3

RSS STEP 3

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

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THE RSS FIELD GUIDES

RSS 1.	Preparation and Scoping
RSS 2.a	Risk Assessment (Pillar 1)
RSS 2.b	Needs Assessment (Pillar 2)
RSS 3.	**Developing an Action Plan**
RSS 4.	Implementation and Documentation
RSS 5.	Monitoring and Review

3

RSS Step 3: Developing an action plan

During RSS Steps 1 and 2 you collected a range of information about risks and needs among your smallholder supply base. You should now also have a good idea of the stakeholders to involve in implementation. Step 3 brings this information together to develop an action plan for implementing RSS to help achieve your objectives.

The objective of developing an action plan is to:

- Finalise and adapt, if needed, the objectives, scope and timeframe for implementing RSS
- Plan the implementation of risk mitigation measures
- Plan activities to address the smallholders' needs for support
- Set aside the resources needed for implementing RSS

Contents

1.	Preparation	1 - 2
2.	Developing the action plan	2 - 4
3.	Approval	4
Annex 1	Initial risk assessment: Guidance for collecting baseline information and preparing consultation	5

1. Preparation

1.1. Review outputs from Step 2

In RSS Step 2.a and 2.b you identified the most important risks associated with performance of your smallholder supply base against the core sustainability issues, and the main needs for support expressed by smallholders and their representatives. You also looked into the significance of those risks and prioritised farmer needs for support.

Compile the information you collected in Steps 1 and 2 and provide an overview of the results, summarising the gaps you identified by comparing information collected on risks and needs with desired results. Present the gaps identified in a clear overview which is ready to share and consult with others.

1.2. Verify available budget

The actions you can undertake to address the gaps will depend on the financial and human resources you have. Therefore, prior to developing the actual action plan in consultation with stakeholders, it is important you review the initial resources allocated (in Step 1) against the gaps identified during the risk and needs assessment (Step 2). You should ensure and confirm there is clear senior commitment in your organisation on the total available resources to implement the action plan.

1.3. Consult stakeholders and staff

To develop the overall action plan to control the gaps, you'll need to consult key stakeholders and staff. They can provide useful feedback and different perspectives, and can help you decide which areas to prioritise and what actions to take.

An effective way to consult is to arrange one or more workshops with your key stakeholders (or your Advisory Group if you have one) and key staff from within your organisation. During the workshop:

- Summarise the risk and needs assessment processes for anyone who wasn't involved.
- Present the results of the risk and needs assessments, including the priorities that you have identified (high/medium risks and high/medium importance needs).
- Seek feedback on the validity of this prioritisation; re-prioritise if necessary.
- Confirm and seek feedback on the expected result you aim to achieve through the action plan.
- Highlight any constraints on your resources to implement RSS, including financial, human and time resources, referencing the timeline you have in mind for the implementation of the action plan.
- Ask participants to suggest ways of addressing the priority risks and needs. If possible, identify activities and who will implement them.

- Find out whether and how stakeholders can and are willing to help in implementing activities.
- Verify that the allocation of resources between risk mitigation and support activities is appropriate.

A note about 'you'

Throughout the RSS field guides we refer to 'you'. In reality 'you' is the person who is responsible for making this particular step of the RSS framework happen. This may be someone who works directly within the Implementing Entity ('your organisation'), or someone who is hired in or is working on behalf of your organisation. Although responsibility for implementating parts of RSS may be delegated, the overall responsibility to make RSS happen remains with the lead person.

2. Developing the action plan

Based on the results of Step 2, and the consultation you carried out with key stakeholders and staff (Section 1.3 above), start to develop the RSS action plan.

A small support programme with limited resources will clearly require only a simple plan. A larger support programme with various organisations involved in implementation requires more detailed plans.

The action plan should include the following components:

1. Gaps identified:

Clearly set out each of the gaps that you aim to address through RSS. These are gaps related both to performance of the farmer supply base against the core sustainability issues and to farmer support needs. Use input from the consultation process or workshop in addition to information collected in Step 2.

2. Timeframe:

Over how long will different activities be implemented? Although you will probably have long- and short-term objectives, it is helpful to keep the action plan focused on the shorter term, covering a maximum of one year. You may want to set different timeframes for risk mitigation and smallholder support measures.

3. Expected results:

To decide on what activity to undertake to address the gaps you identified, it is important that you have in mind what you want to achieve as the end result. Think about what you want to accomplish with each activity. How will this help achieve your expected result and the RSS objectives?

4. Activities:

What will your organisation need to undertake to achieve the expected end results; and what activities can you expect others to undertake in order to address each of the risks and needs? Be as specific as possible and describe: what you'll do; where; when; for how long; for who; with who? What can others do?

5. Implementation team:

Who will do what, both within your organisation and among external organisations (e.g. NGO, government, partner, contracted service provider)? Who is responsible for the overall delivery of each activity (especially when partner organisations are responsible for implementation)? Make sure you agree on clear roles and responsibilities with all parties involved in implementation.

Things you want to consider when you decide on the implementation team include:

- Stakeholders: who else is likely to have an interest, or be affected by the actions you plan to take? How do you involve or link up with them in implementation?
- Similar initiatives and activities: are there any ongoing or similar activities that can you can link up or collaborate with to achieve your desired result?

6. Monitoring plan:

Monitoring your activities will help you keep track of progress made towards achieving your desired result. To ensure monitoring is implemented you need to plan for it as part of your action plan. When planning for monitoring consider the following:

- What? – Decide on an indicator and what you want to monitor to track progress. The indicator should relate to the desired outcome of the action plan.
- Who? – It is important to decide who has responsibility to monitor each indicator. For example: farmers, the company, external actors, local NGOs.
- What form? – Decide on the method and measure for data collection. Examples of methods are: questionnaires, surveys, workshops and interviews.
- When? – The timeframe for monitoring will differ depending on indicator measured. Decide on a suitable frequency for monitoring each indicator.
- Resources – Make sure that you also allocate resources for the final analysis of the data (review as described in RSS Field Guide 5).

7. Resources:

Allocate the resources you'll need for each activity that is part of your action plan, including both financial costs and human resource costs. If you prefer to not specify costs in too much detail and for each individual activity at this stage, you can alternatively allocate resources across each core sustainability area and key area of support identified for Pillars 1 and 2.

The project plan template in **Annex 1 provides some guidance** for developing the action plan. This suggests developing separate action plans for mitigating risks and supporting smallholders in order to maintain clarity about activities related to the two pillars of RSS. If activities contribute to both, include them in both tables.

For the purpose of documentation and communication, overall information on RSS objectives, scope, timeframe and resources can be contained in a shared narrative.

Hints and tips

Expected results

Elements you should consider when you define expected results include:

- Objectives: during the preparation and scoping (RSS Step 1) you defined objectives for using RSS. Verify based on the results of the risk and needs assessments (Step 2) if these objectives are still valid and feasible with the resources available in your timeframe. Ensure your objectives include both the risks related to the minimum core issues highlighted in RSS Pillar 1; and the support for smallholders in Pillar 2.
- Scope: the results of the risk and needs assessment present areas with high, medium and low risk/ priority. These results should help you define and prioritise the target group(s) for whom you aim to provide support. You can define target groups by geographical area or as communities, smallholder type, gender, as migrant or permanent workers, etc.
- Target group: who needs to benefit from the activity, whose behaviour is it that you would like to change?

3. Approval

You will need to ensure that senior management in your organisation approves the final RSS action plan and agrees to dedicate the appropriate resources to implementation. Remind them of the reasons for implementing RSS, and if possible, refer back to the initial steps you took (RSS Step 1) to get support and buy-in from senior management.

Depending on how you agreed to engage with and consult stakeholders on RSS, you may also seek approval of the final action plan from those stakeholders (or Advisory Group if you have one).

Support Needs Action Plan - Timeline for implementation: from _____ to _____					
1st Gap/ Support need identified *Describe the capacity gap or need for support as identified in Step 2b*	**1st Planned support activity** Describe the proposed activity for support and how it addresses the need identified Consider: • What you will do and how this will meet the identified need? • Who needs this support? • Where/area to implement the activity	**Implementation team** Decide with whom you will work to implement the activity. What is expertise and availability of resources within your own organisation? Which organisations and persons can assist to implement the proposed activity? Agree on clear roles and responsibilities	**Timeframe to implement activity** Decide by when you plan to deliver the support activity.	**Monitoring activity** Decide how you will control and monitor implementation of the activity. You need to: • Decide on Indicator(s) for the successful delivery of this activity • Assign responsibilities for monitoring against these indicators	**Budget/Resources** Define and allocate total budget or resources required to implement this activity This should include resources for monitoring and review of the monitoring results (Step 5 RSS) **Note: you can also decide to allocate the budget related to the expected result**
	2nd Planned support activity to address this need (if appropriate) As above	As above	As above	As above	
	3rd Planned support activity to address this need (if appropriate) As above	As above	As above	As above	
	Expected end result of support for this 1st gap identified Describe what you aim to achieve in terms of addressing the gap/need at the end of this initial implementation period.		**Timeframe to achieve results** When do you aim to achieve this result?	**Monitoring results** How will you monitor progress on achievement of this result, including • Indicator(s) for the successful delivery of expected result Responsibilities for monitoring against these indicators • Allocation of resources for monitoring	

Support Needs Action Plan - Timeline for implementation: from _____ to _____					
2nd Gap/support need identified Describe the capacity gap and need for support as identified in Step 2b.	**1st Planned support activity**	**Implementation team**	**Timeframe to implement activity**	**Monitoring activity**	**Budget/Resources**
	2nd Planned support activity *Etc. (add activities if appropriate)*	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Expected end result of support for this 2nd gap identified		**Timeframe to achieve results**	**Monitoring results**	
3rd Gap/support need identified	**1st Planned support activity**	**Implementation team**	**Timeframe to implement activity**	**Monitoring activity**	**Budget/Resources**
	2nd Planned Support activity				
	Expected end result of support for this 3rd gap identified		**Timeframe to achieve results**	**Monitoring results**	
Add Gaps/Support needs as appropriate					

Risk Mitigation Action Plan - Timeline for implementation: from _____ to _____					
1st Risk identified Describe the specific gap in performance or risk as identified in Step 2b	**1st Planned activity to mitigate this risk** Describe the proposed activity to help mitigate the risk and how it addresses the risk identified Consider: What you will do and how this will meet the identified need Who needs to be participate? Where to implement the activity	**Implementation team** Decide with whom you will work to implement this risk mitigation activity. What is expertise and availability of resources within your own organisation? Which organisations and persons can assist to implement the proposed activity? Agree on clear roles and responsibilities	**Timeframe to implement activity** Decide by when you plan to deliver this risk mitigation activity.	**Monitoring activity** Decide how you will control and monitor implementation of this risk mitigation activity. You need to: • Decide on Indicator(s) for the successful delivery of this activity • Assign responsibilities for monitoring against these indicators	**Budget/Resources** Define and allocate a total budget or resources required to implement this risk mitigation activity This should include resources for monitoring and review of the monitoring results (Step 5 RSS) **Note: you can also decide to allocate the budget related to the expected result instead of at activity level**
	2nd Planned activity to mitigate this risk (if appropriate) As above	As above	As above	As above	
	3rd Planned activity to mitigate this risk (if appropriate) As above	As above	As above	As above	
	Expected end result of risk mitigation activities for this 1st risk identified Describe what you aim to achieve in terms of addressing and controlling this risk		**Timeframe to achieve results** When do you aim to achieve this result?	**Monitoring results** How will you monitor progress on achievement of this result, including • Indicator(s) for successful delivery of expected result/mitigation of the risk identified Responsibilities for monitoring against these indicator. • Allocation of resources for monitoring	

Risk Mitigation Action Plan - Timeline for implementation: from _____ to _____					
2nd Gap/risk identified Describe the capacity gap and risk as identified in Step 2b	**1st Planned risk mitigation activity**	**Implementation team**	**Timeframe to implement activity**	**Monitoring activity**	**Budget/Resources**
	2nd Planned risk mitigation activity *Etc. (add activities if appropriate)*	As above	As above	As above	As above
	Expected end result of risk mitigation for this 2nd gap identified		**Timeframe to achieve results**	**Monitoring results**	
3rd Gap/risk identified	**1st Planned risk mitigation activity**	**Implementation team**	**Timeframe to implement activity**	**Monitoring activity**	**Budget/Resources**
	2nd Proposed risk mitigation activity				
	Expected end result of risk mitigation for this 3rd gap identified		**Timeframe to achieve results**	**Monitoring results**	
Add Gaps/risks identified as appropriate					