



## Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Call for Project Proposals

### Strengthening the Capacities of Science Granting Councils in Gender and Inclusivity

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Science Granting Councils Initiative in sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI) invites project proposals from organizations (including think-tanks, institutes and agencies) with proven experience and track records to offer training and technical support to Science Granting Councils (and related organizations such as commissions or funds) in specific areas of gender and inclusivity<sup>1</sup> in science, technology and innovation (STI) namely : promoting (i) the equality and status of women in research environments, (ii) diversity and inclusivity beyond gender equality in research environments; and (iii) the sex, gender and inclusivity dimension in research design and content. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) will enter into an agreement with the successful organization<sup>2</sup> and issue a grant to cover the cost of the project for an implementation period of some 34 months.

#### SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (SGCI)

Launched in April 2015, the SGCI has been strengthening the capacities of fifteen Councils (*see Box 1*) in sub-Saharan African countries to achieve: (1) more effective research management practices among Councils; (2) strengthened ability of the Councils to design and monitor research programs and formulate and implement policies based on robust STI indicators; (3) increased ability of the Councils to promote knowledge transfer to the private sector; and 4) increased coordination and networking among Councils. The overarching goal is to strengthen the capacities of Councils in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. The Initiative's core funding partners are the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF). The Initiative is being implemented in two phases: SGCI-1 (2015-2020) and SGCI-2 (2018-2023). SGCI-2 has been

#### Box 1: SGCI participating countries

Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>1</sup> SGCI Councils have requested training and other forms of support to deepen their understanding of the history, definitions and terminology used in the discourse on gender equality, diversity and inclusivity in STI. As the various terms can be confusing, in the SGCI we have decided to use gender and inclusivity as an all-encompassing terminology. The successful proponent will be expected to adopt and expand the interpretation of this for the individual contexts of the Councils.

<sup>2</sup> The SGCI intends to fund a CTA consortium with one lead institution as the principal investigator. Constituting a consortium should consider language (as per the geographic spread of the Councils), international collaboration, practice, academia and research, and experience working with funding agencies. A consortium of two or more organizations may apply; IDRC will enter into an agreement with the lead organization.

designed to be more demand-led, responding to the priorities identified by the Councils individually and collectively. In addition to deepening the implementation of the four objectives above-outlined, two cross-cutting themes will be implemented, namely; research excellence and gender and inclusivity.

Capacity strengthening, and other forms of technical support are achieved through customized in-country/ onsite coaching as well as regional training courses and workshops implemented by teams of Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs). Research projects are also funded jointly with participating Councils. In-country training allows Councils' collaborators in universities and research institutes to participate and promotes peer-to-peer learning.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is a key element in the implementation of the SGCI. Various approaches are used to capture data, measure progress against the targets of the SGCI's logical framework and ensure that lessons are shared among all stakeholders. Regional Meetings and Annual Forums provide opportunity for on-going joint review and reflection by the Councils, the CTAs and the funders, while the Annual Review process brings together the funders and participating Councils to review progress made and draw recommendations for subsequent periods. Political economy case studies complement the MEL framework with an understanding of the political and economic contexts within which the Councils operate.

The SGCI's governance structure includes an Executive Committee (EC) responsible for high-level oversight, a panel of advisors (POA) to provide guidance and identify networking opportunities, a Councils Committee (CC) to ensure greater engagement of participating Councils, and a management team (known as the Initiative Management Team or IMT) responsible for the day-to-day management of the SGCI, including oversight of the projects supported by the SGCI.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), various UN and other high-level fora on women, African Union's Agenda 2063, the continent's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024 and frameworks championed by organisations, such as UNESCO, are instruments that advocate for greater and deepened efforts to support gender and inclusivity. Women researchers and other groups, remain underrepresented in STI programmes across the human capital development and leadership pipeline, both in Africa and globally. For instance, recent data from [UNESCO](#) show that women comprise less than 30% of researchers globally, with the largest share of women researchers in Africa coming from South Africa, Namibia, Egypt and Mauritius. Adopting equal opportunities and inclusivity approaches ensures that diverse groups of people can participate in the research and innovation landscape. STI can only lead to better, transformed lives for all when the concerns, abilities and needs of both males and females, and gender diverse groups, are taken into consideration throughout the research and innovation process. Currently there are increased calls for policy and implementation actions regarding the sex and gender dimensions in research design and content, as well as in internal institutional policies and practices. One example is the [Global Research Council \(GRC\) 2016 Statement of Principles and Actions on](#)

[Promoting the Status and Equality of Women in Research](#). Another is [IDRC's Equality Statement](#) adopted in 2019 which is intended to help the Centre achieve equality in all aspects of its work.<sup>3</sup>

Councils have a central role in national STI systems with functions ranging from funding research grants and scholarships, infrastructure development, and uptake of research findings, to collection of national data on R&D, STI advocacy and policy advice, and management of scientific collaborations on behalf of the state, to name just a few.<sup>4</sup> So it is critical that they have the capacities to advance gender and inclusivity in the execution of these functions.

There has been some progress already through the SGCI. Since its inception in 2014, the SGCI has advocated for greater focus on ways to support gender considerations in the work of Councils, culminating in the adoption of a gender mainstreaming framework and action plan in 2018 (*see appendix 1*). This addressed how CTAs were mainstreaming gender into their technical support to the Councils, notably through training curriculum and delivery, and in the selection of training participants and speakers. The SGCI has worked with the CTAs and Councils to involve them in discussions about gender and inclusivity, for example at the SARIMA dialogue on gender and diversity (2017), the 2018 SGCI Annual Forum, the 2019 SGCI Regional Meeting and the Global Forum on Women in Scientific Research (2019).

Many Councils also participate in the Global Research Council (GRC), which in 2016 endorsed the *Statement of Principles and Actions: Promoting the Equality and Status of Women in Research* (*see Appendix 2*), and which the Heads of Research Councils (HORCs) have been called upon to champion within their national science systems. Some case studies on how African Councils promote the equality and status of women in research were collated as part of a global report, titled [“Supporting Women in Research: Policies, Programmes and Initiatives Undertaken by Public Research Funding Agencies”](#), which was launched at the 2019 GRC Annual Meeting.

An annual benchmarking survey of the SGCI Councils, conducted by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), collects and analyses gender disaggregated data with a specific focus on the number and size of grants and Council staff. The results are shared individually with the Councils.

In SGCI-2, with the assistance of a CTA, it is the intention to support Councils to initiate and deepen various forms of strategies, activities, studies and additional mechanisms to implement cross-cutting work on gender and inclusivity.

## **PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

The overall goal of this project is to support the Councils to become gender-responsive and inclusive organizations, that support research and research environments that are gender transformative and inclusive, and promote STI policies and practices that are gender transformative and inclusive.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, as the statement notes, “IDRC supports the generation of knowledge – including by individuals from diverse genders, communities, histories, and experiences – that tackles the systems that perpetuate inequalities on the basis of identity”

<sup>4</sup> see Mouton et al, [Science Granting Councils in sub-Saharan Africa](#), 2014.

Achieving this goal could include work in three broad areas: **promoting the equality and status of women in research, diversity and inclusivity beyond gender equality, and the sex, gender and inclusivity dimension in research design and content.** The successful CTA will be encouraged to work closely with other SGCI CTAs, the SGCI MEL consultant, the IMT as well as other relevant groups such as the Gender Working Group (GWG) of the GRC. In proposing a set of activities, the CTA will need to consider how it will take into account national contexts. For example, some Councils may be interested in focusing on a specific aspect for a specified period.

### **(1) Promoting the equality and status of women in research**

To support the Councils to promote the equality and status of women in research, the CTA may propose a number of activities and approaches. The CTA may draw on the 2016 GRC *Statement of Principles and Actions: Promoting the Equality and Status of Women in Research*, which all Councils involved in the GRC have signed onto, and which outlines several actions that Councils might take to support the participation and promotion of women in the research workforce in their countries. These are further elaborated in the GRC booklet, [\*“Supporting Women in Research: Policies, Programmes and Initiatives Undertaken by Public Research Funding Agencies”\*](#). Also, relevant may be an ongoing survey by the GRC’s GWG on the trends in collecting and reporting data broken down by sex or gender, which will result in a report in May 2020. Some Councils may seek support to participate in the global work of the GWG (especially through its Africa regional representatives) in promoting the equality and status of women in research.

### **(2) Diversity and inclusivity beyond gender equality**

Research excellence is advanced considerably when a diversity of groups of people can participate as part of the human capital development pipeline, and in the research enterprise. Beyond the focus on gender equality and the status of women in research, and under the ambit of inclusivity, the CTA may propose supporting research papers, dialogues and compilations of policy briefs where good practices, perspectives and experiences are shared amongst Councils and their partners. For example, a study already underway involving the SGCI, the Organization of Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) South Africa National Chapter and the German Research Foundation (DFG) aims to contribute to greater understanding of intersectionality in the context of research funding. Intersectional perspectives recognize that the combination of elements of identity (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, social status) creates certain circumstances that can produce oppression and discrimination. The CTA may consider how to support Councils to prioritise research that addresses these inequalities and aims to prevent or reduce the impact of inequalities on these populations.

### **(3) The sex, gender and inclusivity dimension in research design and content**

As underscored in several studies and reports including the 2016 GRC Statement of Principles and Actions, there are important reasons for considering the gender dimension in research and encouraging its development. There is a direct correlation between knowledge production that takes into consideration the concerns, abilities and needs of diverse groups of people and research excellence. A gendered scientific discourse contributes positively to how scientific priorities are decided, the parameters of research questions, how research teams are composed, how funding decisions are made, the methodologies used in conducting research, the findings and conclusions reported, and finally, the way suggestions for future studies are formulated. The selected CTA may propose ways to support Councils to ensure that research they fund considers the sex, gender and inclusivity dimension across the research cycle, and specifically the research projects funded in collaboration with SGCI as part of SGCI-2.

## APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

Applicants are expected to present how they will support and work with Councils and other possible collaborators as indicated above. Examples of activities include, but not limited to, the following:

- Conduct a short needs assessment exercise that draws on existing knowledge and explores underpinning issues and aspects of gender and inclusivity in the various Councils, to inform training and other forms of technical support.
- Support updating of the SGCI gender and inclusivity framework and action plan, including a framework for monitoring and tracking the impact of these approaches on gender and inclusivity indicators, in collaboration with the MEL consultant.
- Provide training and technical support to the Councils on the fundamentals of sex, gender and inclusivity in STI.
- Support roundtables involving the SGCs and other relevant actors on gender and inclusivity.
- Support collaborative activities with other initiatives working on gender and inclusivity.
- Support to the Councils develop individual gender and inclusivity policies, strategies and action plans.

## TIMELINE AND BUDGET

Activity	Description	Scheduled Dates
<b>Call for expressions of interest and review process</b>	Call for proposals open	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
	Deadline for submission of proposals	3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2020
	Review of proposals	April 2020
	Results of review process communicated to all applicants	May 2020
<b>Finalisation of implementation work-plan, signing of grant agreement</b>	Successful applicant will finalise the workplan and IDRC will prepare the project document and grant agreement	May 2020
<b>Project Implementation Period (34 months)</b>	Selected technical service provider implements the gender and inclusivity theme	June 2020 – March 2023 1 <sup>st</sup> June

The budget available for this project is up to CAD1,800,000 (all inclusive) over 34 months. **Applicants must submit a draft budget in an Excel document.**

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND DEADLINE

The application should comprise: (1) a proposal of 15 – 20 pages; (2) detailed CVs of lead contributors in the consortium clearly indicating relevant experience; (3) brief CVs of additional contributors in the consortium; (3) a proposed work plan; and (4) a proposed budget in Excel.

Proposals should be submitted in English in Word format. They should be concise and include the following elements at a minimum:

1. Title, name, address and contacts of the project leader and name and address of the applicant organization;
2. Executive summary;
3. Project background and rationale;

4. General and specific objectives;
5. Approach/ methodology and activities;
6. Expected outputs and outcomes<sup>5</sup>;
7. Collaboration with other organizations or initiatives;
8. Ethical considerations;
9. Risks and possible mitigation measures;
10. Organizational profile and key personnel.

### PROJECT TEAM REQUIREMENTS

The Principal Investigator (PI) should come from the lead organization submitting a proposal.

The key requirements for the project team members include the following:

- Experience in STI and related policies within the context of Sub Saharan Africa
- Experience in various aspects of gender and inclusivity in relation to STI
- Experience organizational capacity strengthening, preferably involving Councils in Africa;
- Experience in working in framework of collaborative projects;
- Familiarity with initiatives and plans promoting the equality and status of women in research, diversity and inclusivity beyond gender equality, such as the Global Research Council (GRC) 2016 Statement of Principles and Actions on Promoting the Status and Equality of Women in Research, and works on how African Councils promote the equality and status of women in research;
- Ability to work in both English and French is essential and teams without this capability will not be evaluated. Ability to work in Portuguese will be an added advantage.

### EVALUATION GRID

The Proposals will be reviewed by the **SGCI IMT** and scored using a 60-point scale as follows:

Criteria	Score
Clarity of proposal, showing a clear and nuanced understanding of the project requirements	15
Coherence and soundness of the methodology and approach, including appropriateness for Councils in sub-Saharan Africa	15
Level of experience and expertise of team members in all areas relevant to the project's implementation	10
Involvement of members based in sub-Saharan Africa in the project team	10
Feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and proposed timeline	5
Ability to work in French	5

Applicants should submit proposals by e-mail to [SGCSSA@idrc.ca](mailto:SGCSSA@idrc.ca) with a copy to [lochanda@idrc.ca](mailto:lochanda@idrc.ca) by **the deadline of 23:59 East Africa Time on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020**. Any enquiries should be directed to [SGCSSA@idrc.ca](mailto:SGCSSA@idrc.ca) with a copy to [lochanda@idrc.ca](mailto:lochanda@idrc.ca)

<sup>5</sup> Research papers, Policy briefs and/or Guidelines documenting experiences, approaches and/or emerging discourses on gender and inclusivity in STI