Small Grants for Scaled Impact (SGSI): Collaboration for Improved Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health

Call for Concept Notes for Issuing Small Grants to Improve Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescents Health (SRMNCAH)

Background: CORE Group's mission is to improve and expand community health practices for underserved populations, especially women, children, and adolescents through collaborative action and learning. We bring together leading technical experts to address global public health issues by creating a collaborative and neutral space, promoting the sharing of knowledge resulting in improved capacity at the local, regional, and global level.

Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (SRMNCAH) services are essential for achieving the goal of Universal Health Coverage and the Strategic Development Goal of attaining good health and well-being for people. Evidence suggests that there is a high unmet need for modern contraception among women of reproductive age in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly among adolescents. Additionally, the risk of a woman in a low-income country dying from maternal-related causes during her lifetime is about 130 times higher compared to a woman living in a high-income country. Worldwide, an estimated 2.5 million newborns died in 2018, and neonatal deaths account for 47 percent of all under-five deaths. Although there has been progress in child survival, the COVID-19 pandemic has left children and adolescents with health needs that have gone unmet.

Purpose of the small grants: The CORE Group will issue small grants with the purpose of engaging, in a participatory approach, with eligible Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in a collaborative effort to address key barriers for improving SRMNCAH services and outcomes in two priority countries**: Ethiopia and Kenya.**

The small grants program will contribute to advancing SRMNCAH programming, policy, and interventions in two priority countries by providing financial, technical, and organizational resources to local women-led, youth-led, and people living with disabilities-led organizations. This approach will strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of local and national organizations to design and implement community-based solutions to SRMNCAH challenges, focusing on gender transformation, quality of care, and health equity.

Grant size and eligibility criteria for grant receivers: At this stage, CORE Group is preparing to issue a total of five grants:

1. Two grants of up to $200,000, for organizations operating five years or more, to be implemented within 18 – 24 months.
2. Three grants of up to $90,000 each, for organizations operating 1 – 5 years to be implemented within 18 – 24 months.

The grants will be issued to successful eligible NGOs or CSOs applicants from the two priority countries**. Eligibility criteria include:**

1. Local NGOs or CSOs that are registered in the country, and can provide evidence of official, current registration.

2. NGOs or CSOs that are led by women, youth, or people with disabilities,

3. NGOs or CSOs with an organizational presence in the (proposed) geographic implementation sites/community,

Steps of grant issuing and timeframe: The initial step for receiving a grant is to submit a successful Concept Note summarizing the key barrier in SRMNCAH that will be addressed, the objective/s of the intervention, a description of the intervention methodology/approach, the geographic location, the time frame (from 18 to 24 months), the implementation arrangement, and the monitoring and evaluation plan. The second step will be, upon Concept Note's acceptance, CORE Group will engage with the successful NGO/CSO applicants in developing a detailed proposal and a budget. The specifics of the detailed proposal and budget development will be shared later with the successful Concept Notes applicants.

A summary of the expected timeframe for issuing and implementing the grants is as follows:

1. Reviewing and evaluating concept notes: 1 month.
2. Selecting and communicating with selected NGOs/CSOs capacity assessment and grant preparedness: 1 month.
3. Engaging in organizational capacity strengthening mechanisms and technical proposal development webinars, discussions, feedback, and finalizing participatory full proposal development. 1 month
4. Grant issuing and implementation: 18 to 24 months.

Organizational Capacity Strengthening: One of the objectives of the grant is to strengthen the capacity of local NGOs/CSOs. CORE Group will provide free technical assistance to NGOs/CSOs receiving grants to strengthen their organizational capacity in various areas according to the specific needs of each NGO/CSO and scope of the grant. Examples of capacity strengthening topics can include:

1. Organizational policies and structure.
2. Developing quality proposals.
3. How to implement programs.
4. Collecting and analyzing data.
5. How to document results and write effective reports.
6. Leadership and governance
7. Financial systems and management
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Networking, and Partnership
10. Organizational Risk Management Framework
11. Project Cycle Management

Concept Notes Topics: SRMNCAH programs face multiple challenges and barriers causing lack of access, poor quality, or low utilization of high impact life-saving interventions. However, not all the barriers are

equal in their magnitude and impact. Concept Notes should address key barriers to implementing high impact interventions. These are the barriers that severely hinder the ability of the target population to benefit from high impact SRMNCAH interventions and contribute to the high maternal, newborn, and child mortality. Hence, to maximize the impact of the limited grants, the Concept Notes are to address one of the following key barriers:

1. Unmet need for modern contraception to women in rural areas.
2. Early marriage/pregnancy of adolescent girls.
3. Family planning interventions targeting adolescents
4. Access of women and newborns to emergency obstetrics and neonatal care in rural areas.
5. Home delivery, particularly for women in rural communities, Ethiopia only.
6. Maternal, Newborn and Child Nutrition
7. Ineffective management of childhood fever at the community level.
8. Increased vaccination for children under five including zero dose children
9. Unmet Maternal and Child health needs for refugees or internally displaced population.
10. Unmet Sexual and reproductive health needs of special groups e.g., women with disabilities, (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer) LGTBQ population, and other special groups.
11. Other key barriers to SRMNCAH. Concept Notes should adequately describe what the other barrier is.

Please NOTE: Advocacy is NOT a defined intervention area; For the purposes of uniformity in review, all concept notes should be submitted in English.

Guidelines for submitting a Concept Note: The concept note should not be more than **seven pages.** It should be written in English in a concise language including the following topics:

1. **Include a brief description of the applicant NGO/CSO:** Include the name of the applicant NGO/CSO, the address, the name and contact information of the organization and the key contact person, her/his email address and telephone number, the date of the organization's registration, a brief description of the capacity of the organization (staffing, structure, size of operations, location of organization headquarters, number and distribution of the organization's branch offices, experience in general and in RMNCAH related grants, if any, managing similar grants in the last three years, and presence or experience in other countries, if any. (Suggested 1 page).

2. **Specify which grant size you are applying for:** This could be the larger grant (up to $200,000), or the smaller grant (up to $90,000).

3. **Specify the selected topic of the Concept Note and the rationale for the selection:** Select the key barrier for the implementation of high impact SRMNCAH interventions (from the list above) that will be addressed by the grant. Explain briefly the reasons for selecting this barrier in the context of your country and local situation and provide key evidence/examples in your country. Justify the selection of the barrier with data when possible. (Suggested ½ a page)

   If the selected barrier is under the category of "other key barriers", please explain why the barrier is considered key in your country and local context

4. **Describe the intervention to address the selected barrier:** This should include the specific objective/s of the community-based intervention/solution, anticipated higher level results (outcomes) and specific activities to be undertaken in the life of the grant, the approach/methodology for implementing the intervention, the geographic location of the intervention and the integration with main office/existing programs, the staff who will be responsible for the implementation, the administrative and financial/reporting arrangements for implementing the grant, the NGO/CSO's capacity to prepare quality technical and financial reports, the local stakeholders involved in the implementation, and a clear work plan including the time frame of the intervention. (Suggested 2 pages)

5. **Describe the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Include the main indicators that will be measured to monitor the anticipated results of the intervention in achieving the grant's objective/s, the data collection methods and tools, and the data analysis and utilization methods along with means of verification. Explain how you will incorporate gender principles/indicators. (Suggested 1 page).

6. **Describe the plan for utilizing the experience and results of the intervention at a wider scale:** The results of the grant should be used to advocate for a wide scale policy change, service delivery operational improvement, or effective community engagement approaches. This section should include a list of key stakeholders at the national and sub-national level who are targeted to utilize the experience and the results of the grant to achieve a wide scale improvement in addressing the selected barrier. Include a brief description of the approach that will be implemented to engage with the key stakeholders to get their buy-in to endorse the results of the grant for wider-scale implementation. (Suggested 1 page).

7. **Describe the needs for your organizational capacity strengthening:** Provide background and some detail to the organizational capacity strengths and areas need improvement (gaps) specific to your organization. This section should explicitly present evidence based and prioritized organizational capacity gaps, the desired state of the organization after addressing the gaps, participatory approach to materialize the intervention, organizational commitment on this and willingness to share learning with peer NGOs and CSOs in Ethiopia and Kenya among others. Select from the example organizational development elements included above under "Organizational Capacity Strengthening" or include other organizational pillars/elements relevant to the specific needs of your organization. (Suggested 1 page).

8. **Budget:** Proposed activities to meet the objectives set should be clearly budgeted. Budget amounts indicated by the concept note should reflect a detailed and accurate estimation acceptable by the market and reasonable and should reflect proposed activities.

Informational session on Concept Notes development: Interested NGOs/CSOs can register to participate in a webinar to provide elaboration on the purpose and the approach of the small grants project.

The session will be held on Thursday, June 10th, 2025, at 2.30 pm East African Time. Click here to register for the session.

Concept Notes Evaluation Criteria:

CORE Group will evaluate all concept notes through an evaluation committee based on pre-established criteria including:

1. Eligibility status of the applicant organization: Only concept notes from eligible NGOs/CSOs will be considered (see eligibility criteria above). NGOs/CSOs that submit a high quality concept note will be asked to provide proof of current in-county registration.

2. Capacity of applicant NGO/CSO: CORE Group encourages small organizations with limited capacity to apply. However, to ensure the success of the grant implementation, the applicant organization needs to possess the basic staffing, financial system and administrative capability to implement the grant. This should include the technical capacity of staff, the system

3. to ensure administrative and financial management and accountability, the extent of the presence of the NGO/CSO in the area of grant implementation, and the relationship of the organization with key decision makers at the local and national levels.

4. Clarity of the proposed intervention: Including clarity of stated objective/s (specific, measurable, realistic, with a specific time frame). Clarity and soundness of the implementation methodology/approach as described in the guidelines above.

5. Clarity and soundness of the Work Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation plan: As per guidelines above.

6. Clarity and soundness of the overall grant for utilizing the experience and results of the intervention at a wider scale: As per guidelines above.

Concept notes submission deadline and email address:

Eligible applicants should submit their concept note by: June 25, 2025

Concept notes should be sent by email attachment to: Grants@Coregroup.org

The email subject line should be Concept Note Application on SGSI – name of NGO/CSO/Country of Applicant

The email should include the name of the contact person, her/his email address and mobile number.