USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity

Request for Applications (RFA)
Organizational Capacity Strengthening Grants

Issued on: March 17, 2021
Proposal submission date: April 12, 2021
Closing Time: 5:00 pm, Kampala time
RfA Number: 3031-2021-001

The USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA) invites eligible Ugandan umbrella and individual civil society organizations (CSOs) to apply for Organizational Capacity Strengthening (OCS) grants.

Issuance of this RfA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of EWMI, nor does it commit EWMI to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. In addition, final award of any agreement cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed by USAID. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for award. Further, EWMI reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Grant Awards: CSSA plans to award up to 4 grants under this RfA. The maximum grant award for each proposal is USD 50,000. Grant funds may be used only for activities as described in this RfA.

Period of Performance: The grant award under this RfA will be funded for up to 12 months, depending on performance and availability of funds. The estimated time frame for this subgrant is from May 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022. CSSA anticipates providing assistance to support the selected 4 CSOs over a period of 30 months to deliver activities worth approximately $50,000 per year, for each organization. The selected CSOs will be assessed at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 and the decision to continue will be based on its performance in the previous year.

Section I – Program Description

A. BACKGROUND

CSSA is a five-year Activity implemented by East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI), in partnership with Uganda’s Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA), the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), and Common Ground Consulting (CGC). USAID/Uganda CSSA is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

CSSA supports the capacity strengthening of Ugandan CSOs to influence and contribute to improved development outcomes in four thematic areas: 1) health, with particular attention paid to achieving Uganda’s HIV/AIDS’ reduction goals; 2) education, youth, and child development; 3) agriculture with particular focus on food security; and 4) democracy, rights,
and governance. CSSA prioritizes support for umbrella and individual CSOs implementing activities at the national level, or/and in twelve districts in Uganda: Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nwoya, Gulu, Lamwo, Lira, Omoro, Masindi, Mbarara, Rubirizi, and Kampala.

EWMI’s approach to implementing CSSA emphasizes: (i) local ownership of CSSA’s interventions and initiatives; (ii) building the capacity of CSOs and investing in their sustainability; and (iii) utilizing Uganda’s local expertise and resources. CSSA’s Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Guidelines lead CSSA staff and partners’ work, while CSSA’s Giving Rise to Uganda’s Indigenous Direction and Experience (GUIDE) Program will invest in the leadership of women, youth, and CSOs outside Kampala.

CSSA implements activities through three components:

**Under Component One: Strengthen the advocacy capacity of CSOs to influence national and local development**, CSSA supports national and regional advocacy umbrella and individual CSOs to become leaders in advocating for reforms in CSSA’s four thematic areas and enhance their capacity to engage citizens and other stakeholders, strengthen their advocacy and institutional capacity, and building organizational resilience.

**Under Component Two: Improve the organizational capacity of advocacy and service-delivery oriented CSOs to sustainably fulfill their stated missions**, CSSA supports umbrella and individual CSOs at national, regional and district levels that engage in advocacy or deliver services in CSSA’s four thematic areas through capacity development assistance and grant awards.

**Under Component Three: Promote a more supporting and enabling environment that sustains a vibrant civil society**, CSSA supports: (i) CSOs and government of Uganda (GoU) institutions to promote an enabling environment for civil society in Uganda; and (ii) CSOs to ensure increased levels of funding by the private sector and citizens.

### B. OBJECTIVE

The Organizational Capacity Strengthening (OCS) grant will support CSOs to invest in strengthening their organization capacity so that they can effectively fulfill their mission, expand their constituencies, engage constructively with a wide range of stakeholders, including public institutions, and strengthen transparency and accountability of their operations.

Through this RFA the CSSA seeks to support CSO networks and individual CSOs that: (i) are leaders in their field, specifically within the CSSA’s four thematic areas; (ii) have a clear vision and have a proven track record of successful implementation of their strategy; (iii) might be mid-way to becoming leaders in their focus area, but have demonstrated a clear direction of their development goals, priorities, and beneficiaries; and (iv) are committed to invest in their organizational strengthening as a priority strategy for fulfilling the CSO networks’ or CSO’s mission.

### C. SCOPE OF WORK

The OCS grants will be implemented as a partnership between CSSA and the grantees. Through a pool of local and international experts, CSSA will provide organizational capacity development assistance to the selected CSO networks or CSOs, and through the OSC grant CSSA will provide funding for the grantee’s organizational strengthening activities.

As a first step, the selected CSOs networks or CSOs will conduct an organizational capacity self-assessment that would be facilitated by CSSA’s organizational development experts. The
self-assessment will include, but will not be limited to examining, for example, funding sources, use of participatory planning, internal governance, strategic planning, human resources management, internal and external communication tools and practices, use of ICT for organizational and programmatic purposes, organization accountability mechanisms, and so forth.

Depending on the results of the organizational capacity assessment (OCA), CSSA will work with each grantee to develop an organizational capacity development plan (CDPs) that will outline steps that the CSSA and the CSO will take to address the organizational capacity and performance gaps.

The OCS grant will support activities that serve to implement the CDPs. This could include: developing or updating the strategic plan; developing, implementing, and monitoring internal systems and policies; staff training; training of network members; network meetings; in-country exchange visits; participation in regional and national events; learning forums; constituency expansion activities; fundraising activities; developing tools, including ICT tools, for constituency engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and communication; and equipment necessary to carry out a particular activity. This is not an exhaustive list, and applicants are encouraged to introduce innovative activities that will lead to strengthen organizational capacity and to fulfilling the CSO network’s or CSO’s mission.

The applicant is expected to demonstrate how organizational technical assistance combined with funding from the OCS grant will strengthen its organizational effectiveness. This may include:

- Developing and adhering to vision statements and evidence-based strategic plans, in participatory processes with constituents, whenever appropriate;
- Establishing and managing improved program management, financial, human resource, procurement, leadership, and other systems to implement strategic plans;
- Developing research, analytical, leadership, and communication skills required to provide quality services and/or be credible champions for the causes they represent;
- Developing and implementing sound, efficient, appropriate, and innovative approaches and tools to engage citizens in their work, with particular attention paid to women, youth and vulnerable groups;
- Developing and expanding partnerships with other CSOs, the private sector, media, and academia;
- Attracting and generating financial and in-kind resources from constituents, the private sector, and elsewhere;
- Improving skills and processes related to ensuring accountability to constituents and to sources of funding, including reporting back to them;
- Improving the capacity to comply with government of Uganda legal and administrative requirements related to CSOs operations;
- Strengthening the capacity to develop and adhere to organization and program evaluation, monitoring, learning, and adapting systems.

By benefiting from CSSA’s capacity development assistance and grant support, it is expected that the CSO networks or CSOs will become more professional and effective by improving their operational systems, expanding their membership and stakeholder reach, and building up sustainable means of mobilizing financial resources that can lead to improvements in their advocacy and/or service delivery work ultimately serving their constituencies/beneficiaries.
D. FUNDING PRIORITIES

CSSA will give priority to applications by CSO networks and CSOs that:

1. Carry out activities that are national in scope and/or cover the CSSA’s priority geographic areas, which include the districts of: Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Nwoya, Gulu, Lamwo, Lira, Omoro, Masindi, Mbarara, Rubirizi and Kampala;
2. Focus on issues of particular concern to and/or ensure substantial engagement of women, girls, youth, ethnic or religious minorities, the LGBTI community, or other marginalized groups;
3. Implement interventions at least in one of CSSA’s four thematic areas: (i) health, with particular attention paid to achieving Uganda’s HIV/AIDS’ reduction goals; (ii) education, youth, and child development; (iii) agriculture with particular focus on food security; and (iv) democracy, rights, and governance;
4. Form coalitions that seek to address issues of mutual concern across communities and regions, and/or issues that are relevant on both local and national levels;
5. Demonstrate in their application a cascade effect in the proposed capacity-building efforts;
6. Propose innovative and audience-tailored uses of ICT technology, as well as traditional and new media;
7. Include capacity development activities that increase commitment from constituents, such as volunteering or innovative fundraising initiatives; and
8. For umbrella CSOs have 10 or more CSO members and have a proven track record of engaging in joint actions in the last three years.

CSSA will not review applications that include the following activities:

- Support for or lobbying on behalf of a particular political party;
- Religious activities;
- Humanitarian activities;
- Theoretical research; and
- Any construction activities.

E. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

CSOs legally registered in Uganda are eligible to submit proposals for the OSC grants.

Applicant organizations should meet the following criteria:

- Have at least three years of operational experience. As a rule, CSSA will not provide “start-up” funding, although CSSA may make a rare exception if sufficient evidence is presented to show that the organization’s leadership has adequate prior experience and the organization is capable of filling a niche that has been underserved in the past;
- Have a governance structure that ensures proper rotation of leadership and separation of powers, including, at least a Board of Directors, a Chairperson, and an Executive Director. If the above criteria are not met, the applicant must submit a proposed reform process that will work towards meeting these standards;
- Have a transparent system of bookkeeping that complies with the Ugandan legislation and International Accounting Standards (IAS). If such a system is not in place, the grantee must work closely with CSSA to ensure that accurate financial management and transparent book keeping systems are developed;
- Must not be a debtor and must have cancelled any debt to the state or arranged for debt collection prior to receiving the first disbursement of CSSA grant funds;
• Must operate as an independent non-politically affiliated organization;
• Must not be debarred, suspended, excluded or otherwise ineligible to receive US government funding;
• Must be in very good standing in the civil society community, among the constituencies that they represent, and the donors that have supported them; and
• Must be registered and have a national tax identification number (TIN).

Civil servants, political appointees, members of the current parliament, staff of public broadcasting companies, and/or leaders of political parties cannot participate in a CSSA-funded project as directors or as grant-remunerated participants.

Section II – Grant Application Instructions

A. APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

CSSA will accept proposals only in English. Applications can be emailed or hand-delivered to the CSSA office in Kampala.

Applicants must submit the following documents:

• A Technical Application and a Project Budget
• A copy of the organization’s Annual Report and Audit Report or indicate an Internet link where these documents can be found.

Before making the final decision, CSSA may request additional documentation such as:

• Auditor’s Management Letter;
• Financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss, Cash Flow); and
• The organization’s policies.

Submitted proposals must be the original and sole work of the applicant organization. Plagiarism will result in disqualification from the grant competition.

CSSA will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. It will not use this information for purposes other than proposal review and will not share it with other persons or institutions, except when required by Ugandan law or requested by USAID. Please note that in line with our donor coordination efforts, we will share the names of the applicants and a short description of their respective projects with other Ugandan and international programs that support CSOs in Uganda.

B. PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS – TECHNICAL

Page Limitation: Technical applications should be specific, complete, presented concisely and shall not exceed 10 pages (exclusive of annexes). Applications shall be written in English and typed on standard 1 ½” x 11” or A4 paper, single spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font with each page number consecutively. The Annex and items such as the cover page, table of contents, implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation plan, budget and CVs are not included in the 10-page limitation.
Applications submitted in response to this RfA must include the following information:

1. **Cover Page:** The cover page shall include the following information:
   - Name and Full Address of the CSO applying for the grant
   - Type of CSO (umbrella or individual)
   - Primary contact person (name, title, mailing address, cell number, office number and email address)
   - Alternate contact person (name, title, mailing address, cell number, office number and email address)
   - Authorized signature for the CSO
   - Date of submission

2. **Activity Description:** The applicant must provide a detailed design that includes the following: goals, objectives, activities, beneficiaries and number of beneficiaries, thematic area of intervention, geographic priorities, deliverables and intended results as well as a justification of need, rationale, approach, and implementation strategy, responding to the sections B. Objective, C. Scope of Work, and D. Funding priorities of this RfA.

3. **Implementation Plan:** The applicant should provide a Gantt chart indicating the timeframe for each activity.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The applicant should define its target results that will be achieved under the grant and a monitoring and evaluation plan for measuring progress on activity performance.

5. **Personnel:** The applicant should identify all key personnel responsible for the successful implementation of the award. The applicant should provide, as part of their application a curriculum vitae that demonstrates the key personnel’s ability to perform the duties outlined in the applicant’s proposal and in accordance with the evaluation factors found herein.

6. **Organizational Chart:** Provide an organizational chart for the proposed activity showing the organizational administrative, management and financial structure, showing also lines of supervision.

7. **Organizational Capability:** The applicant shall include information that demonstrates the applicant’s expertise and ability to implement the activity. The applicant should provide evidence of how the organization demonstrates the ability to administer activities like the one expressed under this RfA effectively and sustainably.

Past Performance/Experience: Applicants must present evidence of their past experience in implementing similar activities. Applicants must demonstrate explain how this experience will help build a stronger or organizational capacity to effectively carry out their mandate.
C. PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS – Financial

1. Complete Budget: A budget should be included that provides individual line item, and a breakdown of the types of costs anticipated. All budget lines must be clearly linked to specific activities. The grant will support costs that deemed appropriate, allowable and allocable.

D. PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS – Annexes

The technical application annexes shall include:

- Organizational chart
- Detailed implementation plan
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
- Certificate of registration and statute
- CVs of key personnel
- Other material: Support letters demonstrating partnerships and cooperation with prospective partners of particular interest, government, etc.

Section III – Evaluation Process and Criteria

The selection process will be administered by a Grants Review Committee (GRC) established by CSSA for the purpose of this RfA. If an application is short-listed for potential funding, the respective applicant may be requested to provide additional information.

Awards will be made based on the ranking of applications by the Grants Review Committee according to the evaluation criteria and 100-point scoring system identified below:

I. Technical Approach (60 points)

   a. Project Design and Feasibility [30 points]
      - The potential of the project to successfully and efficiently achieves the objectives outlined in the Scope of Work;
      - The extent to which the activity introduces innovative and potentially replicable approaches; and
      - The degree to which the proposal advances CSSA’s priorities as outlined in this RfA under ‘Funding Priorities’.

   b. Implementation Plan (5)
      - The proposed activity has a Gantt chart that clearly indicates timeframe for each activity.

   c. Monitoring and Evaluation (10)
      - The proposed activity has a clear M&E plan to measure and track activity success and overall performance.

   d. Beneficiaries [10]
      - The umbrella and/or individual CSOs interventions target beneficiaries include girls, women, religious and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, IDPs, the LGBT community, and other marginalized groups.

   e. Collaborative Posture [5]
      - Cooperation among CSO network members (if the applicant is a CSO network), between the applicant and other stakeholders to achieve the project objectives; and
• Level of collaboration among CSOs in sharing expertise and resources to implement activities, and technology approaches in fulfilling project goals.

II. Organizational, Technical and Management Capability and Past Performance (40 points)

a. Technical and Management Capacity [20]
The technical and managerial capacity of the applicant to successfully carry out project implementation on a timely basis, and to produce the targeted results. This includes an assessment of:
• The track record and demonstrated commitment of the applicant to engage in organizational capacity; and
• The experience and expertise of the management team and proposed project personnel.

b. Organizational Capability (10)
• The general financial strength of the applicant; and
• The organizational structure and good governance practices of the applicant.

c. Past Performance [10]
• Past performance in achieving positive results when implementing activities similar to those proposed; and
• Experience working with USAID/other donor funds and ability to meet reporting and accountability requirements.

III. Cost Effectiveness (will be reviewed for consistency and allowability but will not be an evaluation factor)
• The budget must be (i) complete and fully documented, (ii) reasonable, and (iii) allocated to appropriate budget categories;
• The budget must demonstrate a clear and direct relationship between proposed activities and the proposed use of funds; and
• Proposed expenditures must be allowable and allocable to the project.

Section IV – Submission Information

Application Form: To download the application form, please see the RfA announcement at www.ewmi.org. Alternatively, please email your request to cssa-uganda@ewmi.org for an application form.

Clarifications: Applicants should submit clarification requests to cssa-uganda@ewmi.org on Monday, March 22, 2021 by 5:00pm Uganda Time. EWMI will post the responses to the questions on EWMI’s web site and will respond via email by the end of the day on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

Deadline: Applicants should submit their proposal and required documents by Monday, April 12, 2021 no later than 5:00pm, as MS Word and Excel files to cssa-uganda@ewmi.org with the subject: RfA 3031-2021-1, Organizational Capacity Strengthening Grants. Alternatively, applications may be submitted in a sealed envelope to CSSA’s office located at: Plot 1, Kokomo Hill Lane, 5th Floor, Block A, Kampala
Late Applications: All applications received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness and programmatic merit according to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Section III lays out evaluation criteria for each application. Applications that are submitted late or incomplete will not be considered.

This grant is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The contents of this RfA are the sole responsibility of East-West Management Institute, Inc. and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.