

Funding Criteria and Guidelines for Project Planning and Management

Siemenpuu – Foundation for Social Movements’ Cooperation sr Updated in March 2026

The Siemenpuu foundation supports social movements, civil society organisations and environmental defenders in the Global South to protect the environment, promote sustainable livelihoods and ways of living, as well as to defend the rights of local communities in rural areas.

Initiatives funded by the foundation are mainly identified through thematically and geographically restricted calls for project concept papers. Concept papers are evaluated, and selected applicants are called to submit a full application. Both the concept papers and the full applications are assessed using the general funding criteria and guidelines explained below, as well as the specific thematic priorities set for each call regarding the Siemenpuu programme themes: Biocultural Rights, Energy Justice, Feminist Agroecology and Community Forests.

General funding criteria

Siemenpuu supports primarily local and grassroots-based movements, civil society organisations and their networks. In addition to the applicant organisation's administrative capacity, the governance principles of the organisation are assessed. Each grantee organisation must be formally registered, and it needs to have a verifiable capacity to manage the grant. Bookkeeping and project auditing are expected to be performed according to national laws and given Siemenpuu guidelines. Women need to be represented in the decision-making positions of the grantee organisation. The groups of people the project is aimed to benefit should play a significant role in its planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Their Free, Prior and Informed Consent should be sought. The Siemenpuu Ethical Code of Conduct shall be followed in all activities funded by Siemenpuu.

The Siemenpuu programme is committed to advancing the following objectives, which the grantees are expected to enhance through their projects:

- Resilience to the impacts of the climate crisis and development based on low emissions,
- Conservation and restoration of biodiversity,
- Enabling of the space of civil society,
- Advancement of equality and human rights by addressing various forms of multiple discrimination and advancing the inclusion of women and girls and persons with disabilities.

When planning the project, applicants are required to consider how these objectives will be advanced and unintended negative effects concerning them avoided throughout the project. These plans are expected to be outlined in the full application.

Projects supported by Siemenpuu must include a minimum of 7.5 % self-financing counted from the Siemenpuu grant. It may consist of cash, voluntary work, and/or donated goods. **(Updated Guidelines for Financial Management will be sent separately)**

Human rights

Human Rights Based Approach is applied in Siemenpuu Foundation's programme. It means that the realisation of human rights is both a desired result of the work the foundation supports, and at the same time human rights need to be respected when implementing the projects the foundation supports.

Human rights include civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as collective rights. Rights to natural resources, land, food, water, sustainable livelihoods, health, housing, cultural heterogeneity and participation are often relevant in projects supported by Siemenpuu, and so is the right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

When planning a project, it is important to analyse how to address forms of multiple discrimination, which may occur in the interrelation of, for instance age, gender, ethnicity, disability and religion. Equal opportunities to participate and be heard and seen in the planning and implementation of projects must be ensured, as well as to ensure the conditions for equal enjoyment of the project results.

Gender equality, rights of women and girls

Gender equality means that women and men are equally able to enjoy goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. This does not mean that genders become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal. Achieving gender equality requires changes in institutional practices and social relations to stop reinforcing discrimination. It also requires a strong voice for women in shaping their societies.

As Siemenpuu supports projects in the areas of Biocultural Rights, Energy Justice, Feminist Agroecology and Community Forests, ensuring women's and men's equality is particularly topical regarding the rights to natural resources, forests, land, seeds, sustainable energy, know-how, livelihoods, cultural heritage, inclusion and decision-making. To tackle existing inequalities, women's rights may be advanced by supporting women-only initiatives. If the grantee finds out about gendered human rights violations, such as child marriages or female genital mutilation, victims shall be guided to receive help and care.

The minimum standard for gender equality in Siemenpuu supported projects is to "do no harm", that is, to make sure the project will not contribute to gender discrimination or human rights violations. This requires the following when planning and implementing the project:

- Assess and minimise risks for the human rights of women and girls,
- Map and resolve barriers for women’s equal participation and inclusion,
- Collect and report project activity participant lists per sex (male/female).

For the project to exceed the “do no harm” principle, and make a positive contribution towards gender equality, the project community context should be analysed from gender perspective. The analysis helps to include explicit measures in the project to:

- avoid reinforcing gender inequalities,
- overcome barriers to women’s full participation in the project,
- ensure that women and men benefit equitably from the project’s results,
- implement specific activities to address gender inequalities and meet gender-specific needs,
- use gender specific indicators to evaluate changes achieved by the project.

Some questions to help gender equal project planning:

- What is the gender division of labour in general in the region?
- What are the main sources of income for women and for men?
- What needs and opportunities exist for increasing women’s livelihoods?
- To what degree are women visible in the target sector (farming, forests, livelihoods, energy)?
- Are women’s needs in the sector the same as those of men?
- Have women been consulted in identifying needs and opportunities related to the project?
- Do women and men have equal access to resources? If not, what opportunities exist for increasing women’s access to and control of resources and benefits?
- Is the project likely to have same positive and negative effects on women and men?
- Might the project reduce women’s access to some resources or benefits they currently have?
- Are there legal, cultural, religious or other constraints on women’s participation in the project? Have strategies been formulated to address these factors?
- Will women directly benefit from all project components?
- Does the project design include strategies to facilitate women’s active involvement in the project (for instance in terms of meeting and training arrangements)?
- What positive or negative effects could there be on women and on men because of the changes the project aims to cause?
- How will men and women participate in the project, and in what capacities?

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

Disability is born in the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal, as well as environmental barriers that make the full participation of persons with impairments difficult on an equal basis with others. Disability is defined as a condition or function judged to be impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's vision, hearing, thinking, learning, movement, mental health, communicating and social relationships.

Disability itself does not mean being sick or suffering. Negative attitudes towards disability and persons with disability can be the biggest barrier that prevents persons with disabilities from having a good life. In short:

- impairment + social and physical barriers = disability
- impairment + social and physical accessibility = inclusion

The minimum standard for non-discrimination of persons with disabilities in Siemenpuu supported projects is to “do no harm”, that is, to make sure the project will not contribute to discrimination or human rights violations against persons with disabilities. This requires the following when planning and implementing the project:

- Assess and minimise risks for the human rights of persons with disabilities,
- Map and resolve barriers for equal participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities,
- Collect and report project activity participant lists per disability (total participants/ participants with disability).

Steps for the project to make a positive contribution towards disability inclusion:

- “Leave No One Behind”: ensure access to information, resources, and decision-making for persons with disabilities.
- Meaningful Participation: inclusion requires consultation and partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs).
- Intersectionality: recognise multiple discrimination faced by women, children, and indigenous persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen your organisation’s capacity on disability inclusion with support from local organisations of people with disabilities.
- Gather information on the status of persons with disabilities in the project area by consulting people with disabilities, local organisations of people with disabilities, local authorities, and community leaders.
- Identify barriers and specific needs and potential challenges for people with disabilities in your working area. Engage people with disabilities and their organisations in this analysis.
- Involve persons with disabilities in planning project activities in which they want to participate as they best understand their own needs and abilities.
- Remove possible barriers to participation - physical, attitudinal, institutional, technological, and informational.
- Remember to budget for disability inclusion, covering costs like accessibility changes, accessible materials, interpreters, assistive devices, and transport.