Strengthening Inclusive Partnerships for Smallholders in Rainfed Areas (SIPRA) Programme in Sudan

Challenge Fund – Large Grant Facility Guide

This guide serves as a practical resource for prospective applicants, reviewers, and managers of the Challenge Fund (CF) – Large Grant Facility, a central component of the Strengthening Inclusive Partnerships for Smallholders in Rainfed Areas (SIPRA) Programme in Sudan.

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, SIPRA promotes inclusive and sustainable agricultural development to unlock the potential of Sudan's rainfed agricultural system. The Large Grant Facility is a core component of SIPRA, designed to support impactful, scalable, and market-driven solutions that directly advance SIPRA's main objectives: strengthening food and nutrition security and improving the incomes and livelihoods of smallholder women, men, youth, and other vulnerable groups involved in rainfed agriculture and related value chains, including horticulture, livestock, fisheries, and poultry.

This guide is organized into four main sections to support the effective management and implementation of the Large Grant Facility while ensuring transparency, consistency, and alignment with SIPRA's objectives:

- Scope and Objectives of SIPRA and the Large Grant Facility,
- Eligible Applicants and Required Documentation,
- Proposal Template and Guidance,
- Proposal Application and Evaluation Process and Criteria.

1. Scope and Objectives of SIPRA and the Large Grant

SIPRA is a four-year initiative in Sudan funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by a consortium of four partners: ZOA, World Relief, SOS Sahel Sudan, and Wageningen Centre for Social and Economic Research (WSER), with technical assistance provided by MetaMeta for agribusiness and CF management.

Active in seven States – South Darfur, East Darfur, Central Darfur, South Kordofan, White Nile, Blue Nile, and Gedaref. SIPRA aims to unlock the potential of Sudan's rainfed agriculture as well as its interconnected poultry, livestock, fisheries, and horticulture systems. Its core objectives across the target States include:

1. *Increase agricultural production and productivity:* Promote the adoption of improved inputs, sustainable farming practices, value addition, and enhanced post-harvest management to boost yields and reduce losses among smallholder farmers – including women, men, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs),
2. *Improve food and nutrition security:* Enhance smallholder households' access to diverse and nutritious foods and strengthen nutrition knowledge and practices to ensure better dietary outcomes,
3. *Promote climate-resilient agriculture*: Implement water conservation, soil fertility improvement, drought-tolerant crops, agroforestry practices, and other adaptive strategies to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate variability and reduce the risk of agricultural losses across rainfed crops, livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture value chains,
4. *Revitalizing local markets and economies:* To improve the availability and affordability of essential food commodities, strengthen market linkages, upgrade infrastructure, facilitate access to finance, foster partnerships with private sector actors, and promote the circulation of money within local communities to stimulate sustained economic activity and resilience within value chains,
5. *Sustainably enhance incomes and livelihoods:* Support inclusive agribusiness development, income diversification, and entrepreneurial capacity building for smallholder farmers to enhance economic resilience and improve their standard of living.

SIPRA partners with smallholder farming communities not only as beneficiaries but also as active agents of change, engaging them in agribusiness investment, strengthening service delivery systems, and building strong local networks for support and innovation.

To translate the objectives into tangible impacts on the ground, SIPRA combines targeted technical assistance with catalytic funding through the Large Grant Facility. This Facility offers financial support ranging from €20,000 to €100,000 for proposals demonstrating strong potential for impact, sustainability, and scalability across priority value chains:

- Rainfed cereal, legume, and nutrition-rich crop production,
- Livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture,
- Agricultural services,
- Agro-processing and post-harvest management,
- Market linkages and access to finance.

Requests exceeding €100,000 may be considered under exceptional circumstances, subject to prior consultation and justification as detailed in Section 5 below. Such requests cannot amount to more than €200,000.

To **operationalize market-driven agribusiness investment and partnerships** that respond to the objectives above, align with the priority value chains, and directly benefit smallholder farming communities, SIPRA has launched a call for Large Grant proposals. This offers a unique opportunity for **private sector actors**, **producer associations**, and **other** relevant **business-minded institutions**. Applicants are invited to advance inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems in some of Sudan's most fragile and conflict-affected regions through the proposition of projects grounded in strong business rationales with clear economic and financial results. The Large Grant is not just a funding mechanism, it is an invitation to collaborate on transformative solutions with the potential for lasting impact on Sudan's food and nutrition landscape.

2. Eligible Applicants and Institutional Prioritization

SIPRA places a strong strategic emphasis on strengthening local agribusiness capacity as a pathway to sustainable food systems transformation in Sudan. Accordingly, **Sudanese private sector institutions** are the primary target group for the Large Grant Facility. All eligibility and selection criteria reflect this core priority.

The Large Grant Facility is open to the following categories of applicants, provided they are actively engaged in the target states addressing critical challenges of Sudan's rainfed agriculture and its interconnected value chains – poultry, livestock, fisheries, and horticulture:

1. *Farmer Producer Associations and Networks:* Operating farming as a business and producing for the market,
2. *Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)* in agribusiness, food and nutrition security,
3. *Large Private Companies* (including financial institutions) with the capacity to implement scalable agribusiness solutions.

The organization must be officially registered and active for at least two years prior to the submission. Applicants must be active in at least one of the SIPRA-target states. **We strongly encourage applicants from the South Darfur, East Darfur, Central Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states to apply.**

Institutional Eligibility Ranking

Applicants are prioritized based on institutional type and operational presence in the SIPRA target States in Sudan. The ranking below informs the selection process under the Large Grant Facility. Within each category, priority is given to institutions that are owned by, or employ significant numbers of, women, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

Rank	Type of institution and presence in Sudan
1	Sudanese private sector institutions: with active operations in the SIPRA States in Sudan, including a) institutions with both management and technical/operational teams based in Sudan, and b) institutions whose management has temporarily relocated due to conflict but retain in-country operational capacity
2	Private sector institutions with either: a branch office or substantial local team in the SIPRA States in Sudan, or a well-established partnership with a Sudanese private sector institution. Preference is given to proposals where the Sudanese partner is the primary applicant.

3	Non-Dutch private sector institutions: with operational presence and partnerships in the SIPRA States in Sudan equivalent to those described above

3. Required Documents

As part of the application process for the Large Grant Facility, all applicants are required to submit documentation demonstrating their legal status, financial standing, and operational capacity. These documents are critical for eligibility screening, proposal evaluation, and due diligence, including verification of any affiliations with dubious and sanctioned actors and entities.

The CF management team will conduct additional due diligence using the GOPA Vendor Verification system. This system verifies that applicants:

- Are not listed on U.S., Canadian, or EU sanctions lists,
- Are not engaged in illegal, dubious or suspicious financial transactions.

MetaMeta, as a member of the GOPA Group, has direct and full access to the GOPA Vendor Verification system. This tool has been successfully used in managing large-scale programmes valued at millions of euros, ensuring compliance and financial integrity across partners.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure that all documents are clear, complete, and properly labelled to avoid delays or disqualification during the eligibility review process.

The table below outlines the required documents and specifies which categories of applicants must provide each one, based on organizational type and size:

Document	Required from
Company registration number or certificate	All applicants
Audited financial statements (last two years) *Note: Pre-April 2023 statements are acceptable if conflict disrupted operations*	Required for all large institutions SMEs and Farmer Producer or Network associations may submit internal financial records instead – these will be verified against bank accounts
Proof of Zakat (2.5% charitable obligation for Muslims)	All Sudanese institutions, whether lead applicants or contributing partners
Evidence of financial capital to meet the required co-funding contribution. See Proposal Template, Annex 1, for budget-based co-funding thresholds	All applicants
Bank account details in the requested currency	All applicants

4. Template for the Large Grant Proposals

All applicants are required to complete a standardized Proposal Template (Annex 1) as part of their submission. In addition to providing the above required documents and passing the due diligence assessment, below is a summary of the key sections that must be completed:

- *Project Title and Location:* Concise title capturing the project's focus, and a brief description of the implementation area (village, locality, state), with optional location map as annex,
- *Budget Overview:* Summary of total project cost requested grant amount (€20,000 to €100,000), and applicant co-funding contribution. Proposals exceeding €100,000 require prior consultation and justification, grants requests cannot exceed €200,000.
- *Applicant and Consortium Information:* Legal name, year of establishment, registration certificate, bank details, and core sectoral focus of the lead applicant and any consortium partners. If a consortium is involved, each partner's role must be clearly described,
- *Vision and Strategic Goals:* Statement of the applicant's short-term objectives and long-term aspirations, aligned with sustainable agribusiness development,
- *Organizational Business Sustainability:* Outline of the applicant's revenue model, stakeholder value proposition, operational structure, sources of funding, and internal financial systems,
- *Problem Statement:* Clear articulation of the key challenges faced within relevant SIPRA value chains, including rainfed agriculture, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, inputs, processing, and market systems. Includes analysis of climate-related and social vulnerabilities,
- *Proposed Solutions and Roles:* Description of the interventions to address the identified problems, including climate-resilient practices, private sector engagement, market access, and financial inclusion. For consortia, roles and coordination mechanisms must be detailed,
- *Expected Results and Impacts:* Anticipated outcomes such as improved productivity, food security, climate adaptation, market revitalization, and income generation. Also includes organizational benefits such as stronger partnerships and financial sustainability,
- *Target Beneficiaries*: Disaggregated estimates of direct beneficiaries by gender, age, and vulnerability (e.g., women, men, youth, children, IDPs, and PWDs), along with the specific benefits to each group,
- *Assumptions, Risks, and Mitigation Measures:* Outline of the key conditions necessary for success, potential risks (e.g., accessibilty and security, climate shocks, implementation delays), and realistic mitigation strategies,
- *Project Business Sustainability Plans:* A strategy to sustain project outcomes beyond the implementation period, including market linkages, continuity of services, and reinvestment mechanisms to support lasting impact for smallholder agribusinesses,
- *Activity Schedule (Workplan):* A timeline of major project activities from inception through completion, and the upscaling phase,
- *Detailed Budget and Co-Funding Requirements:* Itemized results-based budget broken down by cost category, grant request, and required co-funding (cash or in-kind), aligned with SIPRA thresholds,
- *Supporting Documentation:* Required attachments include registration certificate, financial records, bank statements, Zakat proof (where applicable), and conflict-of-interest declarations,
- *Declarations and Contact Details:* Disclosure of affiliations, conflict of interest confirmation, and full contact information and signatures of the lead applicant and consortium partners.

5. Application and Evaluation Process

The SIPRA Large Grant Facility follows a structured multi-stage evaluation process designed to ensure transparency, strategic alignment, and effective deployment of funds. The summary table below provides a concise overview of each step in the process. This is followed by detailed descriptions in the subsequent sections, which explain the roles, criteria, timelines, and decision points involved at every stage.

Table 1: SIPRA Large Grant Application and Evaluation Process

Step	Process Stage	Who	Scope and key actions	Outcome/ decision	Timeline (based on a batch of 3 to 5 proposals)
0	Submission	Applicants; coordinated by the GOPA-MetaMeta Challenge Fund (GOPA-MM-CF) management team	Proposals submitted through open call or direct solicitation to: cfsipra-metameta@gopa.eu Early submission is encouraged due to limited funding availability.	Acknowledged Proposal received.	Rolling basis.
1	Screening and pre-assessment	GOPA-MM-CF management team suported by ZOA SIPRA Programme management team	Alignment with SIPRA thematic and geographic priorities. Eligibility verification and completeness of documentation. Due diligence screening covering sanctions, illegal transactions, and blacklisting risks using the GOPA-MetaMeta vendor check system.	Pass all aspects: Proceed to detailed evaluation. Fail any aspect: Rejection with justification. Applicants informed of outcome.	3 - 5 working days.
2	Technical, economic, and financial evaluation	Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC); coordinated by GOPA-MM-CF management team with a	The IEC evaluation determines whether proposals should be recommended for funding or rejected. Revision cycle and appeal control: Applicants are allowed one major revision	Part 1 < 70 or negative due diligence: Proposal rejected. Part 1 ≥ 70 and positive due diligence: Proceed to Part	6 - 10 working days for each Parts 1 and 2

		rigorous due diligence	cycle and one appeal to maintain technical quality and transparency. *Part 1 - Technical assessment (100 points):* Impact, feasibility in fragile and conflict context, institutional capacity, risk management, sustainability, and budget integrity. Decision Rule: Score < 70 and/or negative due diligence: Rejection. Score ≥ 70 with positive due diligence: Proceed to Part 2. If requested, applicants may respond in writing to major feedback before final decision consideration. *Part 2 – Financial and economic assessment (25 points):* Financial rate of return, economic rate of return, cost-benefit analysis, and comparison against a no-project scenario. *Note: Section 2 below has the detailed Evaluation Criteria and guide*	2. Part 2 < 15: Proposal rejected. Part 2 ≥ 15: Proceed to next processing stage. Applicants informed of outcome by management team. Applicants have the right to appeal in writing once at Part 1 and Part 2 stages of the IEC evaluation	

3	Due diligence	Local partner; coordinated by GOPA-MM-CF management team	Due diligence covers: Applicant affiliation risks: any potential links with conflict actors or political parties. Applicant operational capacity and organizational strength: local presence, implementation experience, and overall institutional capability. Efficiency of the delivery model and risk considerations - fiduciary, political economy, and cost efficiency risks: ▪ Ownership and governance structure ▪ Risk of political or elite capture ▪ Internal financial control systems ▪ Procurement, cash management, and handling arrangements. *Note:* Due diligence is conducted in parallel with the IEC assessment to accelerate the evaluation process	Due diligence is an integral component of the IEC evaluation results	6 – 10 days (conducted in parallel with IEC evaluation)
4	Applicant Response (if requested)	Applicants; coordinated by GOPA-MM-CF	Written response to major IEC feedback and submission of revised proposal if requested.	IEC confirms whether the proposal proceeds or is rejected.	5 - 10 working days

		management team			
5	Large Grant Special Purpose Steering Committee (LG-SC) Review, Clarification, and Final Decision	Large Grant Special Purpose Steering Committee (LG-SC); coordinated by SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager and GOPA-MM-CF management team	The CF management team prepares consolidated IEC evaluation findings and recommendation reports supported by technical, economic, and financial assessments, due diligence verification, and applicant response documentation. The SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager finalizes and circulates consolidated IEC recommendation documents to LG-SC members at least five working days before the response deadline. LG-SC members shall respond within the specified timeline indicating one of the following: ▪ Approve proposal for funding, ▪ Request clarification before making the final decision, ▪ Reject proposal with written justification referencing evaluation evidence.	Final grant award approval or rejection issued by LG-SC in accordance with its Terms of Reference detailed in Annex 1.	5 - 15 working days

			If clarification requiring applicant input is requested, the CF management team consolidates applicant responses and circulates them to LG-SC members through the SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager. The clarification and review process is limited to one structured feedback and response cycle before the LG-SC makes the final decision. The LG-SC decision is final and binding. **Appeal review:** The LG-SC reviews applicant appeals related to IEC evaluation and may either reject the appeal and uphold the IEC decision or allow independent technical reassessment by at least two external technical experts with no affiliation to IEC members. The reassessment outcome is final.		
6	Contracting, Performance Agreement, and Project Launch	ZOA and GOPA-MM-CF management coordinated	Preparation of contract: Funding, Implementation and Performance Monitoring Agreement	Signed FIMA contract, and project launch.	15 - 20 working days

		with successful applicants	(FIMA), covering legal and procurement requirements, project objectives, deliverables, milestones, technical and financial reporting requirements, disbursement structure, and sustainability provisions, among others.		

Conflict of Interest Safeguards:

- For proposals obtained through direct solicitation, the SIPRA programme management or Area-Based Organisation (ABOs) staff involved in solicitation shall recuse themselves from any engagement in evaluation, scoring, or decision-making processes,
- Members of the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) shall not participate in direct solicitation, proposal preparation, or any activity that could compromise evaluation independence.

The detailed application and evaluation process is as follows:

Step 1: Submission of Proposals

Proposals may be submitted either through an open call or via direct solicitation to: cfsipra-metameta@gopa.eu, managed by the MetaMeta CF Management Team. To avoid a conflict of interest, proposals initiated by MetaMeta must be submitted directly to the SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager (PM) and Agricultural Business Advisor (BA).

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Early submission is strongly encouraged due to the limited nature of available funds.

Step 2: Screening and Preselection

MetaMeta CF Management Team manages communication and screens and preselects all proposals (except those initiated by MetaMeta) for:

- Compliance with eligibility criteria (see Section 2),
- Completeness of required documents (see Section 3),
- Due diligence via the GOPA Vendor Verification System (see Section 3),
- Alignment with SIPRA's thematic and geographical focus (see Section 1).

Proposals initiated by MetaMeta are assessed by the SIPRA PA and BA or their officially delegated experts, to maintain transparency and avoid any conflict of interest.
Applicants are informed of the outcomes:

- Passed all four criteria: Proceed to Step 3 – Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) review,
- Failed one or more of the four assessment criteria: Application is rejected with a written justification,
- Eligible for resubmission: Applicants who passed the due diligence criteria but failed in other areas may revise and resubmit.

Step 3: Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) Review

The Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) is responsible for assessing proposals that have passed the initial screening and preselection stage. The committee has the following members:

- SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager (SIPRA PA),
- SIPRA Consortium Agribusiness Advisor (SIPRA BA),
- MetaMeta SIPRA Technical Support Programme (TSP) Director (MM PD) ,
- Short-term expert (Economic and Financial Analyst).

To ensure impartiality, conflict of interest procedures are in place:

- When proposals are solicited by ZOA, the SIPRA PA and BA, who are ZOA employees, recuse themselves. They are replaced by the MetaMeta SIPRA Project Leader and Challenge Fund (MM PL and CF) Manager,
- For proposals initiated by MetaMeta, the MM PD recuses themselves. The remaining three members continue with the evaluation.

The evaluation process is triggered once a *minimum of three proposals* have been screened and approved for further review.

IEC Evaluation:

The IEC evaluation is conducted in two main parts for proposals that have passed the Screening and Pre-assessment Stage (see Table 1 in the above):

- **Part 1: Technical Assessment** (covering criteria "a to e") – Proposals scoring ≥70 out of 100 points and pass the due diligence assessment detailed in Table 1, proceed to Part 2,
- **Part 2: Economic and Financial Analysis** – A minimum of 15 out of 25 points is required for proposals to be considered by the LG-SC for funding.

Part 1: Technical Assessment (100 Points)

Criteria	Description / Guiding Questions	Max Points	Scoring Guide
Expected Benefits/ Impact	Assess whether: ▪ Expected benefits are clearly stated and quantified ▪ Targets are realistic for the fragile and conflict-operational context of Sudan ▪ Assumptions are well defined and supported with evidence. Expected benefits include, but are not limited to: ▪ Improvements in smallholder farming communities (women, men, youth) ▪ Enhanced food and nutrition security of smallholders and the wider rural community ▪ Employment opportunities, income and livelihood improvement for smallholders and rural communities ▪ Improved access to finance and markets Reviewers must verify that numerical projections are consistent with project activities, resource availability, and implementation capacity.	25	▪ 20 - 25: Clear, quantified benefits/impact well supported by project activities, resource availability, and implementation capacity. Assumptions are realistic and supported by evidence. ▪ 15 - 19: Benefits are quantified but not adequately supported by project activities, resource availability, or implementation capacity. Some assumptions are not realistic or are weakly supported by evidence. ▪ 10 -14: Partial quantitative information is provided, and some assumptions are not realistic or are weakly supported by evidence. ▪ 0 - 9: Impact/benefits are vague, assumptions are unrealistic or unsupported by evidence.
Feasibility in Conflict Context	Evaluate whether project objectives are operationally achievable in the Sudan fragile and conflict-affected environment. Key risks to review include: ▪ Supply chain disruption ▪ Transport access limitation ▪ Price and input cost volatility ▪ Market interruption risk ▪ Security and operational continuity risk.	25	▪ 20 - 25: Practical and coherent risk management plan presented; all major risks are identified with implementable mitigation measures ▪ 15 - 19: Practical risk management plan presented but some critical risks or mitigation measures are missing ▪ 10 -14: Incomplete risk management plan; several major risks are missing and mitigation is weak

			▪ 0 - 9: No coherent risk management plan; most major risks are not properly defined and mitigation is very weak.
Institutional and Implementation Capacity	Evaluate whether the applicant can realistically implement the project considering: ▪ Experience in similar projects ▪ Operational presence in implementation areas ▪ Availability of qualified technical staff ▪ Financial management capacity reliability.	20	Technical and Operational Experience (10 Points): ▪ 8 -10: Strong experience and clear operational presence ▪ 5 - 7: Some relevant experience but presence or staffing needs strengthening ▪ 0 - 4: Limited or unclear implementation experience. Financial Management Capacity (10 Points): ▪ 8 - 10: Proven financial management track record in similar-sized projects ▪ 5 - 7: Proven financial management track record only in smaller projects. ▪ 0 - 4: Limited or no clear evidence of financial management capacity.
Business Sustainability	Evaluate the likelihood that project benefits/impacts can be sustained beyond the grant period. Review: ▪ Revenue generation and reinvestment opportunities ▪ Financial and operational capacity to maintain and scale up activities after project completion.	20	▪ 15 - 20: Well-defined sustainability plan that adequately responds to the review criteria ▪ 10 - 14: Sustainability plan is presented but requires strengthening ▪ 5 - 9: Sustainability ideas are present but are not translated into a coherent operational plan ▪ 0 - 4: Few or no convincing sustainability ideas.
Budget Completeness	Review: ▪ Accuracy of cost estimates: Unit costs align with local market rates; major cost items are neither underestimated nor inflated; key assumptions are justified ▪ Budget alignment: Total budget and allocations to productive assets,	10	▪ 8 - 10: Cost estimates are accurate and reflect local market prices. Budget allocations are clearly linked to activities, and all required components are included with no significant unexplained cost

	operating expenses, indirect costs, and other categories are directly linked to proposed activities. ▪ Completeness: all required budget components are included.		▪ 5 - 7: Costs are mostly realistic and activity-linked but contain some unexplained or unclear cost elements ▪ 0 - 4: Budget is poorly justified, cost estimates are unrealistic, or major budget components are missing.

Part 2 – Economic and Financial Analyses (25 Points)

Criterion	Description	Max Points	Scoring Guide
Financial Analysis	▪ Evaluate financial feasibility using Financial Rate of Return (FRR). This financial analyses should include a detailed assessment of: o Accuracy of cost estimates: Unit costs align with local market rates; major cost items are neither underestimated nor inflated; key assumptions are justified o Budget alignment: Total budget and allocations to productive assets, operating expenses, indirect costs, and other categories are directly linked to proposed activities. o Completeness: all required budget components are included	12.5	▪ 10 - 12.5: FRR is positive and projection assumptions are fully supported by activity cost structure ▪ 7 - 9: FRR is positive, but projection assumptions are only partially supported. ▪ 4 - 6: FRR is around break-even level or financial return is uncertain due to significant assumption limitations ▪ 0 - 3: FRR is negative.
Economic Analysis	Evaluate economic impact using ERR or equivalent cost-benefit evidence.	12.5	▪ 10 -12.5: ERR is positive and shows clear improvement in smallholder-related outcomes compared to the no-project scenario. Estimates and assumptions are supported by evidence ▪ 7 - 9: ERR is positive but assumptions are only partially supported by evidence ▪ 4 - 6: ERR is slightly positive and benefit margin is very small ▪ 0 - 3: ERR is negative.

Step 4: Due Diligence Assessment

This step involved a detailed due diligence assessment performed by an external specialized firm in order to assess institutional, legal status, governance arrangements of the applying organization, as well as organizational and operational capacity to implement the proposed investment. The financial management of the organization will be reviewed to evaluate the firms' financial standing and capability. The Due Diligence assessment entails remote assessments as well as direct field verification and stakeholder consultations.

Step 5: Strategic Review by Special Purpose Large Grant Facility Steering Committee

The Special Purpose Large Grant Facility Steering Committee (SPLG-SC) convenes specifically to evaluate the report submitted by the IEC. The SPLG-SC is composed of:

- Directors or their official delegates from the three SIPRA consortium member organizations,
- A representative from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), the donor organization, as observer and contributor to the discussion with no decision power involved. 'With a voice, but no vote'

The SIPRA PM, supported by MM PL and CF Manager and/or MM PD, presents the IEC's evaluation findings and the shortlisted proposals to the SPLG-SC. These project staff have no voting power; their only task is to respond to questions and provide clarifications.

Timeline: The SPLG-SC finalizes and shares its review within 5 working days for a batch of 3 to 5 proposals.

Review focus: The SPLG-SC validates the IEC assessments and may apply additional strategic criteria to guide its decisions, including: a) Portfolio synergy – ensuring proposals complement ongoing projects or initiatives supported by SIPRA or its partners, and b) Geographical and sectoral balance – promoting equitable distribution across target States and agricultural value chains.

Decisions:

- Approve for Independent Finance Committee (IFC) review (with or without minor revisions),
- Request major revisions, and
- Decline with justification (appeal allowed).

Follow-up to these decisions is detailed in Step 5 below.

Step 6: Notification, Request for Additional Documents, and Appeal Process

MM PL and CF Manager and team will communicate the SPLG-SC's review and decision to all applicants. This notification includes both those shortlisted for the next stage of detailed technical review and those whose proposals were not successful.

Applicants whose proposals are not approved will have a clear opportunity to contest the decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing *within 10 working days* from the date of the decision notification. The appeal should include justifications and any additional information the applicant wishes to be considered.

MM PL and CF Manager compiles appeals and present them to the SIPRA PM for a second and final review by the SPLG-SC. This process ensures fairness and transparency, allowing the SPLG-SC to reconsider its decision in light of new information or clarifications during the review of the next batch of proposals. The decision made by the SPLG-SC is final and binding.

Meanwhile, shortlisted applicants will be invited to respond to feedback from both the IEC and the SPLG-SC. They will be requested to provide additional documentation to strengthen their proposals, including:

- Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan, IMEP (a template will be provided)
- List of relevant projects previously implemented
- Consortium Agreement, if applicable
- CVs of key personnel leading the proposed intervention
- Detailed budget aligned with proposed activities
- Any other documents or clarifications requested by the IEC or the SPLG-SC

MM PL and CF Manager and team will communicate clear submission deadlines, generally *allowing one to three weeks* depending on the volume and nature of the feedback. Once all requested documents are received, proposals will proceed to the detailed technical review phase led by the Independent Finance Committee (IFC).

Step 7: Final Decision, Appeal, Contracting and Public Disclosure

Once the final funding decisions have been made, the CF Management Team formally notifies all applicants of the outcomes. Successful applicants will then move forward to contract signing, which will be managed by ZOA as the lead partner. A small signing ceremony may be organized to mark the occasion and celebrate the new partnerships.

Applicants whose proposals are not approved may submit a formal written appeal within 10 working days of receiving the decision notification. The appeal must clearly outline the grounds for the complaint and include any relevant supporting information. The MM PL and CF Manager will compile and forward all appeals to the SIPRA PM, who will coordinate a thorough review by the SPLG-SC. Decisions made at this stage are final. In case of rejection, applicants may re-submit a new application to the Challenge Fund, no more than one time.

To promote transparency and accountability, ZOA will publish a summary of the final funded proposals. This public disclosure will include the names of the selected applicants, the titles or themes of the approved projects, grant amounts awarded, and the regions or sectors in which the projects will operate. This information will be made available on ZOA's official website and may also be shared by the EKN, the programme's donor. This step ensures that third parties can verify the integrity and fairness of the evaluation process and the resulting funding decisions.

Step 8: Disbursement, Administrative Onboarding and Alignment with ZOA Systems

- Following contract signing, ZOA will initiate the disbursement process in accordance with its financial management systems, based on the approved budget, co-funding arrangements, and project timelines,
- All administrative and financial procedures, including reporting formats, fund release schedules, and procurement guidelines, will be guided by ZOA's established compliance and accountability frameworks and will be tailored, where necessary, to fit the specific context and needs of each project,
- Applicants will be oriented on these systems as part of the post-contract onboarding process,
- As part of this onboarding, applicants will finalize their IMEP, aligning it with ZOA's MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) standards and tools. This IMEP will serve as the basis for ongoing reporting, adaptive management, and performance tracking throughout the project lifecycle.

Annex 1: Challenge Fund – Large Grant Proposal Template

1. Generic Project Information

<table>
<tr><th>Field</th><th>Details / Instructions</th></tr>
<tr><td>Project title</td><td>Should concisely communicate the focus of the project</td></tr>
<tr><td>Project location (village, locality, state)</td><td>Brief description; location map may be added as annex</td></tr>
<tr><td>Budget summary

Grant amount requested: Applicants requesting above €100,000 must consult the SIPRA team in advance to confirm eligibility and provide a clear justification prior to submission.
If the SIPRA team decides to consider such proposals, the applicant will be asked to share a 2-pager clearly stating the problems, solutions, and impacts and the detailed budget with justifications for why a higher amount is needed</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Description</th><th>Amount (€)</th><th>Remarks</th></tr>
<tr><td>Total project cost (this is the grand total of your detailed budget breakdown)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Co-funding (Applicant contribution) - see section '12' below for guidance</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Grant amount requested (Should be within allowed range (€20,000 to €100,000)</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
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2. Information About the Applicant

Field	*Details / Instructions*
Name of your organization (lead applicant)	
Name(s) of the consortium partner organizations (if any)	**Note:** The lead applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the co-funding is made available, all project activities and deliverables are implemented on time, meet agreed-upon quality standards, and remain within the approved budget. While roles and responsibilities of consortium partners should be briefly described here, it is important to note that the lead applicant holds full accountability for the overall coordination and successful execution of the project. If the proposal advances to the detailed technical review phase, the lead applicant will be required to submit a formal consortium agreement outlining the specific roles, responsibilities, and contributions of each partner
Year of your organization's establishment (lead applicant)	
Registration number or attach legal certificate of registration (lead applicant)	
Bank account information of lead applicant in Euros or USD	

Which of these sector(s) best describe your activities? Tick as many as are relevant	Lead applicant ☐ Commercial (mechanized) Agriculture ☐ Equipment and Installations ☐ Food processing ☐ Aggregation and warehousing ☐ Infrastructure and construction ☐ Input supplies ☐ Branding and Packaging ☐ Market Standards and Specifications Others, please describe: _______________ Consortium partners ☐ Commercial (mechanized) Agriculture ☐ Equipment and Installations ☐ Food processing ☐ Aggregation and warehousing ☐ Infrastructure and construction ☐ Input supplies ☐ Branding and Packaging ☐ Market Standards and Specifications Others, describe ___
Farming system profile (lead applicant)	**Note**: only relevant in case the Farmer Network is the lead applicant: describe cultivable area (size in hectares, under lease, individual ownership, group or communal ownership), season crops and their respective yields, farming practices such as intercropping cereal and leguminous crops, relay cropping or intensive agriculture, etc. (Maximum 200 words)
Relevant experience (lead applicant)	Describe your organization's experience related to the proposed project focus. Highlight any relevant projects, partnerships, or achievements that demonstrate your capacity to deliver on this project. (Maximum 300 words)

3. Vision and Mission Statement

What does your organization (lead applicant) want to achieve in the next two years, and how? What are your organization's long-term ambitions? (maximum 200 words)

4. Organizational Business Sustainability

Describe how your organization currently operates to generate revenue, deliver value to stakeholders (e.g., farmers, buyers, communities, partners), and sustain its activities. Include your cost structure, key customers or beneficiaries, and sources of income or funding and financial management system (Maximum 300 words)

5. Problem Statement

To begin, please describe the key challenges your organization faces that directly affect your work in the relevant SIPRA value chains:

- Rainfed cereal, legume, and nutrition-rich crop production,
- Livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture,
- Agricultural inputs and services,
- Agro-processing and post-harvest management,
- Market linkages and access to finance.

Then, clearly explain:

- The specific problems and the context in which they arise, including challenges related to climate variability and resilience,
- Why addressing these problems is critical for your organization, your agribusiness partners, and your beneficiaries (Smallholder farmers, women, men, youth, Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, and Persons with Disabilities, PWDs),
- How these challenges impact agricultural productivity, food security, climate resilience, market functionality, and livelihoods.

If applying as a consortium, please describe any unique challenges faced by your partner organizations relevant to the project. (Maximum 300 words).

6. Proposed Solutions

Building on the challenges identified above, please explain the specific activities and strategies your organization plans to implement using the requested grant to address these issues. Focus on key interventions such as:

- Promoting adoption of improved inputs, sustainable farming, and climate-resilient agricultural practices
- Strengthening input supply chains, agro-processing, and post-harvest management
- Enhancing market access, infrastructure, and facilitating access to finance
- Fostering private sector partnerships and entrepreneurial capacity building

Describe your approach, key steps, and any innovative tools, technologies, or best practices you will apply, particularly those that enhance climate resilience. Highlight how your solution builds on existing experience or work.

For consortium applications, specify each partner's roles, responsibilities, and how coordination will be managed to ensure effective delivery of the solution.

Also, describe how your partners will collaborate to ensure effective and coordinated delivery of these solutions. (Maximum 300 words).

7. Expected Benefits

Based on the solutions proposed, please outline the concrete benefits and positive impacts your project will deliver to smallholder farmers – including women, men, youth, IDPs, and PWDs – in alignment with SIPRA's objectives. These may include:

- Increased agricultural production and productivity through improved inputs, sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices, and value addition
- Enhanced food and nutrition security by improving access to diverse, nutritious foods and nutrition awareness
- Strengthened climate resilience through water conservation, soil fertility management, drought-tolerant crops, and agroforestry
- Revitalized local markets and economies through better market linkages, infrastructure, and private sector engagement
- Sustainable income growth and livelihood diversification through inclusive agribusiness development and entrepreneurial capacity building

Additionally, describe expected benefits for your organization and any consortium partners, such as improved business sustainability, diversified revenue streams, stronger partnerships, and enhanced capacity to deliver lasting impact. (Maximum 300 words).

8. Target Beneficiary Information

The table below summarizes the varied categories of beneficiaries and the respective expected benefits. This information will be verified through the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) developed by applicants in line with ZOA's proven and effective approaches and practices.

Please estimate how many people will benefit from your proposed intervention. Disaggregate the total number of beneficiaries by gender, age, and vulnerable groups – including women, men, youth, children, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">How many people will benefit from your proposed intervention?

Please disaggregate the targeted number of beneficiaries</td><td rowspan="2">Total number of Beneficiaries</td><td rowspan="2">Women</td><td rowspan="2">Men</td><td rowspan="2">IDPs</td><td rowspan="2">PWDs</td><td rowspan="2">Children up to 15 years</td><td colspan="2">Youth (ages 15 to 30)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Boys</td><td>Girls</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Describe briefly what will be the specific benefits to each of the target beneficiary groups (max. 300 words)</td><td colspan="8"></td></tr>
</table>

9. Assumptions, Risks and Mitigation Measures

Assumptions (100 to 200 words): Briefly describe the key conditions that must be in place for your proposed solution to succeed. These may include adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices (e.g., composting, organic manure use), functioning of the cooperative smallholder groups, availability of relevant skills, timely release of project funds, accessible project sites, no bureaucratic obstacles, support from local stakeholders, etc. The listed items are illustrative – please specify the assumptions relevant to your *intervention.* ***Risks and Mitigation Measures** (200 to 300 words):* Identify the major risks that could hinder implementation, such as climate change and variability (e.g., droughts, floods), pest and disease outbreaks, limited technology uptake, supply chain disruptions, political instability, or financial delays. For each risk, outline realistic mitigation strategies, such as deploying drought-tolerant crops, delivering targeted training, engaging stakeholders, strengthening input and market systems, or adjusting implementation timelines.

10. Project Business Sustainability

Explain your plans after this investment to maintain, replicate and/or scale up the proposed solutions and benefits (300 words)

11. Detailed Schedule of Activities

This should cover implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation activities until the currently set end of the SIPRA program, which is August 2026 as well as the expected extension duration, August 2028.

Activity description	2025	2026	2027	August 2028
	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals
1.				

12. Project Budget and Co-Funding

All applicants must complete the budget table below. Co-funding is a mandatory requirement, and proposals *will not be considered* without meeting the specified co-funding thresholds. Co-funding can be in cash, in-kind, or a mix, depending on project size.

Budget and Co-Funding Breakdown in Euros

Budget Category	% of Total Budget	Total Amount (a)	Applicant Co-Funding – see requirements bellow (b)	Requested Grant (a-b)	Example Items
1. Staff and Personnel	20%				Project manager, technical and field staff, facilitators
2. Investments	45%				Agricultural equipment, storage

					facilities, processing machinery
3. Operational Costs	15%				Training, logistics, transport, utilities
4. Monitoring, Evaluation, Documentation	5%				Field visits, data collection, reporting
5. Formulating Upscaling Plans	5%				Stakeholder consultations, strategy design
6. Contingency	10%				Inflation and unforeseen costs
TOTAL	100%				

Co-Funding Requirements in Euros

Grant size (€)	Minimum Co-Funding rate (%)	Minimum Co-Funding Amount (€)	Cash Requirement (Minimum % of Co-Funding)
20,000 – 40,000	10%	2,000 – 4,000	5%
41,000 – 80,000	15%	6,150 – 12,000	20%
81,000 – 100,000	25%	20,250 – 25,000	25%
100,001 – 150,000	30%	30,000 – 45,000	30%
150,001 – 200,000	35%	52,500 – 70,000	40%

Important Notes on Project Budget and Co-Funding

Budget deviations during proposal review:

- Applicants are expected to adhere strictly to the budget structure and co-funding requirements,
- Any major deviation from the budget categories or co-funding structure must be pre-approved during the review process and fully justified in the proposal.

Budget deviations after contracting (during Implementation):

- Once the project is approved and under contract, budget deviations of up to ±10% per category are permitted without prior approval,
- Any changes exceeding ±10% during implementation must be discussed and agreed upon in writing with ZOA, the contracting party.

The tiered co-funding system balances flexibility and accountability:

- Lower-budget projects allow more in-kind support to accommodate applicants with limited cash resources,
- Higher-budget projects require stronger cash contributions to ensure financial commitment and long-term sustainability,
- The approach is designed for fragile contexts such as Sudan, where liquidity may be constrained, while aligning with global best practices in CF management,
- Applicants must submit evidence of financial capacity (e.g. a recent bank statement) to confirm their ability to provide the required co-funding. This is part of the mandatory list of required documents (see section 13),
- Co-funding must be clearly itemized in the budget and reported quarterly once the project is active,

- Proposals that pass the internal review stage will be required to submit a detailed Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) showing how co-funding will be tracked and reported,
- Approved projects will adhere to ZOA procurement and financial management system for both the co-funding and grant budget management.

13. Supporting documents to be attached to this proposal

Document	Required from	Joined to this proposal
Company registration number or certificate	All applicants	☐
Audited financial statements (last two years) *Note: Pre-April 2023 statements are acceptable if conflict disrupted operations*	Required for all large institutions; SMEs and Farmer Producer or Network associations may submit internal financial records instead of audited statements – this will be checked against bank accounts or equivalent amount in assets – will be further verified through field inspection	☐
Proof of Zakat (2.5% charitable obligation for Muslims)	All Sudanese institutions, whether lead applicants or contributing partners*	☐
Evidence of financial capital (bank statement) to meet the required co-funding contribution. See Proposal Template, Point 12, for budget-based co-funding thresholds	All applicants, Farmer Producers or Networks may present assets with equivalent amounts	☐
Bank account details in the requested currency	All applicants	☐

**Should your institution be exempted from financial audits or Zakat payment, please explain why and submit supportive documents.*

14. Affiliation Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Disclaimers

☐ **Affiliation Disclosure:** I declare that no individual, organization, or entity involved in the grant application is directly or indirectly affiliated with any party to an active conflict, nor are they subject to any national, regional, or international prohibitions. Applicants agree to undergo necessary background, and compliance checks to verify this status. They are required to promptly disclose any changes to this status throughout the duration of the grant lifecycle. Non-compliance may result in the suspension or termination of grant funding and repayment of allocated funds.

☐ *Conflict of Interest*: I understand that I must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest related to the grant application. This includes any personal, professional, or financial relationships with members of the grant management team, implementing partners, or decision-making bodies. Failure to disclose such information may result in disqualification, withdrawal of funding, or other appropriate measures. All applicants are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and impartiality throughout the application and implementation process.

15. Contact Details and Signature of the Lead Applicant

Name	
Function/position	
Address (village, locality, state)	
E-mail (if available)	
Telephone	
Date and signature	

16. Contact Details and Signature of the Consortium Partners, if Applicable

Name	
Function/position	
Address (village, locality, state)	
E-mail (if available)	
Telephone	
Date and signature	