



Co-Impact

Sourcing for regional and country practice-focused research grants in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in 2022-23

Overview timeline 2022

June-August:	Networking, sourcing, conversations with potential partner organizations
August/September (rolling):	2-4 organizations notified of invitation to submit proposals and due diligence documentation
September/October:	Due diligence process alongside proposal development & review
Early October:	Full proposals and due diligence materials submitted
October/November:	Proposals reviewed, decisions finalized; grant agreements prepared & executed

Purpose

Co-Impact's new [Gender Fund](#) aims to raise and deploy US \$1 billion over the next decade to support predominantly women-led Global South organizations with the large, long-term, and flexible funding needed to transform systems to be more just and inclusive, advance women's power, agency and leadership at all levels and shift harmful gender norms that prevent progress towards equality¹. The 10-year goals of the Gender Fund are:

- More than 100 million people will have better healthcare, quality education, and opportunity to work and thrive – regardless of gender, ethnicity, caste, or race.
- There will be more women leading at all levels from the household and community to institutions and government, influencing decisions that affect their communities and society.
- Discriminatory norms about women's roles will be challenged and shifted

¹ Co-Impact uses the terms 'woman', 'women' and 'gender' throughout to be inclusive of people across the gender spectrum.

One of the [Gender Fund 10-year outcomes](#) is to make a **significant contribution the body of evidence** on how to advance women's leadership and gender equality at scale; and in doing so to **strengthen practitioner-oriented research and learning** through:

- Improved evidence of how to advance women's leadership and gender transformative programs at scale
- Increased use of evidence for advocacy and influence
- Improved learning and continual improvement among program partners
- Increased participation of women in the Global South countries in research production and dissemination

In line with the above objectives, we are looking for practitioner-oriented and value-aligned research and learning organizations that actively bridge knowledge and practice, have the capacity to synthesize lessons across contexts, and are positioned to influentially disseminate those lessons. One of the core values which we will seek alignment on is the shifting of power of knowledge production (in the shape of e.g. funds, agenda-setting, ownership, publications, etc.) from entities in the Global North to those in the Global South, particularly those driven by equity principles.

We recognize the persistent problem of research that is disconnected from practice. The research conducted under the Gender Fund will therefore primarily serve the needs and interests of practitioners (including but not limited to our program partners). That is why **it is paramount to Co-Impact that research partners have a track record of close collaboration with practitioners and can make a compelling case that the proposed research corresponds to practitioners' needs, will be co-created and of direct use to practitioners.**

As an important secondary purpose the research should contribute to local, regional, or global knowledge.

Who is "a practitioner"? By practitioners we mean an organization or entity that is dedicated to implementing initiatives to promote gender equality. It includes but is not limited to civil society, government, women's groups, feminist movements, and activists.

In 2022-23 we have an opportunity to make a limited number of practice-focused research grants with three linked objectives:

1. to expand and deepen the work of practice-oriented and value-aligned research entities in generating evidence on how to promote gender equality and women's leadership in the Global South (see the section below on themes for more detail); leaning in especially into the connection between data / evidence and improved decision making (for programs and / or policies), and demonstrating the effectiveness of that approach
2. to set up and/or manage mechanisms which explicitly support learning, measurement, adaptation, reflection and evaluation capacities of practitioners (including but not limited to Co-Impact program partners);
3. generate and actively disseminate (at country, regional, and/or global levels) insights and lessons on cross-cutting learning questions on how to work with systems so that they are more equitable and just, and how to contribute towards gender equitable outcomes, women's agency, and women in leadership.

Grant size & term

We expect grant awards to range between US \$300,000 and \$1,500,000 for proposed work spanning between 12 months and 5 years.

We are currently sourcing for aligned partner organizations and expect to make a limited number of grants in 2022, and further grants in 2023.

We may suggest that a multi-year grant begins with an “inception period” (of 6-12 months) to give the partner organization the opportunity to further develop certain components of the proposal. The final parameters of the grant (scope, timeline and amount) can be adjusted following the insight gathered during the inception period.

Organization Selection Process

Co-Impact is inviting a group of organizations to a series of preliminary conversations selected through a combination of sources including a desk review and conversations with funders, experts, and practitioners. The list of identified organizations is neither comprehensive nor complete; and in future years we expect to review our approach and expand the groups to which we reach out. Through these conversations we will explore alignment of core components such as strategy, track record, and goals.

Based on these conversations in which we'll explore alignment, Co-Impact will request organizations to develop a full proposal (~5,000 words), and will simultaneously begin a review of due diligence with the candidate organization. Proposals will be reviewed internally as well as by external advisors with expertise in research, gender and equity in the Global South.

When considering a grant, we may suggest that a multi-year grant begins with an “inception period” (6-12 months) to give the partner organization the opportunity to further develop certain components of the proposal. The final parameters of the grant (scope, timeline and amount) can be adjusted following the insight gathered during the inception period.

An invitation to submit a proposal does not mean that a grant will be awarded. Co-Impact may consult with partner organizations, experts and other third parties about the information provided in the proposal. The final decision will be made at the sole determination of Co-Impact considering the best fit for the Co-Impact portfolio.

Detailed timeline for grants made in 2022

We expect to award a very limited number (2-3) grants in 2022, and a further number of grants under the same approach in 2023.

Please note that grants made in 2022 will follow the timeline below. Grants made in 2023 will follow the same selection process and flow, but with adjusted approximate dates.

July - August: Co-Impact will conduct a set of preliminary conversations with potential partners. We may at this early stage also request the potential partner to provide us with basic information on the organization (e.g., country of incorporation, type of organization, board composition, FCRA certificate status, etc).

August/September (rolling): Co-Impact request proposals (~5,000 words)

September/October: Due diligence conducted alongside proposal development & review

Early October: Full proposals and due diligence materials submitted

October/November: Proposals are internally & externally reviewed and decisions finalized; grant agreements prepared & executed

Themes and research approaches

Themes & areas of interest:

Co-Impact seeks research initiatives (with a compelling case that the research process and findings will be a significant contribution to practitioners) which propose to undertake one or more of the following areas of work:

- Examine the trajectory, failures and successes of initiatives that have sought to promote **gender equitable outcomes, in health, education, and economic opportunity, as well as women's agency, at scale, and ideally working through government or market systems²**.
 - Within health, we focus on primary health care and call out specifically sexual and reproductive health and rights but are open to a range of health areas and outcomes.
 - Within education, we call out specifically learning outcomes, literacy and numeracy, progression to secondary education, and acquisition of “critical skills”; but are open to other education-related outcomes.
 - Within economic outcomes, we call out specifically income, employment, assets, and savings, but are open to other economic outcomes.
 - Women's agency (i.e., ability to make decisions and act on those decisions) can be integrated within or linked to health, education, and economic outcomes, and can also be examined on its own.
 - We will give preference to proposals which examine initiatives that are able to have impact at scale and are able to influence and shape key institutions and systems (for example, policies or regulation on sexual and reproductive health and their implementation through the layers of a system, from normative to front-line service providers). Pilot initiatives are of interest only if also implemented at scale, i.e., through institutions and systems.
- Examine the trajectory, failures, and successes of initiatives to promote **women's leadership in the sectors of health, education, and economic opportunity, as well as the professional and academic fields of law and economics**. We are interested in research on initiatives that address various points of entry and progression of women through these sectors and fields into positions of leadership, including efforts to expand women's power and agency to make decisions.

² See for example these recent [reviews of evidence](#)

- We are particularly interested in institutional policies and practices that support or advance women's leadership, in contrast to supporting individual leaders. However, the combination of institutional and individual initiatives, or initiatives which network leaders, is welcome.
- We are also interested in research which explores the link between leadership and institutional outcomes, as well as outcomes for people in domains of health, education, economic opportunity.
- Describe and analyze **contextually specific barriers** in the region or country that hold back progress on gender equality, and which, if addressed, would significantly move the needle on progress. *Research which links barriers with an examination of practices to overcome those barriers will be prioritized over research which is limited to a description of barriers only.*
 - We signal interest in barriers holding back women's substantive equality that have been highlighted through recent global research, such as **unpaid care (or lack of quality childcare) and other unpaid work; fear of violence or harassment in the workplace, at home or in public spaces; curtailed reproductive rights; and discriminatory gender norms.**
 - In addition, we are open to other barriers that research partners, together with practitioners, consider to be critical in their particular context.

We recognize the unprecedented ways in which COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated systemic, deep-rooted inequalities, especially the disproportionate way it has affected marginalized women and girls. We encourage applicants to consider these in preliminary conversations and their proposals.

Research type / approach:

We welcome a range of approaches, including but not limited to analytical case studies, descriptive or formative research, action research, feminist ethnography, one or more stages of implementation research (e.g., operations, intervention, or evaluation), etc. The most important criteria are that the chosen approach is well-suited to the question/topic of inquiry and aligned with ethical research principles.

We will give preference to initiatives which:

- Are **developed jointly with practitioners**, or clearly build on a practitioner agenda, including setting of the research question and methodologies (by practitioners we mean for example civil society, government, women's groups, feminist movements, activists, etc.)
- Make the case that the **research is relevant, applicable and of priority to practitioners** in specific regional or country contexts; and outline how the process of the research as well as the outputs align with or support the practitioner agenda.
- Include purpose-built and tested **mechanisms to support practitioners** in further developing learning, measurement, evaluation, adaptation and reflection capacities
- Include **diverse voices and perspectives** in developing the research methodologies, as well as in its implementation and dissemination of results.
- Use a **mix of methods**, including but not limited to participatory research, feminist evaluation, etc.
- Align with the principles in the [Equitable Evaluation Framework](#)

- Include **an intersectional lens** to the research process and results, i.e., how gender interacts with other inequalities depending on context (e.g., class, race, caste, etc.)
- Outline a compelling plan as to **how the results will be used** / applied (by whom, for what), including closing the loop with those who generated the findings.
- Include a compelling plan of how the knowledge generated will actively contribute to **country, regional, or global knowledge gaps**.

Important Considerations:

Geographical Focus: The proposed research initiative must include at least one of the countries specified below, although it does not need to be limited to the countries on this list. Regional initiatives are encouraged. Cross-regional initiatives will be considered, provided they make a convincing argument that they benefit practitioners based in one or more of the countries listed below. We envision awarding grants so that there is representation from each *geographic region*.

Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa.

Asia: India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

Latin America: Brazil, Mexico, and Peru.

Practitioner-orientation: We will give preference to entities that can convincingly demonstrate a track record of generating research and evidence that is collaborative with and inclusive of communities it seeks to serve, and co-created with, and useful to, practitioners working on gender equality and women leadership problems.

Outcome focused: As part of making a compelling case that research is relevant and will be applied to improve policy, programs or practice, we encourage potential partners to articulate the envisioned outcomes - or effects - of the research (rather than just research activities and outputs). This rationale can be articulated as a start of a theory of change or theory of action. That said, we understand that research and evidence are usually just one component in the complex endeavor of promoting systems to be more just and equitable. We therefore encourage potential partners to paint the picture of the wider context as well as situate their own contribution to change within it.

Scale: We do not have specific requirements for scale of the research itself but will look for a persuasive argument of why the proposed lessons and evidence will be useful for impact at scale, i.e., addressing systemic problems, or contributing to systems change.

Organization & leadership:

- Partnerships between multiple organizations are possible but not required. Partnerships should designate a lead organization, and proposals must specify the contribution of each partner organization.
- For-profit organizations are eligible provided the primary objective of the effort is to achieve the generation of insights, lessons, and evidence for public benefit, as described above.
- We will give preference to initiatives that are substantively led by women. We define "substantive women's leadership" as both the primary leader and a significant portion of

the initiative's leadership are women. Exceptions will be considered for initiatives which are hosted or fiscally sponsored by non-female-led institutions.