

## **A FUNDING MECHANISM FOR FIELDWORK GRANTS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

### **GENERAL**

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland allocates funds to support academic research in the context of the bilaterally-funded rural development programmes in some countries. This support will be in the form of small fieldwork grants to BSc, MSc and PhD -level students conducting studies that support the planning and implementation of the selected rural development programmes. The main objectives of these fieldwork grants are:

- ❖ Producing academic research results for the use of MFA funded rural development programmes and Finland's Partner Countries in the field of rural development
- ❖ Strengthening Finnish students' knowledge and practical experience of rural development in developing countries.
- ❖ Strengthening the Partner Country students' knowledge and practical experience of rural development as well as supporting their academic work
- ❖ Facilitating and strengthening linkages between the rural development programmes and local academic institutions
- ❖ Raising awareness among Finnish universities and other higher educational institutions about developing countries and their rural development and promoting scientific linkages between Finnish and developing country universities, polytechnics and practitioners

The Fieldwork Grants are aimed to students and higher educational institutions of the Partner Country and Finland. The Grants will facilitate BSc, MSc and PhD –level students to carry out fieldwork in a designated rural development programme. The recommended length for the fieldwork in the programme area is about 3 months. The Grant should result in a fieldwork report, including findings, written in English and delivered to the programme, and also eventually lead to an academic dissertation on a topic that will directly benefit the planning, implementation or monitoring of the rural development programmes.

The Grant is a lump sum, which is supposed to cover all the costs of the travel and fieldwork such as health, insurance, international and local travel, interpretation, meals and simple accommodation. The student is responsible for the practical arrangements, such as travel, visa and insurances. The amount of the Grant for Finnish students is 5000 Euros. The size of the Grant for students in Partner Countries will be decided by the Steering Committee of the each rural development programme, because conditions vary from one country to other.

The Grant can be incorporated into long-term, multiphase rural development programmes. The academic work will result in in-depth studies on relevant issues that otherwise would not be possible to cover within the scope of the rural development programme and the technical assistance provided.

The studies conducted by students and supported by the Grant will not replace baseline studies or other urgent studies required by the programmes, but will complement the information and knowledge that the programme is able to produce itself.

## MANAGEMENT OF GRANTS

1. Funds for the Grants are earmarked in the programme budget. MFA informs the rural development programme and the consulting company responsible for the programme management about the Grant, required procedures and the amount of funds earmarked for the purpose.
2. The rural development programme management structure such as Project Management Team (PMT) will consider research topics based on the needs and interests of the programme. It decides whether the fieldwork topic is more suitable for Partner Countries or Finnish universities. The PMT will also make contact with potential local universities or research institutes to discuss possible collaboration, to establish whether they have interest in the topic and a possible suitable supervisor (the principle supervisor is from the student's own institute).
3. The PMT submits a Study request (Annex 1) to the Steering Committee to assess the need and relevance of the study.
4. Based on the approval of the Steering Committee, the PMT will submit the Study request to desk officer in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs who will disseminate information on the Study request on MFA's internet pages. When request is aimed at Partner Country's students, it is published in internet pages of the Embassy of Finland.
5. Interested Finnish students will submit a draft research proposal based on the Study request to the home office coordinator in the responsible consulting company. The home office coordinator will compile the proposals from Finland and forward them to the PMT. Partner countries' students will submit the proposal the PMT of the rural development programme.  

The research proposal, max.5 pages, shall be supplemented with a motivation letter, a CV, and a support statement from the supervising professor/teacher. One professor or teacher can support only one student/study request for each study request.
6. The PMT and Steering Committee will screen the proposals (e.g. their relevance, realism, approach, methodology) and select the most feasible proposal(s) and make justifications for rejected applications. PMT/Steering Committee may request the student to modify or clarify the selected proposal, if necessary.
7. PMT sends the Steering Committee's proposal for selection to the desk officer in MFA. The desk officer will process the decision and prepare a decision on government grant and forward the decision to the home office coordinator in the consulting company with the mandate to proceed with the implementation arrangements.
8. Upon receipt of a final research plan of the selected Finnish candidate the consulting company pays the first instalment (4000 euros) of the lump sum. The second instalment (1000 euros) of the lump sum is paid on submission of fieldwork report. The Partner Country's candidate payment arrangement will be decided by the Programme Management Team.
9. The PMT will fulfil their responsibilities (Annex 2) and the student will conduct the work.
10. The student commits to submitting a fieldwork report including preliminary findings to the programme management unit within two months from the end of fieldwork, as well as to submitting the BSc/MSc/PhD dissertation in electronic form after finalizing the academic work.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The Fieldwork Grant will be assessed after being operational approximately for two years. It is necessary to analyse the mechanism from at least from two perspectives. The first one will be the mechanism as such, e.g. the efficiency and smoothness of the operations, roles and responsibilities of the parties involved, and whether any adjustments are required for continuing the work. The second issue will deal with relevance from both the Partner Countries' and Finnish students' and institutions' as well as the participating rural development programmes' viewpoint. The assessment is also expected to include concrete recommendations for necessary amendments to improve the performance of the research grant mechanism.

## **ANNEX 1. STUDY REQUEST BY THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

The study request form should include at least the following issues:

1. Description of the programme - background
2. Objective
3. Proposed research questions and their relevance from the programme viewpoint and proposal for study level (BSc/MSc/PhD)
4. Duration of the study and proposed fieldwork
5. Academic field
6. Proposed schedule and duration
7. Indication of the cost level in the field, such as accommodation, meals, interpretation services, travel
8. Description of the logistical and other support the project is able to offer (mentoring, transportation, etc)
9. Field station
10. Tutor's name, title and contact details
11. Home Office Coordinator's name and contact details
12. Deadline for research proposal submission

## **ANNEX 2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RECEIVING PROGRAMME**

The assistance each programme can provide to the student will vary case by case. It is thus fundamental that the available support is clearly defined in the study request.

The recommendation is that the programme staff should deliver at least the following:

1. A tutor, who has participated in the formulation of the study request, for matters regarding the study, including answering to questions about practical arrangements
2. Definition of the most appropriate timing and schedule of the fieldwork from the programme viewpoint
3. Documentation about the programme prior to arrival
4. Letters of introduction
5. Contacts to local authorities and stakeholders
6. Support in arranging accommodation and local transport (not necessarily at the cost of the programme)
7. Provision of information on the security situation
8. Comments on the final fieldwork report

The programme is not obliged to provide accommodation, office equipment, a desk or transportation to the student, if it will jeopardize the service delivery to the programme. However, the student should be informed of this prior to arrival.