting**. In defining a project’s or programme’s causal relationships, a Logical Framework acts as a vehicle for communicating about the resources, activities, and outcomes to project staff (e.g. research team) and target groups. These frameworks can be an important tool in illustrating to the beneficiaries or community what a project is meant to achieve.

**Learning from experience**. Over time, the systematic use of Logical Frameworks allows researchers and practitioners to assess what approaches or interventions contribute most effectively to achieving specific solution-oriented research and development objectives, a process that helps identify good practices for replication. A body of knowledge also forms regarding which indicators, measures, and data sources are best suited to monitoring progress in similar contexts.

**What are SMART indicators?**

**Specific.** The indicator has to be specific. It must be able to be translated into operational terms and made visible. While the outcome/output itself can be broad, the indicator should be narrow and focus on the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of the intervention. Additionally, ‘how’ and ‘where’ the ‘who’ is doing the ‘what’ is important to include in the indicator as it provides the action for the intervention.

**Measurable.** The indicator should be measurable, that is, it has the capacity to be counted, observed, analyzed, tested, or challenged. If one cannot measure an indicator, then progress cannot be determined. How will one know if the outcome has been achieved? Once an indicator is clear and specific, they can be measured in numerous ways; almost any indicator is in one way or another, measurable.

**Attainable.** The indicator is achievable if the performance target accurately specifies the amount or level of what is to be measured in order to meet the output/outcome. The indicator should be achievable both as a result of the program and as a measure of realism. The target attached to the indicator should be achievable.

**Relevant.** An indicator must be relevant. It should be a valid measure of the output/outcome and be linked through research and professional expertise. There is no reason to create an indicator which does not relate to the larger outcome. The indicator should be meaningful and important to the outcome to certify that the results are actually showing a related impact. Broad outcomes/outputs can and should have numerous specific and applicable indicators through which progress can be assessed. An indicator is relevant to the extent that it captures or measures a facet of the outcome that it is intended to measure. The best way to think about relevance is to ensure that there is a relationship between what the indicator measures and the theories that help create the outcomes for the client, program, or system.

**Time bound.** The indicator is attached to a time frame. The indicator should state when it will be measured. If there is no time included on when to measure the indicator, how will anyone know if and when there is a output/outcome?

**Key elements of the Logical Framework**

| **Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention:** | **Key Indicators (including target values and baseline)** | **Sources & Means of Verification** | **Assumptions & Risks (External Factors)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Definition:<br><br>**The strategy of intervention defines the hierarchy of objectives and follows the logic of the results chain.** | Definition:<br><br>Features which can be measured or at least described precisely in terms of quantity and quality respectively and which show a change in situation.<br><br>*Hints:*<br><br>Indicators measure whether the results on each level (impact, outcome, output) are achieved.<br><br>Indicators include **targets** and require **baselines** to assess progress.<br><br>The need to disaggregate indicators and baselines by other criteria (such as age, social and economic status etc.) depends on objectives and targeting. | Definition:<br><br>**Sources refer to relevant data/ information on results and to the documents where this information is to be found.**<br><br>**Means of verification refer to methods to collect these data/information.**<br><br>*Hints:*<br><br>The timely availability and quality of information on the achievement of results are important criteria when defining indicators.<br><br>When having several indicators for the same result level, sources and means of verification should be clearly attributed to the specific indicators. | Definition:<br><br>**Assumptions and risks are conditions which could affect the progress of the project, but which are not under direct control of project management.**<br><br>An *assumption* is a ***positive*** statement of a condition that must be met for the project's objectives to be achieved.<br><br>A *risk* is a ***negative*** statement of a condition that might prevent the project's objectives from being achieved.<br><br>*Hint: Information on risks as well as their management are part of the project document.* |

# Annex G: Logical Framework (fill in and remove the instructions)

| **Impact (goal)** | **Impact Indicators** | **Sources and Means of Verification** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Definition:<br><br>**The highest-level change that can be reasonably attributed to a research project, an organisation, policy or programme in a causal manner, and are the consequences of intermediate outcomes. The ultimate outcomes take the form of a sustainable change of state among beneficiaries.**<br><br>Scope of project management:<br><br>The achievement of the development objective lies outside the direct reach of the project and depends on the assumptions formulated at outcome level. However, outcomes of the project/programme should represent a relevant contribution to it. | *Hint:*<br><br>*Impact indicators are essentially used during evaluations and for project monitoring.* | *Hints:*<br><br>*On impact level, sources and means of verification are usually beyond the scope of project management.*<br><br>*Information depends on documents of others, are based on national or international data bases or may result from joint evaluations.* | No assumptions and risks are defined at this level |
| **Outcomes** (Project objectives) | **Outcome Indicators** | **Outcome**<br>**Means of Verification** | **Outcome**<br>**Assumptions & Risks** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Definition:<br><br>**The short or medium term effects (=changes in quality and quantity) expected from the outputs of the project**<br>Scope of project management:<br><br>The attainment of outcomes is primarily dependent on the project outputs, but depends also on factors beyond the project's control.<br><br>Monitoring of outcomes is part of project management.<br><br>*Hints:*<br><br>*It is useful to distinguish between immediate and intermediate outcomes. The number of outcomes has to be limited to **2-3 outcomes.*** | Definition:<br><br>**Variable that allows the verification of changes at the outcome level or shows results relative to what was planned.**<br><br>*Hints:*<br><br>*Keep the number of outcome indicators limited: as few as possible, as many as necessary to assess intended changes.*<br><br>*Outcome indicators are used for monitoring and evaluations.* | | *Hint:*<br><br>*To ensure a proper vertical logic, it is essential to attribute assumptions to the corresponding level of intervention. In this box the assumptions at outcome level which are relevant for achieving the intended impact need to be stated.* |
| …<br>… | …<br>… | …<br>… | …<br>… |
| **Outputs: project deliveries per outcome and costs** | **Output Indicators** | **Output<br>Means of Verification** | **Output<br>Assumptions & Risks** |
| Definition:<br><br>**Products, methods and services produced or competences and capacities established directly as a result of activities of the research project.**<br><br>Scope of project management: | Definition:<br><br>**Quantitative or qualitative variable that allows the verification of changes at the output level or shows results relative to what was planned.**<br><br>*Hint:* | | *Hint:*<br><br>*Formulate assumptions at output level which are relevant for achieving the project's objective(s).* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Outputs are under the control / responsibility of project management. | *Output indicators are used during monitoring and evaluation.* | | |
| …<br>… | …<br>… | …<br>… | …<br>… |