

*Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) Request for Statements of Interest:  
Global Support for Women's Economic Empowerment – Access and Reform Implementation  
by Civil Society*

**Applicant Questions and Responses**

- Q1. Question regarding the restrictive criteria of at least two countries in two different regions:** While we understand the need to work in two or more countries, we think that the requirement for these countries to be in two totally different geographic regions of the world effectively excludes the vast majority of qualified and deserving organizations. This requirement only advantages big international NGOs at the expense of smaller and indigenous NGOs that would be the primary target of this initiative in the context of the *Journey to Self-Reliance*. There are simply not that many organizations with the capacity and resources to work in multiple continents. This criteria also excludes nonprofits that have made a strategic choice like our focus on one continent – Sub-Saharan Africa in our case. Can this restrictive criteria be removed? If you take the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, there are several sub-regional jurisdictions. It would make more sense for applicants to choose a country from Eastern Africa and Southern Africa, for instance.
- A1. As detailed in the RSOI, S/GWI is seeking statements of interests from applicants with global capacity, as demonstrated by the ability to implement the proposed activities in a minimum of two regions.
- Q2. Budget Question: Is the \$3 million budget floor and ceiling for one year or it is the total budget for the entire project for up to five years?**
- A2. The total budget available for the project at this time is \$3 million for all years of programming. Applicants should propose a timeframe for project length that is appropriate to the \$3 million funding level and the planned scope of activities.
- Q3. For review criteria #1, can S/GWI provide additional guidance on the definition of global capacity? For example, if an organization has capacity and experience in two of the six regions, would they be considered to have global capacity?**
- A3. As detailed in the RSOI, S/GWI is seeking statements of interests from applicants with global capacity, as demonstrated by the ability to implement the proposed activities in a minimum of two regions. The minimum requirement to demonstrate global capacity is ability to program in at least two regions.
- Q4. Will the capacity and experience to implement programming in most of the six regions be rated more favorably than the ability to program in multiple countries but only in two regions (EAP and SCA)? Put another way: will S/GWI place preference on an organization's capacity to cover more regions or more countries with more in-depth programming?**

A4. The minimum requirement for global capacity in this RSOI is ability to work in at least two global regions. As stated on page 1 of the RSOI, “For the purposes of this RSOI, global capacity means relevant capacity in as many regions and priority countries as possible.” The scope of an organization’s global capacity will be considered but is one of multiple review criteria.

**Q5. [Organization] intends to submit two SOI for the 2021 WEE RSOI. We do have an account in SAMS Domestic where usually we submit our proposals and SOIs. We read in the Public Notice Guidelines we should also have an active account in SAM.gov. I tried to access the account using the same log in details but it says the account does not exist. Do we have to create a new account in SAM.gov?**

A5. SAM.gov is not the same as SAMS Domestic. It is free to register in both systems, but the registration processes are different. For additional assistance, please contact:

**SAM.gov**

Federal Service Desk Contact Information

Website: [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov)

Hours of Operation: 8am - 8pm (Eastern Time)

U.S. Toll Free: 866-606-8220; International: 334-206-7828

**SAMS Domestic Help Desk**

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home>. Customer support is available 24/7.

**Q6. Can we submit a pilot project with less than stated amount? and explain it as a pilot project?**

A6. As stated on page 1 of the RSOI, the budget floor and ceiling is \$3,000,000. Applicants are requested to submit proposals for a project of that amount. S/GWI anticipates making one award for \$3,000,000.

**Q7. Could organizations from Colombia and Peru participate in the opportunity?**

A7. As stated on page 2 of the RSOI, applicants must propose work in no fewer than two countries in two different regions. Country selections may be subject to additional vetting, to include review of any relevant U.S. funding restrictions applicable in proposed countries.

**Q8. How much of the application is based on addressing intersectionality, particularly with the LGBTQI+? Being in the Arab (and predominantly Muslim world), the representation of that population is very low. We would like to get a better idea of**

**how much this area of the grant influences your decision to fund certain projects in order to know if we would be the best fit.**

- A8 S/GWI prioritizes inclusion of underrepresented populations and consideration of how individuals may face marginalized due to factors such as their race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic position, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability status. . As stated on page 12, applicants will need to address how they “will conduct gender and inclusion analysis addressing intersectionality and underrepresented populations including LGBTQI+.” Inclusion and intersectionality is not limited to inclusion of LGBTQI+, rather, this is one of multiple underrepresented populations that may be included in the analysis as relevant in the proposed target community. This will be considered under the review criteria for “Gender and Inclusion, Do No Harm.” As noted on p. 15-16, under this criteria, S/GWI will consider whether the:
- Applicant demonstrates plans and capacity for effectively applying a gender and inclusion analysis to program design and implementation.
  - Applicant describes sound approaches to inclusion, including but not limited to ethnic and religious minorities and other historically marginalized groups.
  - Applicant demonstrates application of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity principles.
- Q9. Page 1 of the RSOI states “Applicants must first submit a SOI consisting of: a) a concise, 3-page concept note that clearly communicates a program idea and its objectives; and b) a 1-page statement of global capacity as outlined below;” however, page 12 states that the Global Capacity Statement should not exceed two pages in Microsoft Word. Could S/GWI please confirm that the Global Capacity Statement is limited to two pages?**
- A9. The Global Capacity Statement should be limited to two pages. The entry on page 1 of the RSOI is an error.
- Q10. Page 1 of the RSOI states that this program should include “No fewer than two countries;” however, page 9 states that the “SOI should propose an inclusive process for mapping and co-creating equitable local partnerships in their selected three or more countries.” Could S/GWI please confirm that the program should include no fewer than two countries?**
- A10. The program should include no fewer than two countries in two regions. The inclusion of “three or more countries” on page 9 is an error and should read “two or more countries”.
- Q11. The RSOI states that the funding ceiling is \$3,000,000, however the RSOI states on page 6 that \$3 million of the award must be used for women’s empowerment and \$2 million of the award must be used for women’s leadership. Could S/GWI please clarify?**

A11. The total \$3,000,000 award must be used in alignment with the women's empowerment appropriations language, of which \$2,000,000 must specifically be used in alignment with the women's leadership appropriations language.

**Q12. Page 12 of the RSOI states "The applicant may also describe WEE opportunities it sees in one or more countries not listed as priority countries in this RSOI." While the RSOI clarifies a list of countries that are not priorities on page 2, it does not specify what the priority countries for this opportunity are. Could S/GWI please clarify if there are any specific priority countries?**

A12. There is no specific list of priority countries. As stated on page 2, country selections may be subject to additional approvals and/or vetting including any relevant funding restrictions.

**Q13. Can you please confirm the minimum number of countries and regions for this cooperative agreement? Page 1 has the language "no fewer than two countries and regions" but on Page 9 there is mention of "their selected three or more countries."**

A13. See response A10.

**Q14. Are we eligible to apply for this RSOI as a "Offeror is a nonresident alien, foreign corporation, or foreign partnership that does not have income effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business in the United States and does not have an office or place of business or a fiscal paying agent in the United States; ," [Organization] HQ based in Ottawa, Canada is registered on the SAM.Gov US bid portal and is interested in applying for this call. We have TIN numbers for some of our branch offices in Africa including Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Jordan, as well as DUNS numbers. Based on the solicitation's eligibility criteria we are a foreign-based non-profit/NGO and we have the exciting capacity to develop, active and equitable partnerships with in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders, including NGOs and private sector actors; and have demonstrable experience administering successful and preferably similar programs in size, scope, and focus. We are however not registered in the 501(c)(3) tax exemption. But have been previously registered with a prior branch office based in the USA.**

A14. Unfortunately, a determination cannot be made based on the information provided. Foreign-based non-profit/non-governmental organization (NGO)s are eligible to apply and are not subject to US tax code. Each applicant must meet all eligibility criteria and requirements stated in pages 2-5 of the RSOI.

**Q15. Regarding alignment to the RSOI goal - leadership of women's civil society organizations in improving the enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy. [Organization] is a women led organization, its Founder and CEO plus four out of six of the Country Directors are female - Would an organization qualify if a proposal is submitted that involves female led country operations with a project that focused on the local design of gender focused youth-**

**led programming that enables an environment for YOUNG women's full and free participating in the economy (18-35years).**

A15. S/GWI has not established age range parameters for this project. S/GWI is open to considering applications for programming addressing young women's participation.

**Q16. Competitiveness of our proposal, will a proposal be considered if it is focused on creating a more inclusive ecosystem for women with focus on overcoming social and cultural barriers faced by young women - rather than specific direct policy changing activities?**

A16. As stated on page 7, the goal of the project to improve the enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy. The goal lists four types of activities for accomplishing this goal:

- support to women-led advocacy for legal, regulatory, and policy reform;
- implementation of such reform;
- accountability for such reforms; and
- reduction of social and cultural barriers.

It is permissible for a proposal to only address one of those types of activities. Proposals may be aligned to a broad understanding of the enabling environment that impacts women's economic empowerment, including through addressing gender-based violence, unpaid care responsibilities, and socioeconomic inequality.

**Q17. We are registered as a local NGO in Pakistan and as an INGO in Afghanistan, on SAMS we are registered with our registration in Pakistan, are we eligible to apply for this call then?**

A17. As stated on pages 2 – 5, there are additional eligibility criteria for applicant organizations. We are unable to determine your organizations eligibility based only on the information in your question.

**Q18. In terms of the women leadership component, is that US \$ 2m included in the total US \$ 3m or a separate allocation?**

A18. See response A11.

**Q19. What is the geographic limitation of this project? Can we work in two countries in the same region - for example, Pakistan and Afghanistan?**

A16. See response A7.

**Q20. What is the total budget available for this call?**

A20. See response A6.

**Q21. In the Request for Statements of Interest, page 1 references "a 1-page statement of global capacity" while page 12 states that the global capacity statement should "not**

exceed two pages in Microsoft Word." Could you please provide further clarification on the global capacity statement page limit?

A21. See response A9.

**Q22. The request for statements of interest states that applicants must propose work in “no fewer than two countries in two different regions” and lists Sub-Saharan Africa (AF) as one possible region. Would both a country in West Africa, say Benin, and another in Southern Africa, say Mozambique, both be considered as part of the same region of Sub-Saharan Africa?**

A23. Benin and Mozambique are two countries in one region, Sub-Saharan Africa (AF). The RSOI seeks proposals that include no fewer than two countries in two regions.

**Q24. Could the S/GWI please confirm the number of required countries to be proposed in response to this notice? On page 2, the Priorities Regions and Countries section states “no fewer than two countries in two different regions”. On page 9, the SOI requirements state “SOIs should propose an inclusive process for mapping and co-creating equitable local partnerships in their selected three or more countries, consistent with the Objectives”. We would like to confirm whether it is allowable to propose two countries.**

A24. See response A10.

**Q25. On page 12 under Required Documents, number 3b there is an option to describe WEE opportunities we see in one or more countries not listed as priority countries. Could S/GWI provide additional information on what the purpose/use of this information would be? This would help organizations frame the response to this question.**

A25. S/GWI has not identified priority countries for this RSOI. Please disregard the language on page 12 that references “listed priority countries.”

**Q26. Can you give further details on the timeline expected between receiving initial SOIs and requesting full proposals?**

A26. The deadline for initial statements of interest is April 18, 2021. We anticipate requesting full proposals sometime in May 2021.

**Q27. Do you have a preference for activities that support WEE in particular areas or fields e.g small business holders, sustainability, agriculture?**

A27. There is no preference in this RSOI for support to specific WEE activities.

**Q28. Is there a limit to the number of partnerships within one SOI?**

A28. There is no limit to the number of partnerships proposed in one SOI.

**Q29. On page 1 the RSOI instructs that SOI should include no fewer than 2 countries but on page 9 states "equitable local partnerships in their selected three or more countries". Please can you confirm if the minimum is 2 or 3 countries?**

A29. See response A10.

**Q30. Can a single organization conduct the program, or should it be a collaborative program with other entities, and in such case how many partner entities do you recommend, and what type of entities?**

A30. The award will be provided to one prime grantee but, as stated on pages 1, 3, 15, and others, applicants will be evaluated based on the statement of interest's (SOI's) demonstration of concrete approaches for equitable partnership with a range of local women's civil society organizations in each proposed benefitting country. Women's civil society organizations may include women-led organizations or women-serving organizations. As stated on p. 9, applicants should maximize appropriate support to civil society organizations. Detailed budgets of applicants selected to submit full proposals will be evaluated on the proportion budgeted to support civil society organizations.

**Q31. What does « sustainability mean »? Does "sustainability" mean that the program must offer a viable business model that is sustainable and subsequently sustained by private and internal funding?**

A31. As stated on page 16, SOIs will be reviewed for sustainability as shown if the “applicant articulates an approach to building local partner capacity to continue their work once funding from this program ends.”

**Q32. Are there any strategic preferences on the choice of countries? Do you prefer French-speaking or English-speaking countries?**

A32. There are no stated priority countries in the RSOI and S/GWI does not have a preference for specific national languages.

**Q33. Is it correctly understood that SOIs should address both of the two objectives of "Support an enabling environment for WEE" AND "Support to women's civil society organizations", and not only one of these?**

A33. As stated on page 7, there are two objectives, one to support an enabling environment for WEE and a second to support women's civil society organizations. SOIs should address both objectives.

**Q34. In the 'Eligible Applicants' section, it is noted that "S/GWI does not fund large-scale programs or long-term development work, but instead engages in shorter-term practical efforts to realize U.S. foreign policy priorities". Might you kindly elaborate on how 'large-scale programs' should be understood more precisely?**

A34. S/GWI projects generally operate for no more than 5 years, with limited funding and scope requiring goals and objectives that are focused and aligned with U.S. foreign policy

priorities. The quoted statement is a general remark about S/GWI's programming efforts. The criteria that applicants must meet for this solicitation are noted in the Request for Statements of Interest.

**Q35. In the section 'Submission Instructions and Technical Eligibility' it is noted that "The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate" and elsewhere in the document the requirements for partnering equitably with local women-led organizations are emphasized. Can you kindly confirm whether, for the purpose of the SOI, to present the applicant's strategy and track record in relation to this will suffice, or whether it is preferable, and applicants are expected to identify, and name intended local women-led partner organizations already at the SOI stage?**

A35. Support to and partnership with women's civil society organizations is a requirement of this RSOI. As stated on page 13, SOIs will be reviewed for applicant expertise and capacity to co-design and implement programs globally in equitable partnership with existing local women's organizations and demonstration of concrete approaches for equitable partnership with a range of existing women-led or women-serving civil society organizations. There is no requirement for applicants to name specific local partner organizations at the SOI stage. However, the ability to do so may help strengthen the SOI's demonstration of "concrete approaches for equitable partnership."

**Q36. The list of funding restrictions notes that: "Social welfare projects that purely provide service-delivery or humanitarian assistance". It would be most helpful, if you can kindly specify 1. whether economic recovery activities aimed at women's economic empowerment in the specific context of humanitarian crisis, would not be consider eligible; and 2. whether activities with a humanitarian focus will not be considered eligible?**

A36. S/GWI does not support programming in contexts of humanitarian crisis.

**Q37. The list of funding restrictions notes that: "Initiatives directed towards a permanent diaspora community as ultimate beneficiaries" - can you kindly elaborate on whether this requirement would also concern partnering with women-led diaspora organizations for implementation of activities targeting 1. a mix of diaspora and non-diaspora population groups; or 2. non-diaspora population groups?**

A37. Activities designed to benefit the diaspora community outside of the identified benefiting country will not be considered eligible. Partnerships with diaspora organizations to implement activities designed to benefit nationals or permanent residents in the identified benefitting country is allowed.

**Q38. The solicitation does not state that a budget is required at the SOI stage. Can you please confirm that we do not need to submit a preliminary budget at this stage and that will only come if we are invited to a full proposal?**

A38. Applicants are not required to submit a preliminary budget at this stage.

**Q39. The due date for the SOI submission is listed as April 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, which falls on a Sunday. The solicitation on page 14 states “S/GWI encourages organizations to submit applications during normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm EST).” Can you please clarify if there is a change in SOI submission date?**

A39. Applications are due on April 18, 2021 at 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST).

**Q40. “SOIs should propose an inclusive process for mapping and co-creating equitable local partnerships in their selected three or more countries, consistent with the Objectives.” Could you please clarify that discrepancy?**

A40. If the discrepancy referenced is the inclusion of “three or more countries” in this section, please see response A10.