



SABI GRANTS FUND  
BRIEFING PACK



## 1. INTRODUCTION

**SABI is a four-year citizen-led accountability programme funded by UK aid and implemented by a consortium of leading international and Sierra Leonean partners, led by international development agency Christian Aid.** It commenced in July 2016 and will end in June 2020. Its overall goal is to deliver “Increased awareness and demand for improved services, with service providers increasingly accountable to citizens for results.”

Operational in every district of the country, we aim to:

### Contribute towards improvements in basic services

Strengthen community-led accountability, increasing awareness of, and demand for, the delivery of basic services in health, education and social protection. Support citizens to identify problems and work with state service providers to overcome challenges in service delivery. (SABI though does not do service delivery.)

### Build relationships between citizens and the state

We build relationships between citizens and state, encouraging both citizens and state service providers to fulfil their own responsibilities for social amenities.

### Support the Government’s development plans

We worked alongside, yet independently of, the Presidential Recovery Priorities, and will continue to support Government development plans.

### Promote gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)

Gender equality and social inclusion are central to the programme. We will support vulnerable and excluded groups to develop skills and be provided the support they need to become active agents of change in their communities.

**The SABI Grants Fund is designed to fill identified gaps in our current implementation, to complement and strengthen the work of our existing local partners, and to feed into programme learning.**

**The Fund comprises a total pool of £490k** and grants will be awarded for 12-month projects for the sum of between £15k and £25k per project (between Le 150m and Le 250m).

**SABI is setting strict eligibility criteria for organisations** and project proposals will only be considered for those organisations able to meet *all* of the criteria set out below.

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS: 10 July 2018**

**PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE TO: [SABIgrants@christian-aid.org](mailto:SABIgrants@christian-aid.org)**

## 1.1 Objectives of the grants fund

Every grant must respond to one or more of the objectives set out below and *must* have a clear gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) focus.

- Enhance the capability of communities to hold duty bearers to account for service delivery
- Enhance the capability of duty bearers to be more accountable in their delivery of services
- Respond to the CPS findings in SABI target areas
- Promote an integrated approach to GESI across the programme, with clear results for women, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and other marginalised groups
- Fill identified gaps in our current implementation
- Respond to unexpected or emerging opportunities
- Contribute to programme learning, leverage and influence; and generate evidence for programme adaptation

## 1.2 Identified gaps in our current implementation

Set out below are three areas where we have identified gaps in our current implementation and projects which address these will be preferred.

### 1. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

GESI is an integral aspect of SABI and we strive to be what we preach, however learning over the course of the implementation has highlighted factors that are barriers to effective implementation of the GESI strategy whilst implementing activities. Our experience working with communities has shown that women, persons with disability, young people and other marginalised groups generally lack the required skillset to engage meaningfully in development activities taking place in their communities. The cultural and economic barriers that these groups face is exacerbated by not having what are often referred to as soft skills.

Findings from the SABI Citizens Perception Survey data show that only 32.26% of young people and 31.08% of women feel that they always have a say in what happens in the communities. Similarly, only one in four thinks that persons with disability have a say in what happens in their communities. These figures illustrate the relatively low levels of participation by marginalised groups, not to talk of taking leading roles in developmental activities. Clearly, there is a gap around participation and meaningful engagement by marginalised groups and projects designed to enhance these soft skills and address capability issues among these groups can improve GESI within these communities. Hence, there is a very good case for projects designed to improve the following listed and similar skills of marginalised groups in communities in which SABI is working.

- Negotiation
- Advocacy
- Public speaking
- Confidence
- Life skills

Please note that this list is not exhaustive as we are looking for solutions which can be innovative or tried and tested on how marginalised groups can engage meaningfully with service providers to improve service delivery for themselves and their communities.

### 2. Policy literacy at community level

Existing SABI partners carry out policy literacy sessions at Ward level to raise awareness about services and entitlements, in which various Ward and Chiefdom level structures participate and are expected to share information with their respective communities. It is hoped that increasing

awareness would help citizens gain the necessary information with which to demand for accountability and improved service delivery from service providers. However, SABI does not have this activity at the community level.

Findings from our last annual survey in December 2017 showed that 74% of the population had little or no awareness of services and entitlement and this cuts across the three sectors of health, education and social protection, which illustrates the level of work required to ensure citizens are well informed. There is no doubt the new government will be coming up with new policies and it is important that community members are well informed on both existing and new policies so that they will be in position to demand for their entitlements as well as improved service provision.

SABI will be interested in projects designed to raise awareness levels on government policies at community level. The project can focus but not be necessarily limited to the following policy areas.

- New education policy
- Free health care (who benefits, how and when)
- Entitlements
- Services available at what facility

### **3. Strengthening capacity of structures**

To respond adequately to demands coming from citizens, services providers including district councils, chieftaincy structures, front line service providers and ward development committee members should have the necessary capacity or skillset required to take appropriate action. SABI is interested in projects that are designed to respond to capability gaps that may be affecting the effectiveness of service providers to respond adequately to issues arising from citizens. The projects can be designed to provide support in the following areas, or others as the case is made. Other structures that can be supported includes SMCs and FMCs to be effective in their mandated functions.

- Revenue generation
- GESI
- Accountability
- Youth friendly services

## **2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

SABI is setting a high bar for eligibility, cognisant of the fact that this is just one component of a complex, nationwide programme, and that it is not intended as a capacity-building initiative. Local NGOs and other CSOs may apply.

The eligibility criteria are grouped into two. (a) Organisation Eligibility - The application form will require evidence that *all* criteria are met. And (b) Project Eligibility - GESI minimum standards must be met. Project proposals will not be assessed unless the partner eligibility criteria have been met.

### **(a) Organisations/Networks/Partner Eligibility Criteria**

The organisation must satisfy *all* of the following minimum standards of eligibility:

- Be legally registered in Sierra Leone and be fully compliant with all relevant legislation;
- Have appropriate standards and structures for good organisational governance/oversight and financial management and be able to demonstrate active engagement of the governing/oversight body;

- Practically demonstrate real and actual commitment to inclusion/diversity and gender sensitivity across the organisation, including proven capacity/good understanding of participatory approaches to implementation and M & E;
- Satisfy SABI minimum standards of financial management, including a willingness to open a separate bank account for SABI funds; have at least two previous annual statements of accounts audited by a suitably certified person(s) or body;
- Be able to demonstrate a good track record with previous donors and provide two references from previous donors;
- Have experience of managing grants of a similar size. (The grant must not represent more than 40% percentage of the organisation's annual income for the previous financial year);
- Demonstrate a two-year track record in delivering results and timely reports;
- For coalitions and networks: be formalised by way of a memorandum of understanding signed by its constituents; demonstrate the effectiveness and reach of the coalition;
- Desirable: Have staff members who are women or from socially excluded groups/communities;
- Desirable: Have processes for and evidence of beneficiary feedback.

### **(b) Project Eligibility Criteria**

Proposed projects must be able to demonstrate how they will deliver on the objectives of the grant fund and fulfil our GESI minimum standards, summarised below:

- Potential to enhance the voice and participation of women, PWDs and other marginalised groups and level to which it addresses their specific needs and vulnerabilities;

Other aspects which will be taken into account when proposals are being assessed:

- Alignment with wider SABI programming;
- Ability to replicate/scale up activities, to leverage impact and add value;
- Potential to move beyond advocacy to inclusive accountability engagement;
- Capacity to deliver intended results within the specified timeframe and likelihood of achieving expected results;
- Commitment to collaboration with others, state and non-state, to expand potential impact;
- Opportunity for learning;
- Level of innovation<sup>1</sup>;
- VFM and with a strong emphasis on sustainability;
- Evidence of the involvement of beneficiaries in project design; mechanisms to involve beneficiaries in project implementation and/or management.

**Note:** An organisation may submit more than one proposal but will be awarded no more than one grant across the two calls (June 2018 and October 2018.)

## 3. SELECTION PROCESS

### 3.1 First screening

A first screening will be undertaken by the SABI Programme Team. This process will commence immediately that applications are received. Applications will be screened on a rolling basis to establish whether the applicants fulfil the Partner Eligibility Criteria. If they do not, the applicant will be declined. A spreadsheet will be maintained into which the reasons for decline of each applicant will be recorded. It will be shared with the Grant Selection Committee. Any applicant declined at this stage

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<sup>1</sup> Innovation is defined as: A new solution to a social problem that is fairer, more effective, efficient and sustainable than existing solutions, and geared towards collective good.

will be informed within one month of the deadline for submissions, outlining the reason for their decline. There is no right of appeal.

The SABI Programme Team will assess the applications. Every proposal which meets the GESI minimum standards and for which all supporting documentation is included will be scored.

### 3.2 Grant Selection Committee

The Grant Selection Committee (GSC) will comprise of the SABI Team Leader, Christian Aid Sierra Leone Country Manager, a DFID representative, a Social Development Direct representative, and three representatives from the Project Advisory Committees set up by the implementing partners at the district level.

It will review every proposal which has been scored. It will reach funding decisions by a majority vote, based on the criteria outlined in section 2(b), taking into account our desire to ensure 'nationwide coverage'. We interpret this as meaning no less than one grant-funded project in every province at each call, though not necessarily in every district. Priority will be given to organisations working in areas with low levels of service delivery and NGO/CBO presence.

The GSC is mandated to make one of three possible decisions for each proposal: a) The proposal is rejected, b) the proposal is given initial approval for funding, or c) the proposal is provided with feedback for revision and re-submission. In the case of c) the applicant will be given two weeks to work with the SABI Programme Team to make revisions. Upon resubmission, the final decision for initial approval is delegated to the SABI Team Leader and CASL Country Manager.

Deliberations, decisions and reasons for decisions of the GSC will be minuted. Every applicant will be notified in writing of the GSC's decision explaining the basis for it, within one week of the GSC meeting.

### 3.3 Grant approval

Every applicant given initial approval by the GSC will then undergo a capacity and due diligence assessment by the SABI programme and finance teams.

The exercise will adopt a risk management approach depending on size of organisation and size of grant. In the absence of prior experience of working with the partner, the presumption will be that a full due diligence assessment will be undertaken. A traffic light system will be adopted providing an overall risk rating for the organisation and a detailed assessment of the financial management practices of each organisation, identifying areas of weakness. At this stage, the SABI Team can advise the GSC that an applicant fails to meet the minimum standards of organisational capacity and due diligence. The application may then be rejected. Alternatively, where it meets all other standards and criteria, the GSC may choose to prescribe corrective measures which will address the problem quickly and effectively.

The final list of applicants that satisfy the due diligence process will then be presented to DFID, via the SABI team leader, for their 'no objection' approval. All successful applicants will be notified in writing of the GSC's decision explaining the basis for the decision, and a list will be publicised on the SABI website.

## 4. APPLICATION PROCESS

### 4.1 General information

This is a **one-stage application process**. All applicants will be required to submit a full application form with budget, action plan and other supporting documentation.

Each grant will be for a **minimum of £15k** to a **maximum of £25k** (budgets are to be submitted in Leones for the sum of between Le 150m and Le 250m.) Projects are for a duration of one year, with

the option of a 6-month extension for the first round of grantees, at which point additional funds will be considered on submission of an addendum workplan and budget.

- Applications will be accepted online only to [SABIGrants@christian-aid.org](mailto:SABIGrants@christian-aid.org)
- Applications will be accepted only on the SABI Grants Application Form, and will be considered only if all supporting documentation is received.
- The deadline for submissions is **10 July 2018 23:59pm**. No proposals submitted after this deadline will be considered.
- You are required to respond to every question and to not exceed the stated word count for each section. If you do so, it may eliminate your application. Your submission should not exceed 12 pages, plus one additional page for project experience (Q 3.1).

## 4.2 Proposal guidance

The application form is divided into two sections:

### SECTION A – Organisation Eligibility

In this section you are required to evidence the relevant experience and sufficient capacity of your organisation to deliver your proposed project, including reference to your governance arrangements. If you are unable to answer yes to all of the partner eligibility criteria on the first page, please do not submit a proposal.

You are required to submit these documents along with your application:

- (1) Certificate of registration
- (2) Organisational Constitution
- (3) Activity Plan
- (4) Proposal budget
- (5) Audited accounts for past two years and copy of Grant Award Letter(s) as evidence of income for the past financial year

If your proposal is given initial approval, these documents will be requested as part of the due diligence process:

- (6) HR policies
- (7) Financial policies
- (8) Two reference letters [one of which must be from a donor listed under section 3.1]
- (9) Minutes of your last two Board meetings

### SECTION B – Project Proposal

In this section you are required to outline your project proposal with sufficient detail for it to be clear how you will respond to the objectives of the SABI grants programme. In order for your proposal to be considered, you have to be able to confirm that you meet SABI's GESI minimum standards. If you are unable to answer yes to all of the standards, please do not submit a proposal.

- All projects must respond to the SABI Grants Fund objectives and preference will be given to those which additionally respond to the gaps we have identified in our current implementation.
- Projects will only be considered which target the communities and wards in which SABI is already operational. These are set out on the [SABI website](#).

### 4.3 Further information

All information about the SABI Grants Fund can be found on the SABI website <http://sabi-sl.org/>. Questions for clarification can be directed to [SABIgrants@christian-aid.org](mailto:SABIgrants@christian-aid.org), and will be responded to within a week of receipt.

Additionally, the SABI team will be holding Information Sessions for potential applicants in each of the regional capitals (Bo, Kenema, Port Loko and Makeni) to outline the process and respond to questions relating to the call. Details of these sessions will be communicated via the SABI website.

## 5. COMMENCEMENT OF PARTNERSHIP

Every applicant given initial approval by the Grant Selection Committee will then undergo a capacity and due diligence assessment by the SABI programme and finance teams.

The final list of applicants that satisfy the due diligence process will then be presented to DFID, via the SABI team leader, for their 'no objection' approval. All successful applicants will be notified in writing of the GSC's decision explaining the basis for the decision, and a list will be publicised on the SABI website.

A Grant Agreement will be signed between the Grantee and Christian Aid.

SABI will hold a post-award orientation workshop for grantees to clarify their responsibilities, inform them of procedures and guidelines and to train them in project management, financial management and SABI's GESI approach. Attendance will be a condition of the grant and should be budgeted for in applicants' proposals.

It is anticipated that the whole process from the launch of the Grants Call to the disbursement of funds will take approximately 13 weeks.