

GENDER FUND

Open Call for Country-Level Grants

To support initiatives that make systems just and
inclusive and advance women's leadership at all levels



Our invitation

Co-Impact is excited to announce its **Open Call for Country-level Grants** to advance gender equality. We envision a gender equal world where all people can live fulfilling lives – where systems and societies are just and inclusive, and women and girls' are leading at all levels.

We recognize that there are multiple ways to advance gender equality. These include technical engagement, advocacy efforts, strengthening governance and accountability mechanisms, tackling deep-seated social norms, and other ways of challenging the status quo. At its core, we are looking for partners who take the view that enduring and positive change needs *feminist approaches that tackle root causes of structural injustice, question who holds power and how it is exercised, address restrictive and discriminatory norms, and deepen inclusion.*

This **Open Call** is an invitation to **Global South organizations** – civil society groups, think-tanks and academic institutions, professional associations and networks, women's rights groups, and feminist and allied movements, among others. We invite you to apply and join us in moving towards the common goal of **making systems just and inclusive** and creating a level playing field for **women and girls to rise to and thrive in leadership positions at all levels** – in the household, in their communities, and in the highest national institutions.

Our commitment

In consultations with feminists, leaders of women's rights organizations, gender experts, activists, and advocates, we heard clearly that there are big gaps in funding for gender equality. These gaps include under-funded issue areas, barriers that hold women and girls back and even bigger gaps in the types of organizations that get funded. We also heard how women-led organizations in the Global South often do not have resources and support to strengthen their own organization for long-term resilience.

We also heard that gender inequality is best advanced through an **intersectional** lens – by addressing how race, caste, class, ethnicity, identity, and other forms of discrimination that exacerbate inequality and exclusion. Long-term change takes time, is complex, and needs locally rooted organizations that are committed to the cause and understand their contexts well.

Accordingly, in this open call we seek to:

- Support organizations that address root causes and foster systemic change.
- Provide flexible and longer-term funding, including dedicated resources for organizational strengthening.
- Ensure that 100% of our grants will go to Global South organizations and at least 75% of our grants will be to women-led organizations
- Prioritize an intersectional lens throughout our process – during the review, diligence, and selection.
- Respect that the organizations we partner with are in the driver's seat and best placed to decide what the best approaches to achieve enduring change

While we will look to support feminist approaches and advance women's rights across our work, we recognize the critical role that *Women's Rights Organizations* and *Feminist Movements* play in advancing gender equality. We will ensure that **at least 10% of our funding** will go to organizations that identify as these groups.

Key considerations

A. GLOBAL SOUTH ROOTEDNESS

We require all applicants (or the lead organization if applying as a consortium/coalition) to be rooted in the Global South. Our experience shows that locally-rooted organizations bring a deeper understanding of the issue area and governance context, have more established and trusted relationships, and have long-term commitment that is critical for enduring change. Applicants must meet **at least 2 of 3 Global South criteria** (*preference will be given to organizations that meet all 3 criteria*):

- Global Head Office and the majority of the Lead Organization’s total staff presence is in a Global South country
- Leader of the initiative²/lead organization and at least 50% of senior leadership are from the Global South
- Lead organization/initiative has long-term roots in the region, demonstrated by 10+ years working on strengthening systems in the country/region, long-term and substantial working partnerships with local actors, and a commitment to investing in local talent for leadership positions.

B. FEMINIST APPROACHES AND WOMEN-LED

We ask all applicants to clearly articulate how the initiative addresses structural gender discrimination and exclusion, enhances power and agency among women and girls, and advances women’s leadership and influence.³ We remain open to how applicants interpret and execute feminist approaches i.e., intersectionality, dismantling power, and tackling discrimination and exclusion.

We also believe that our grantmaking is enhanced by strong representation of women among our program partners.⁴ **We will ensure that at least 75% of our country-level grants are substantively led by women.** We define “substantive women leadership” as:

- The primary leader and a significant portion of the senior leadership of the anchor organization or initiative are women.
- Gender composition of the anchor organization’s governance structure (e.g., Board) has significant and/or increasing representation of women.

We expect the bulk of our funding to go to non-profit civil society groups. However, for-profit organizations are eligible where the primary objective of the effort is to achieve lasting social impact for millions of people. We cannot fund political campaigns or “lobbying” organizations.⁵



C. GEOGRAPHY

Our grantmaking will be focused on a set of countries that meet a basic threshold of governance and **civic conditions**. To enable us to build a deeper contextual understanding and take an **ecosystem approach**⁶ to our grant-making and relationship building, we invite initiatives that will focus on countries in the list below:

- **Africa:** Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa
- **Asia:** India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka
- **Latin America:** Brazil, Mexico, and Peru

D. OUTCOMES-FOCUSED

To help us understand how the initiative will positively impact people and result in enduring change in the systems and institutions that are meant to serve, we request applicants to clearly articulate the outcomes they aim to achieve over the grant period.

We recognize the importance of measuring population level impact i.e., **people-level outcomes** and seek to support initiatives that take a holistic approach that combines improving gender-equitable outcomes and advancing women’s power, agency and leadership. At a minimum, we expect outcomes to be sex-disaggregated, and encourage applicants to take an intersectional lens by addressing discriminatory layers of class, race, caste, ethnicity, and identity among others. Moreover, we believe that **systemic and institutional change** are critical to achieving impact at scale and have the change last over time. Accordingly, please explain the specific systems and/or institutional shifts that you will advance, and why these changes are critical to achieving people level outcomes. Refer [here](#) for more information on the types of people-level and systems-level outcomes we seek.



Our windows of opportunity

Through this **Open Call** we will provide three grant types – **ANCHOR**, **DOMAIN**, and **CATALYTIC** – each with its own purpose, range, and requirement for selection.

1. ANCHOR GRANTS

Purpose

These grants will support systems change initiatives that aim to **improve gender-equitable outcomes and women’s leadership in the health, education, and economic opportunity sectors.**

Initiatives that are most suitable for Anchor Grants will have approaches/pathways to bring about lasting change at scale in one or more of these sectors by focusing on key levers in the systems that provide the most basic services of health, education, and economic opportunity to millions of people.

Grant details

Each Anchor Grant will support proven ideas to be ‘adopted at scale’⁷ to benefit at least one million people over a 5 to 6-year period. The estimated range of Anchor Grants is between **US \$5-20 million over the entire grant period.**

Illustrative initiatives

Hypothetical/illustrative examples of Anchor grants include:

- A feminist advocacy organization in India that works to strengthen women farmer cooperatives, in partnership with private enterprises in the agricultural sector and with civil society organizations working to improve land rights of smallholder farmers. The initiative aims to increase sustained income of women smallholder farmers by increasing their access to agricultural inputs, information, and markets, while also increasing their secure land tenure and enhancing their engagement in government livelihood schemes.
- A Kenyan civil society organization that supports the Ministry of Health to expand its social health insurance scheme, particularly for informal workers (who are majority women). The initiative aims to improve maternal and child health outcomes by increasing access to community health services, while reducing out of pocket expenditure among lower income families. This initiative partners with relevant Government agencies and is looking to nationally scale the model that has shown positive results in several counties.
- A women’s rights group in Mexico that works closely with community-based advocacy organizations to leverage the solidarity network and use strategic litigation to promote increased resource allocation for mental and legal services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The all-women team social workers provide counseling, referral and representation services to the GBV survivors for their legal, social support and health needs. The grant supports this group to focus within their network to do advocacy training and develop a campaign around the need for revised laws and regulations on violence against women, while elevating the need for increased service availability at the community level.

2. DOMAIN GRANTS

Purpose

These grants will support initiatives that focus on institutional change to advance women's ability to enter, rise to, and thrive in leadership positions in the academic and professional domains of **law and/or economics**.

Initiatives for Domain Grants may focus on dismantling structural and normative barriers such as harmful policies and practices, lack of formal/informal networking and mentoring opportunities, insufficient role models, and limiting social and professional biases among others.

For enduring change at scale, we recognize the need to focus on key institutions in the law and/or economics domains. We use the following categories to define key institutions and remain open to ideas from the applicants:

- **Critical Institutions** – These are institutions that have an inordinate influence on public policy, national priorities, resource allocation, and gender-related issues. Hence, it is critical to advance women's leadership in the institutions that include but are not limited to ministries or major governance agencies responsible for Finance, Planning, Public Policy, Justice, Public Service or similar.
- **Pipeline and Supporting Institutions** – These agencies feed into, promote institutional change, and/or enable pathways to leadership in the critical institutions. These include but are not limited to academic institutions, professional associations, and networks and convening agencies, among others.

Grant details

Each Domain Grant will support transformative organizational and institutional practices in the key institutions in Law and Economics. The estimated range of Domain Grants is between **US \$2–4 million over the entire grant period of 5–6 years**.

Illustrative initiatives

Hypothetical/illustrative examples of Domain grants include:

- A think-tank in Indonesia, led by feminist economists, supports the chambers of commerce and the Ministry of Labor to roll-out evidence informed policy and strategies to advance women's leadership in the formal and informal sectors. The initiative helps create opportunities for feminist economists to lead on writing academic and policy papers, opportunities for formal networking with other economists, and mentorship program with senior Government officials. The initiative also works on reviewing policies and practices in the Ministry of Labor to increase representation of women at all levels and tackles institutional barriers to women rising to leadership positions in key Government institutions.
- A women lawyers' professional association in Ghana is implementing an initiative to update and revise programs and policies for women to enter and thrive in the legal profession. This initiative has teamed up with a regional behavioral design firm in South Africa that studies and develops behavioral nudges to identify levers within academic and public institutions to promote policies and practices that strengthen pathways for women to rise in the key legal institutions in the region.
- Women-led civil organization in Peru is implementing an initiative to support women paralegals who are working at the community level to address social and employment rights of informal workers. The initiative focuses on addressing the challenges faced by women paralegals in their interactions with public institutions, especially sexual harassment and workplace bias. The initiative also creates opportunities for women paralegals to get training and convening opportunities to learn from each and create a national network **to increase pathways and opportunities for leadership**.

3. CATALYTIC GRANTS

Purpose

These grants will nurture promising initiatives that are either in the Pre-Anchor stage (focusing on health, education, and/or economic opportunity) or Pre-Domain stage (focusing on domains of law and/or economics).

This grant type does not support new, experimental ideas; instead, we will support early-stage initiatives with a well-developed idea that has been tried in a specific context and would benefit from exploring pathways for sustained change at scale.

This grant type is especially important given the fact that women-led organizations from the Global South are often excluded from transformative funding opportunities. Hence **100% of our Catalytic grants will go to women-led organizations in the Global South.**⁸

Grant details

Each Catalytic Grant will support initiatives that show potential to be adopted at scale in the systems of health, education, or economic opportunity, or institutional change in the key domains of law or economics. The estimated range of Catalytic Grants is to reach **US \$1-3 million over the entire grant period of 3-4 years.**

Illustrative examples

Below we provide a few broad descriptors:

What Catalytic Grants may support:

- Demonstrative viability of taking a successful model/approach to scale
- Testing scaling pathways through a specific system/institution
- Bringing together partnerships and coalitions needed for scale and sustained impact
- Generating evidence and/or building a powerful coalition to influence key institutions

What Catalytic Grants will not support:

- Nascent idea or early development of a model
- Linear scaling of a direct implementation model
- Exploratory research to identify gaps/needs or further develop an idea



No one grant type is considered more important than another. Anchor and/or Domain grants are not limited to any organization type but differentiated based on their sectors/domains of focus. Grant sizes are also not intended to communicate importance, hierarchy, or type of the cause or approach. Neither are they intended to position some grants as instrumental to the objectives of the other. The intent is to recognize that organizations operate at different levels, have different budget requirements, and are at different stages of development. Diversity of grant types is intended to provide an opportunity to work with a broader set of actors than we have in the past. The average grant ranges and periods above are indicative and may be revised based on the needs and contexts of the different initiatives as well as our funding envelope.

The table below provides details of the qualification requirements by grant type:

QUALIFICATION	ANCHOR GRANT	DOMAIN GRANT	CATALYTIC GRANT
Outcomes and Scale of Impact	<p>Initiatives result in significant improvement in one or more of the gender-equitable outcomes in health, education, and economic system(s).</p> <p>The proposed initiative has a high potential for large-scale change and is poised to improve one million lives or more over a 5-to-6-year period.</p>	<p>Initiatives result in positive institutional change i.e., improvements or creation of policies, practices, cultures, and/or pathways and networks to increase women in leadership positions in critical and/or supporting institutions in Law or Economics.</p>	<p>Significant improvement in gender-equitable outcomes for initiatives in Pre-Anchor stage or positive institutional change outcomes for initiatives in Pre-Domain stage.</p>
Evidence (additional guidance available here)	<p>We require initiatives to provide an evaluation/assessment that shows the core approach/model/idea(s) at the center of the initiative works and achieves the intended people-level outcomes. We value evaluations that are relevant, rigorous, and of high quality, but do not require the use of any particular methodology.</p>	<p>No independent evaluation or assessment is required but sharing evidence makes a stronger case for the proposed initiative.</p>	<p>No independent evaluation or assessment is required but sharing evidence makes a stronger case for the proposed initiative.</p>
Track record	<p>The Lead Organization and/or consortium/coalition of organizations in the initiative have worked on the issue for at least 5 years.</p> <p>The proposed or very similar systems change initiative is already well underway (not a start-up or initial pilot), and in the past year has benefited at least 10,000 persons in a significant way.</p>	<p>The Lead Organization and/or consortium/coalition of organizations in the initiative have worked on the issue for at least 3 years.</p> <p>The proposed initiative is currently working on institutional change and has a partnership in place with one or more Critical or Supporting institutions in either the domain of Law or Economics.</p>	<p>The Lead Organization and/or consortium/coalition of organizations in the initiative have worked on the issue for at least 2 years.</p>
Organization Capacity	<p>We require audited financials for the most recent year available for the Lead Organization.</p> <p>The Lead Organization has significant capacity and track record to work at scale; the annual budget in the last financial year of the Lead Organization is at least US\$ 500,000 or equivalent.</p>	<p>We request audited financials for the most recent year available for the Lead Organization.</p>	<p>We request audited financials for the most recent year available for the Lead Organization.</p>

Our application process

The application period will be open from **30 September till 20 December 2021**. Applicants are asked to submit your application through [this link](#). This application system will enable you to complete your intake form for basic organizational and initiative information and [concept note](#) as well as upload supporting documentation. The same concept note template will be used across all grant types.

Our preference is to receive the concept note in English. However, we recognize that English is not the primary language for many applicants, hence we will accept the concept notes in Bahasa (Indonesia), French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tagalog. We speak multiple languages across our team, and we will arrange for translation of concept notes where we do not.

Please refer to the purpose and qualifying criteria for each grant type to determine the grant type you are applying for. We may re-categorize the grant type during our review process, in which case we will let you know. Our selection criteria and scoring rubric is available [here](#).

We expect to use the following process and timelines to arrive at the final grant decisions estimated to be made by end October 2022.

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS		DATES
Sourcing and initiative consideration	Open call period to receive applications	30 September to 20 December 2021
	Notification of qualification to all applicants	End January 2022
	Initial consideration of all submitted concept notes	January to March 2022
Detailed proposal submission and consideration	Proposal development and submission period	April to May 2022
	Second review of the detailed proposals	June to July 2022
Due Diligence and Site Visits	Virtual/in-country site visits plus request for additional diligence-related information. ⁹	August to September 2022

We realize that understanding our requirements and applying for grants takes a lot of time and effort and thank you for your interest.

Questions and conversations

We hope the information provided here was helpful. Please note that, unfortunately, with a small team, we are generally unable to hold individual conversations or provide individual feedback. We plan to hold **at least three public webinars** during the open call period (from 30 September to 20 December 2021) to run through the process and answer your questions – [see here for more details](#). Please [click here to sign up](#) to receive an email about any updates we may produce regarding the open call process. We may also provide periodic updates [on our website](#). Thank you for your understanding.

Endnotes

- 1 Throughout this document, our use of “gender” and/or “women and girls” is meant to be inclusive of all those who identify as women and girls on the gender spectrum.
- 2 Initiative refers to the systems/institutional change effort and the team of people who are working to carry it out. This may include single organization or multiple organizations working together. Lead Organization refers to the organization who is ultimately the primary accountable party for the proposed “Initiative”.
- 3 For more details, refer to [Co-Impact’s Approach to Gender Equality and Intersectionality](#).
- 4 We prefer this term to “grantee” because we do not think an organization should be defined by the fact that it receives funds.
- 5 We require applicants to confirm that their organization/partnership is not a political campaign promoting a specific candidate or party. This is not intended to preclude advocacy efforts. Policy interventions may be a part of an initiative, but we generally do not support “lobbying” that seeks to change specific legislation.
- 6 We recognize that there is no single, silver-bullet approach to systems change and solving gender inequalities, and that it takes the collective action of multiple, diverse actors.
- 7 Explained in detail in the Co-Impact [Handbook](#), see pages 15 to 18
- 8 *Catalytic grants are not intended to communicate that the organization itself is in an earlier stage of its growth.* We recognize that certain initiatives have not had the adequate time or resourcing they need and would benefit from a longer runway to develop strategic pathways for sustained impact at scale. The Catalytic grant type is intended to allow for that longer runway and presents an important opportunity for women-led organizations to receive the multi-year, flexible funding and support needed for this.
- 9 Please note that we may consult with partner organizations, experts and other third parties about the information you provide in your submission. The final decision will be made at the sole determination of Co-Impact based on the extensive review and diligence process, including inputs from external and internal teams, to determine the best fit for the Gender Fund portfolio. Thank you for your understanding.