

The **EmpowHER Fund:** Collective action for an HIV free future for women and girls

Q&A Webinar Call for Proposals

November 25th 2025

11.00 CET



Aidsfonds November 2025

About the webinar

This webinar is meant to help you understand the call for proposals.

We will try to answer general questions about eligibility, work that can be done, financing and budget, and the application process.

Please note that we **cannot answer** questions about the strategy, content or ideas of **individual applications**.

We can only speak about the call in general, not give advice on specific proposals.

Please take the time to carefully read the full call for proposals, as it includes all the information you need to prepare your application.

Key information EmpowHER Fund

Objective: Community led action to accelerate access to *new* and *existing* HIV-prevention for women and girls in all their diversity*

EmpowHER Fund funds advocacy to advance choice in HIV- prevention

First Call for Proposals: Launch Mid-November 2025

Duration of grant: 2026-2028

Geographical focus: South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique

Total budget: € 4.000.000

Rewarded applications: 20 (maximum)

* Women and girls who are hit hardest by HIV and face barriers when accessing services

Shaping EmpowHER Fund

Background

- Current challenges in HIV prevention vs
 - Limited PrEP use and adherence, lack of prevention options for women and girls, restrictive political climate, funding cuts and shifts that result in deprioritization of prevention
- Emerging opportunities
 - New, groundbreaking, HIV prevention options, more methods to offer more agency in prevention, a need to refocus on prevention alongside treatment

Participatory process

- The set-up of the fund has been participatory throughout
- Strategy and focus has been validated by communities we work with
- The current governance of the fund is Aidsfonds as fund manager and an Advisory Committee for:
 - Strategic advice
 - Reviewing funding proposals & funding decisions

The aim of EmpowHER Fund

- Accelerating access to *new* and existing HIV- prevention methods for women and girls in all their diversity
- The fund is aiming to bridge the gap between the existing methods out there, their availability in contexts and their level of access
 - This includes Lenacapavir, Dual prevention pill, DVR, other long acting injectables – CAB-LA, oral prep
- Advocacy programme
- Impact we want to achieve is: Women and girls in all their diversity use the HIV- prevention of their *choice*
- EmpowHER has 3 outcome areas:
 1. Policy change
 2. Access and adaptation of methods
 3. Movement building
- We are funding *women- girls led* community led CSO's (incl. networks, coalition, organisations)
- Long- term grants (min 3 years), core and project funding
- We aim to go beyond the HIV- space; into the women- girls (health) rights advocacy (feminist principles)

Rationale behind EmpowHER

EmpowHER is looking to strengthen the women- and girls led movement for them to take the lead

- This is why the EmpowHER Fund is thoughtful in its approach and does not fund every organisation that can deliver activities to achieve its goals.

We are looking to fund:

- Women- and girls led organisations
- With a mission, vision that is rooted in *feminist principles* and
- Have a solid track record in- and have core activities aligned with advocacy around women- or girls HIV (prevention),- women and/ or girls- (sexual health) rights
- Have the understanding of current HIV- Prevention landscape, developments and challenges

Please find the definition of ‘Women- and girls led’ on page 4 of the Call for Proposals.

Eligibility

In terms of eligibility, it means the following:

- Organisations need to tick multiple boxes; its not just about being women led or having SRHR programs
- Being eligible is about relevance to the mission of the fund.

In summary: eligibility is heavily depending whether the organisations mission, vision, track record, governance and understanding is relevant to the calls' objective

Some clarifying examples:

- Women headed, but focus and mission has no or limited relevance to the call's objective (such as sports, mental health, general health, men's health, solely on economic empowerment etc.) (**not eligible**)
- Youth led (led by a young woman, with a specific focus on girl's health) (**eligible**)
- Trans- led (advocating for trans- women's rights) (**eligible**)
- Faith based organisations (led by women, but without a relevant track record in advocacy) (**not eligible**)
- Women's- and girls rights organisations with a relevant track record (**eligible**)

We strongly encourage you to assess whether your organisation aligns with the overall intention, objectives, and rationale of the EmpowHER Fund. Please check the eligibility criteria on page 13.

Eligibility

Aidsfonds funds community led initiatives.

Not eligible:

- International organisations (Int. NGO's)
- Organisations registered as foreign NGO

Eligible

- Un-registered
 - Your organisation will need a fiscal host
 - Or become part of a consortium
- Organisations operating at district, national or regional level
- Research will be addressed separately under the EmpowHER Fund (details to follow). However, academic institutions may be eligible to participate as technical partners within a consortium.

Please refer to page 13 of the call for proposals.

Geography

- The countries covered by this call face persistent challenges in HIV prevention uptake and access. While they are early adopters of Lenacapavir through the Global Fund, gaps remain in access to the full spectrum of HIV prevention methods.
- Within the framework of this call, there are no restrictions on the geographic focus of your initiative
- However, proposals **must** explicitly **justify the chosen context** and **demonstrate its relevance** to current regional, national or district HIV-prevention access challenges or needs, and the population of women and girls wanting to access them.

In terms of M&E regarding geography:

- Aidsfonds does not have pre-determined targets
- Grantees will develop a workplan with targets of their own, which will inform EmpowHERs multi-county strategy.

Geography

- The aim of Aidsfonds and the Advisory Committee is to create a well-balanced portfolio in terms of grant types (consortia, single organisations), number of grants per country/ regional grants, diversity and inclusivity of diverse populations of women and girls, and budgets ceilings
 - Multi-country consortia may be prioritized when they are expected to have a most significant impact on the issue being addressed
- We encourage you to engage strategically and partner with others to enhance your impact.

Applications

- You can apply as individual organisation or as consortium
- When applying as a consortium
 - The set up of the consortium is your choice
 - You can do a joint application or work with technical partners
 - There's no maximum number of consortium partners
 - There's a maximum budget for a consortium to apply for
- A consortium can be cross-country or have a multi-county approach
- Applicants can submit one proposal
 - Either as individual or as part of a consortium

! An exception may be made for a technical support organisation with a proven track record in multiple countries of implementation. Such an organisation may participate in multiple consortia but may only apply in one consortia per country.

Work that can be funded

- Please see page 11 & 12 of the call for proposals
- General SRHR focus is no objective of this call
 - Support will not be provided for the distribution of MHM materials or general SRHR services
 - Activities specifically related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are not automatically funded on their own.
 - Small-scale service delivery (page 12) is permitted, only when this is benefitting the outcome of your advocacy. For example, sharing of health education or information as a way to increase informed choices about HIV- Prevention.
- Strengthening health systems can be done, see full call for details
 - This may include training of health providers capacity, related to the outcomes of this call
- Procurement of product is not eligible

Work that can be funded

- The fund is encouraging evidence-informed approaches and not starting completely from scratch.

We mean:

- Applicants are encouraged to build on existing knowledge, tools, or best practices in HIV prevention, advocacy, or women- and girl-led programming developed or used in other (donor-) programmes
- This could include research findings, monitoring tools, training materials, community engagement methods, or intervention models that have been proven effective.

M&E

- Guidance on M&E will be provided during application for the full proposal
- Your initiative addresses 1 or more outcomes of the call
- Measurement will be done according to:
 - Certain indicators that are set, and non-negotiated (from Aidsfonds e.g.)
 - Certain indicators part of the context or measurement tools of the grantee
 - Indicators could be a mix of social/ community and biomedical (if that applies to your application)
- The grantees are expected to make their own monitoring and impact plan, including targets, short and medium-term outcomes and annual goals.
- More information on baseline study and if- and how this will include grantees will be communicated in a later stage.

Finances & Budget

- Guidance on budget and budget caps will be shared once applying for the full proposal
- The level of funding available is to be read at page 14 of the call for proposals. For the full grant period (2026-2028):
 - Individual organisations should provide an annual budget within the range of €50,000 to €200,000; Applications for consortia should provide an annual budget within the range of €150,000 to €300,000.
- The first year of implementation will be 9 months. The annual budget of the first year must be proportional to the 9 months of implementation (rather than the full 12-month budget).
- The minimum of grants for an individual organisation is €50,000.
 - This means that young and new organisations, without a current annual budget, can only apply with a fiscal host, when they are part of a consortium or e.g. be sub-granted

Finances & Budget

- The requested budget cannot be higher than 30% to 50% of the annual budget of the applicant. In case of applying as consortium, this applies to all applicants.
 - This means that the budget requested for each consortium member, cannot be higher than 30% to 50% of the annual budget of that specific consortium member
 - We will have a look at the last 3 years of annual income
- The budget includes staff costs, project costs, and a level of admin costs (core costs).
 - The percentages will be communicated once successful to apply for a full proposal
- In the application process all applicants have to submit audited financial reports
 - This can also be *audited* Organization Financial Statements
- We encourage applicants to apply for long-term funding, to maximize impact
 - However, if there's strong demonstration for a short-term grant, you can submit this

Finances & Budget

- Regarding a fiscal host:
 - A fiscal host is required to have a bank account, be registered and have experience with receiving donor funding
 - Due diligence will be performed on the hosting organisation after the full application is reviewed as successful.
- If you are a current grantee under any Aidsfonds grants this will not affect your application under EmpowHER
- Aidsfonds will require external project audits to be done under this call
- Funding decisions will be made jointly by Aidsfonds and the EmpowHER Advisory Committee. The aim is to create a well-balanced portfolio in terms of grant types, countries, populations, and budgets ceilings. **Applicants should note that the amount of funding requested may not be fully granted** and that they might be asked to revise their proposed budget after the review process

Assessment of applications

From the call for proposals, we can see the following key criteria that guide the assessment of applications:

- Eligibility
- Relevance & contextual understanding
- Justification for the chosen context and population
- Strategies that increase access to new and existing HIV- prevention options and advance choice
- Advocacy plan
- Partnerships and collaborations (enhancing capacity of smaller women- led networks, cross sector with feminist organisations, in-country, regional)
- Alignment with EmpowHER Fund vision, values and principles
 - Level of leadership of women and girls in governance, project set-up, decision making
- Budget quality
- Feasibility

Application process

- Access through Aidsfonds Good Grant platform
<https://aidsfonds.grantplatform.com/>
- You can find the link on our website under the call for proposals text saying ‘Good Grants’
- In this system you will fill in an application form.
 - Application forms submitted through email will not be excepted.
- When you are eligible and shortlisted, you will be invited to submit a full proposal including a workplan and budget.
- Due to the high interest and the expected high number applications, unsuccessful applicants will not receive feedback on their applications.
- The portal has Portuguese support. Applications in Portuguese will be translated through a professional platform and the process will be assisted by a translator if necessary.

[Visit url: The EmpowHER Fund](#)