

British Embassy Kathmandu.
CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES
Samartha – Citizens' Voice & Social Accountability in Social Sectors

Deadline for submission of concept note: 2nd September 2024 at 23:59 (Kathmandu time)

Summary

This is a programme funded by UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), supporting the portfolio of the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK) in Nepal. The agreement will follow FCDO accountable grant agreement (AGA) process, rules and regulations.

Up to £3 million will be made available over 3 years to eligible non-governmental organisations working in social sectors in Nepal. There is a potential to extend this for an additional 2 years, with an additional £2 million available for this extension. This funding will be allocated through the potential extension of a single award.

Introduction

Nepal's recent history is dominated by natural disasters (including the 2015 mega-earthquake), the transition into a federal republic, and the immediate and protracted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These significant occurrences have slowed progress in key areas of human development, from maternal and child health to learning outcomes, threatening the achievement of key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets by 2030.

This accountable grant is part of BEK's new social sectors' governance programme, ***Samartha***, which plans to invest a total of £38.8 million over seven years. Samartha will support the Government of Nepal (GoN) to protect, sustain and expand hard-won gains in human development achieved over the last two decades and put delivery of basic services back on track to achieving 2030 SDGs targets. The programme will:

- support Local, Provincial and Federal governments to translate their constitutional mandates into people-centred policies and service delivery;
- improve the allocation and use of intergovernmental transfers to expand and improve delivery of essential social services;
- increase accountability and citizens' participation, especially of women and marginalised groups, in the planning and oversight of social services.

To do this, the programme will support federal, provincial, and local government programming to deliver better human development outcomes and leverage Government and other development partners' spend in the following areas:

- Improved governance of social sectors across levels of government, with a specific focus on local level service delivery and staff capability, by improving their capacity and political appetite to plan, budget, rationally allocate and spend public resources.
- Increased accountability and responsiveness to citizen demands in social sectors by strengthening social accountability and participatory processes at the local level.
- Expanded access to quality services with a focus on excluded and marginalised groups by developing and implementing sectoral policies on gender equality and social inclusion that are integrated into local governments' plans.

The proposed programme represents an evolution from successful legacy UK investments in the health and education sectors. It is part of a shift in BEK's strategy to prioritise more comprehensively and coherently the needs and rights of women, girls and vulnerable people. BEK is focusing on governance strengthening efforts by sub-national governments to support

equitable delivery of quality basic services, as per the mandates prescribed in the 2015 Nepal Constitution.

Samartha will support Nepal in building responsive and resilient systems to enhance the delivery of social services outcomes (with a focus on health and education) within the context of a federal constitutional commitment. The programme will do so by supporting intergovernmental coordination, rational and evidence-based planning and budgeting, expanding access to quality services, and improving both citizens participation in decision-making and responsiveness and preparedness to shocks.

Samartha's objectives and links to this grant

At the impact level, Samartha will contribute to improved human development and gender outcomes, enhancing the Nepal's trajectory towards a stable and prosperous middle-income country.

At the outcome level, the programme will support the Government of Nepal to sustainably and equitably deliver their constitutional mandates and human development commitments.

The programme will focus on four intermediate outcome areas:

Intermediate Outcome Area 1. Improved governance of social services in selected provincial and local governments and at federal level ensures that they deliver on their constitutional mandates, with adequate and more efficient planning, budgeting and spending in social sectors.

Intermediate Outcome Area 2. Access to quality services is expanded in selected provinces and local governments, with a focus on underserved and under-represented groups, by operationalising sectoral plans & policies and mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion within local delivery plans.

Intermediate Outcome Area 3. Demand for and social accountability of social services by intended beneficiaries increases, with citizens more empowered and better informed to challenge decision-makers and expect fulfilment of their basic constitutional rights.

Intermediate Outcome Area 4. Proactive planning for and preparedness against emergencies (including public health crises) and effective response capacity to disasters that impact on social services' business continuity.

Interventions

This AGA will focus on *Intermediate Outcome Area 3* described above. The aim behind this delivery area is to increase demand for social services by communities and individuals (including from marginalised groups) and enhance the control exercised by citizens on public sector officials. Specifically, the objectives of this AGA are to:

- 1) Increase the involvement of civil society movements / platforms / networks in human development issues, with a focus on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) dimensions of social services.
- 2) Increase citizens' engagement in the planning, prioritising and monitoring the delivery of social services

By investing in citizens' awareness, participation and social accountability interventions, the expectation is that citizens will be more empowered and better informed to engage and negotiate with decision-makers, participate in planning and delivery of social services and expect the fulfilment of their basic constitutional rights.

Some outcomes BEK expected to achieve through this AGA include:

- An enhanced appreciation of the importance of human development and social sectors' interventions, both among leaders and through community champions to allow communities and individuals to understand and use information on essential services (including right to access)
- Increased provincial and local political leadership engagement with citizens and the adoption of deliberative and inclusive decision-making, with a focus on the inclusion of women and girls (for instance through appropriate and realistic use of mothers and female community groups) and other excluded groups (such as people with disabilities, Dalits and other minorities. For instance, through representative committees that are consulted on local government planning decisions).
- Citizens-led tracking of social service delivery and the use of scarce resources e.g., through social audits and other tools to improve transparency and accountability through civic engagement, as well as other deliberative decision techniques to monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- Demand-led improvements in the quality of teaching and quality of care, including a focus on public providers' behaviour change.

Interventions could include for instance:

- Bespoke capacitation and support to formal and informal civil society (where civil society is intended in its most loose sense of *all forms of social actors - individuals or groups - who are neither connected to nor managed by state authorities*)
- Non-financial technical support to issues-based citizens' platforms, networks, rights-based associations, movements & coalitions
- Support to the development of guidance for enhancing citizen engagement and accountability in social sectors
- Set-up of transparency, communication and data platforms on social services entitlements and quality of service delivery to inform citizens
- Reintroduction / strengthening of social audits for social services

The list above is just illustrative, and prospective implementing partners should feel free to dismiss the above suggestions and propose their approach to strengthening citizens' voice and action in social services.

Coordination and collaboration with other actors

It is important that this programme ensures effective coordination and collaboration with other actors and programmes. These include:

- BEK's complementary programmes that deal with governance, justice, gender issues, locally-led development;
- Other donors' and development partners' programmes working in similar thematic areas as in the previous point, with a focus on the geographic areas of Lumbini and Madhesh.
- Established local civil society (as loosely defined above)
- Academia and professional associations
- Government authorities, where relevant.

Geographic Prioritisation

As mentioned above, project activities will be primarily focussed on the provinces of Lumbini and Madhesh, with a focus on areas that have relatively low human development indicators and show multiple dimensions of vulnerability. However, the programme should have the flexibility to change and adapt based on identified needs and opportunities.

Locations proposed should be places where the organisation has a comparative advantage to offer such support (thematically and/or operationally).

Eligibility

The programme will be delivered through an initial accountable grant to an organisation whose primary purpose is not for profit (and for which we have verified its status). This will enable civil society, non-government or not-for-profit organisations to approach BEK with a proposal for funding for this work. The Call for Concept Notes is open to eligible organisations present and able to work in Nepal, who can deliver high quality activities as outlined above, have a proven operational record in the prioritised geographies and thematic areas, and can deliver value for money (VfM) for BEK and beneficiaries. Applicants must show that they're allowed to operate in Nepal according to the relevant legislation.

Only one proposal will be eventually retained. While there's no requirement for consortia, partnership with local actors is encouraged, as long as value for money is assured. In the case of partnerships or consortia, there must be an identified lead partner which will be subject to a Due Diligence Assessment by BEK Nepal, as per FCDO policies. The lead partner will need to provide assurance that Due Diligence Assessments will be carried out for other partners.

While there is no set limit on number of consortia members, the partnerships must be rational and avoid inefficient spread of administrative costs, and ideally favour a significant degree of localisation. Local partners should have relevant experience and expertise in the sub-themes where they are leading engagement with communities and local governments. An explanation of how the consortia will be able to take agile approaches and design interventions should be provided.

Funding from BEK will only be channelled through the lead consortia partner, who will then be responsible for disbursement to sub-leads and conducting downstream due diligence.

NOTE that only organisations that underwent a successful Due Diligence Assessment with FCDO / BEK within the last five years, or which can prove that they have undergone similarly stringent vetting processes by USAID or the EU within the same period, will be eligible to apply as lead partners for this AGA.

Expected Duration

Funding will be provided for a first phase of up to three years, beginning in late 2024 / early 2025. There is an ambition to extend this funding for an additional two years and £2 million.

BEK will develop a performance management framework to monitor progress and will reserve the right to terminate agreements if performance falls below expectations.

Process

The concept note is the first stage in this process and will be expected to align the template provide in Annex 1.

Applicants are invited to submit concept notes by **2 September 2024**, 23:59 by e-mail to bekathmandu@fcdo.gov.uk, with the subject heading **Samartha AGA**. Concept notes received after this deadline will not be considered. The concept note should not exceed eight (8) pages, font Arial pt. 11, based on the template annexed to this Call. Within the concept note, it must be evident that proposed interventions meet the criteria indicated above related to: interventions,

geographic prioritisation; eligibility; coordination and collaboration with other actors; and expected duration.

Any technical or procedural query should be submitted to the above-mentioned emails by August 16, 23:59. Responses will be circulated to all original recipients by August 23.

After receipt and review of the concept notes, BEK will invite shortlisted applicants to submit a full proposal of up to 20 pages in September 2024. BEK will only notify shortlisted applicants and will not be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful concept note submissions.

After receipt and review of the full proposals, BEK may invite applicants to meet to discuss questions and comments on their proposals, after which they may be invited to re-submit a final version. We are aiming to make a final decision in October 2024. BEK will notify all shortlisted applicants about the outcome of the process but will not be able to provide specific feedback on unsuccessful proposals. All decisions will be final.

Templates for full proposal submission will be provided separately to shortlisted applicants.

ANNEX 1 - Concept Note Template

BEK | Samartha

Organisation(s) Name:

Name and Duration of the project:

Proposed geographic reach of project (provinces/local government(s)):

Background of your organisation:

Brief description of proposed activity:

Outputs and outcomes to be achieved:

Risks and mitigations:

Experience of implementing similar projects internationally and in Nepal, including in Lumbini and Madhesh:

Estimated total budget and value for money considerations:

References to the evidence based for the proposed intervention(s):

ANNEX 2 - <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-GOV-1-301596/documents>