

Decision-memo Final report

Initiative number	Initiative name
300010106	Upper Fulladou women for change
Cooperation partner	Partner(s) in subsequent step
Swedish Association for Economical Liberation in the Gambia	Sololo Tabokoto Kankiling Kafoo
Reported period	Geographical area(s)
01/01/2024 - 31/12/2024	Gambia
Granted support for the period	Approved outcome for the period (incl. own contribution)
300,618 SEK	323,424 SEK

Summary

The project goal for three years 2023-2025 is:

The targeted women rights-holders are well informed on how to influence and participate in public decision-making processes at local level. Through increased knowledge and application of the same, the women rights-holders have developed strategies and tactics to reach their goals. With the goal to involve 1660 persons - 1560 women and 100 men, in 100 villages in the Upper Fulladou region.

The initiative has led to:

- ✓ There is now a network called Upper Fulladou Women for Change involving 6 women's groups in the town of Bansang and 38 more women's groups in the villages outside Bansang.
- ✓ A total of 2619 registered persons are involved in the project's activities of which 1954 are women and 280 are men.
- ✓ Local information meetings used in all the villages. Eight seminars (four per year) where representatives have been invited to deepen their knowledge about gender, local democracy, representation, poverty eradication, climate change and the tools: study circles Networking and problem solving.
- ✓ Educated study circle leaders, 4 women in each village. The Educators are study circle leaders themselves in Bansang who have concentrated on one topic each. They have also been touring the villages to help the new study circle leaders get started.
- ✓ The Network uses WhatsApp to communicate, a Facebook site to inform the surrounding society and the project homepage for internal information and tools.
- ✓ Sololo Kafoo and the Network: Upper Fulladou Women for Change, are now known to be the strongest women Network in the region after some representatives have participated in 3 regional seminars about women empowerment, facilitated by UNDP and the regional authorities.

- ✓ Inclusion is important as Gambian politics has been very tribal. Thus, Study Circle materials have been transformed into sound files and in some of the local languages. Some study circle materials are transformed into just pictures for those who cannot read and write. Solidarity actions for women with special needs have brought the women together no matter their differences.
- ✓ Women in the network prepared to be nominated in coming elections. The Network has tested and knows how to nominate and campaign for their representatives.
- ✓ They also have experience now of reaching out to local and regional authorities with their demands for changes.

The partners would have benefitted of one more year to strengthen the capacity of the administrative organization. Unfortunately, due to SIDA new conditions, the partners had to focus on how to face out the project already 2024 to make it as sustainable as possible. The partners learned a lot by doing the planning, follow-ups, organizing AGMs and reporting together.

The two organizations will continue working together over WhatsApp even without funding. The partners can organize the already planned economic education for the board members, to be ready to handle new projects by themselves. The Network is planning a women's march in April this year and is discussing starting a Revolving fund together, to let one women group at a time realize their dream

Final report assessment

Organisation assessment

Organisation assessment: the extent to which the organisation(s) has the programmatic, administrative, and financial capacity to manage funds in a transparent way.

1. Provide a brief analysis and conclusions about respective organizations' programmatic, administrative, and financial capacity development in the initiative. How has the initiative impacted the capacities of the organizations in particular and as civil society actors in general?

Sololo demonstrated significant growth in administrative capacity supported by SAELG. Both organizations emphasized "learning by doing" and stressed the importance of close collaboration as core to this progress. The termination of the programme one year earlier, was acknowledged as a missed opportunity to fully prepare the local organization for future project independence. It is assessed that the financial management is adequate and compliant despite the challenges. The progress of this aspect is also noticed in the final reporting preparation and completion compared to the annual reporting last year. On the Swedish organization's level, SAELG has expanded its learning process through participating in ForumCiv's capacity building and network exchange activities.

The initiative has meaningfully strengthened Sololo's role as a local civil society actor. The organization now has greater legitimacy, structured governance, and practical experience with rights-based education and civic engagement. It is positioned as a respected voice for women in the region.

2. Is there anything that needs to be followed-up in an on-going initiative or future application?

While the organization made commendable progress, the early closure of the initiative limited the planned administrative development in the third year. Since this is the last year of this initiative under this programme, it is recommended that both organizations continue to work strengthening the

administrative and financial capacities of the local organizations. The initiative is a good example of how small-scale interventions can contribute to structural changes when rooted in trust, mutual learning, and community-defined goal. The challenge now is how to sustain the momentum without external funding.

Implementation Strategy

Implementation strategy: (a) effectiveness: the extent to which the set objectives of an initiative are likely to be achieved; and whether the implementation strategy is an appropriate way of achieving the objectives under the prevailing circumstances; (b) feasibility: the sum of several factors, such as economic, technical, time, human resources etc. that is needed to plan, implement, and monitor the project in a satisfactory way.

1. To what extent has the partnership achieved the goals of the initiative? How has this contributed to the local organization's long-term strategy and goal?

The partnership has reached its set goals of empowering women's rights holders and supporting their participation to influence their lives. The creation of a women's network in Upper Fulladou and supporting it in a participatory way resulted in reaching to more women above the target. Women were trained as group leaders in every village and learning materials were made easier to understand through local languages, sound files, and pictures. Many women now feel confident speaking in public, standing up for their rights, and taking part in local decision-making. Some are even preparing to run for office. The network is now recognized by local leaders and has taken part in events supported by UNDP. This progress supports the group's long-term goals of helping women gain access to small loans, learn basic skills, and understand their rights in society. The project's focus on civic education has helped lay a strong foundation for these goals.

2. Has the implementation strategy been adapted in response to lessons-learned and/or deviations (this includes operational plan and budget)?

The implementation strategy was adjusted throughout the project based on what the team learned along the way. When the team found out the project would end earlier than planned, they quickly shifted their focus to making it as sustainable as possible, rethinking priorities and moving funds to where they were most needed. One of the most important lessons was the need to work with the whole community, not only women. Including men and local religious leaders helped reduce resistance and build trust. This approach made it easier for women to participate and feel supported. The team also realized that practical, hands-on learning, like organizing village meetings and running their own activities, was the most effective way to build skills and confidence. Training women to drive the project vehicle was one way to show what women are capable of. They also brought in a local women's rights activist to provide extra support when international travel wasn't possible. These experiences showed that adapting to local needs and being flexible helped the team overcome challenges and achieve more than expected.

3. Is there anything that needs to be followed-up in an on-going initiative or future application? (For example, level of funding, flexibility, bridge year, the partnerships relevance to the local organization).

One of the clearest lessons from this initiative is the importance of building administrative capacity alongside community mobilisation. Although the project achieved strong results in terms of women's empowerment and local organising, the early termination of the initiative meant that the local organisation did not have enough time to fully develop the skills needed to manage future projects independently. This unfinished progress is an area to follow up on, especially if future support is possible. The network is active and motivated but financially vulnerable, and would benefit from ongoing support for local coordination, mobile communication costs, and plans such as a revolving fund. The strategy remains deeply relevant to the local group's long-term goals, and a future

application could include components on microfinance and adult learning to build on what has been started. Finally, while the partnership will continue informally, its ability to expand or sustain impact depends on whether further resources can be secured.

Effective partnership

Effective partnership: the extent to which partners demonstrate adequate capacity to maintain an effective, strategic, and equitable partnership.

1. Provide a brief analysis and conclusions about the partnership development. How has the initiative impacted the cooperation/collaboration of the partners?

The partnership between Sololo and SAELG has grown stronger throughout the initiative despite the challenges. Working across countries with different languages, limited internet access, and varying digital skills proved difficult, but the teams adapted through regular WhatsApp communication and annual in-person visits. This close, consistent collaboration helped both sides learn by doing, particularly in planning, budgeting, and reporting. It also deepened mutual understanding and respect, with both organizations engaging their boards in decision-making and project adjustments. However, the early termination of the project due to external funding changes limited the time needed to fully build Sololo's independent administrative capacity. Nevertheless, the partnership has had a lasting impact, with a shared commitment to continuing cooperation informally and supporting the women's network beyond the project's end. The relationship evolved from a formal project collaboration into one based on solidarity and shared goals, but future support would be necessary to ensure long-term organizational independence and network sustainability.

2. Is there anything that needs to be followed-up in an on-going initiative or future application? For example, level of funding, flexibility, bridge year, the partnerships relevance to the local organization.

The early termination of the project in 2024, instead of the planned 2025 end date, meant the local organization had to shift focus from strengthening administrative capacity to ensuring sustainability. As a result, they missed an important opportunity to build the skills needed to manage projects independently. A bridge year or additional support would have allowed them to complete this critical development phase. Additionally, despite the positive partnership and clear alignment with the local organization's long-term goals, the lack of future funding remains a major challenge. Both partners have expressed a strong desire to continue working together and are committed to supporting the women's network informally, but ongoing support would make a significant difference. Finally, the flexibility provided during this project (e.g. reallocating funds from travel to local support) was essential and should be considered in any future applications to allow partners to respond effectively to changing needs.

3. How can ForumCiv improve to be a better partner going forward?

The collaboration with ForumCiv was seen as highly supportive and educational, with the Swedish partner, SAELG, gaining valuable knowledge through seminars, templates, and exchanges with other organizations. A visit from a ForumCiv representative to the project site also helped build mutual understanding. However, the partnership is coming to an end, not because of issues with ForumCiv, but because changing in SIDA requirements and funding. While nothing specific was suggested to improve ForumCiv's role, the report reflects appreciation for the guidance provided and regret that the collaboration cannot continue due to external limitations rather than the quality of the partnership itself.

Follow-up questions

ForumCiv has no follow up points from last year.

Financial reporting

The partner's financial management during the year was generally sound and well-coordinated, contributing positively to the effectiveness and feasibility of the initiative. The local partner, Sololo Kafoo, showed commitment to maintaining accurate records and meeting donor requirements, with no missing receipts and full documentation provided during audits. While the audit highlighted areas for improvement—such as over-reliance on cash transactions and limited digital tools—these did not result in significant compliance issues and plans for capacity-building in digital financial management were set for 2025.

There was good coordination between the Gambian and Swedish teams, especially when the project had to close earlier than expected. This led to timely budget adjustments, such as reallocating funds from travel to support method development, which was approved by ForumCiv. Exchange rate effects (66,053 SEK) were also effectively used to strengthen activities in the final year, with no unused grants or repayment issues reported.

ForumCiv followed up on the costs paid after final report is submitted and approved them.