



19 July 2012

Dear Friends,

This week we are sending you Part 3 of Firelights series of Agra-flash Newsflashes focusing on Sustainable Agriculture, we hope you enjoy!

Sincerely,
The Firelight Team

(Call for Proposals) Japan Water Forum Fund: Grants for Grassroots NGOs
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(Call for Proposals) Japan Water Forum Fund: Grants for Grassroots NGOs

The Japan Water Forum has announced a grant opportunity for grassroots NGOs in developing countries working to resolve water and sanitation problems.

Only projects planned and implemented to solve the current water and sanitation problems by grassroots organizations in developing countries will be considered.

These projects include for example:

- Installation of rainwater-harvesting tanks, ponds or digging wells;
- Development of small scale water supply systems;
- Building new toilets and upgrading existing sanitation facilities;
- Prevention of water-related disasters projects;
- Establishment and encouragement of water-efficient irrigation;
- Solving gender issues on water and sanitation;
- Water environment restoration activities.

Who should apply?

Any grassroots organizations in developing countries involved in resolution of

water and sanitation problems. National governments, Local governments and private companies will not be selected can apply for this opportunity.

The JWF Fund recommends that your proposed project includes capacity building/awareness-raising programs but it should not be only that. All projects need to be implemented by end of March 2013.

The deadline to submit proposals is 25 July 2012. For more information and to apply, visit this link: http://www.waterforum.jp/eng/fund/2012_top_main_r.html

(Call for Letters of Inquiry) Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (VGIF): Small grants for grassroots projects that empower women and girls in developing countries

VGIF provides small grants for grassroots projects that empower women and girls in developing countries.

We support women's organizations based outside of the United States by providing small grants for an array of community needs up to \$7,500 USD.

What VGIF supports:

- Community development
- Health and nutritional support
- Literacy and leadership training
- Educational seminars and workshops
- Women's human rights
- Organizations that are governed and directed by women.

VGIF does not consider requests for the following:

- Individual scholarships and tuition
- Political organizations
- Religious groups unless the proposed project contributes to the general good of the community
- The construction of permanent buildings or the purchase of land
- Salaries for board members and permanent staff but may include stipends/honoraria for external resource people/trainers.

If your organization fulfills this profile, and you would like to apply for a grant for our 2013 funding cycle, here are the steps you will need to take once our process is open:

All interested applicants must complete a Letter of Intent (LOI). VGIF does not accept unsolicited LOIs or full proposals. The LOI process will open in May, 2012. At that time you will have access to our Letter Of Intent by creating an account, then completing and submitting your LOI to us electronically. After LOIs are reviewed, your organization may or may not be invited to move forward in our funding

process, with the completion of our full application.

Information requested in the LOI:

- Organization and personnel Information
- A brief description of the organization
- A brief description of previous projects (if any)
- A description of your project
- The project budget
- Prior funding from other sources
- Qualifications of the project director

2013 Criteria and Guidelines for LOI:

- The Letter of Intent must be submitted by a non-profit, non-political organization.
- The proposal addresses the empowerment of women and girls and will lead to action and sustainable change in the community.
- The proposal clearly reflects the participation of the community/target group in its development and design.
- The project addresses sustainability after VGIF funding with continued involvement in the larger community.
- Women are well represented in the leadership, staff and management of the organization and project.
- The organization can demonstrate its ability to manage resources and funding from external sources.
- The Letter of Intent provides reliable email addresses as well as phone numbers.
- The proposal must present a true budget with a clear explanation of all items. The budget amount requested from VGIF must not exceed \$7,500 USD.
- Other sponsors or potential funding for this project must be clearly identified.
- The timeline of activities is realistic and achievable and the project can begin upon the awarding of grants by VGIF in mid-May.

VGIF will consider inclusion of an amount, not to exceed 10% of the total grant, for administration of the project to the executing organization in the country where the project is located.

How to Proceed

If your organization fulfills these criteria and you would like to begin the Letter Of Intent process you will need to complete the following 4 stages:

Stage 1: Create a Log In Account – a valid e-mail address must be provided to create an account. To create a log-in, please visit: <http://www.vgif3.org/projects2tier/index.asp>

Stage 2: Supply the required Personnel Information - once you have created a log-in account with VGIF you will need to complete and submit information about yourself

and your organization. Once this stage is complete you will be directed to our Letter of Intent.

Stage 3: Create and edit the Letter of Intent -The Letter of Intent can be completed immediately or you may start the Letter of Intent, save your work, and add additional information at a later time. There is no limit to how many times you can update your Letter of Intent before submitting it.

Stage 4: Submit the Letter of Intent

Deadline to submit LOI: 31 July, 2012

For more information and to apply, please visit: <http://www.vgif3.org/projects2tier/index.asp>

(Resource) Alliance Magazine now offering free electronic subscriptions to over 140 countries

Alliance magazine's mission is to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among people working for social change in order to maximize the impact of funding for social development. That is why they are now offering FREE electronic subscriptions to those in over 140 countries not designated as high-income countries by the World Bank. **This includes every country that Firelight partners work in.**

Alliance is the leading magazine for philanthropy and social investment worldwide. It provides news and analysis of what's happening in the philanthropy and social investment sectors across the world. It also acts as a forum for exchange of ideas and experiences among practitioners.

As well as news and conference reports, articles, book reviews and opinion columns, each issue has a special in-depth feature on some key aspect of philanthropy and social investment, with contributors from around the world and expert guest editors.

To sign up for a free electronic subscription, please visit: <http://www.alliancemagazine.org/en/content/free-electronic-subscriptions>

(Report) How To Conserve Water

One of the best ways to conserve water is to learn how often plants need irrigation, so that water isn't wasted.

Soil type will also dictate how often to water. Soils with a high clay content drain slowly—they can hold water for up to two weeks; sandy soils drain quickly and may hold water for only a few days. Both types of soil will benefit from applications of compost and other organic matter. For clay soils, compost improves drainage and opens up air spaces so that roots can breathe. Adding compost to sandy soils helps the soil retain water longer—the compost acts like a sponge, absorbing and holding moisture until plants can use it.

The squeeze test can help you determine whether the soil needs water; dig down a few inches and grab a handful of soil. You need to water when: sandy soil won't retain its shape when squeezed into a ball; loamy soil looks dry and won't form a loose ball under pressure; clay soil won't form a ball unless squeezed.

When it's time to irrigate, here are some water-saving guidelines:

- **Deep waterings that wet the entire root zone use water most effectively.** The goal is to draw plant roots deep into the soil, where water remains available longer. If all the moisture remains in the top few inches of the bed, that's where the roots will stay, and shallow-rooted plants are especially vulnerable to drying out. Deep waterings combined with deeply dug soil will encourage roots to spread and lengthen. An exception: just-planted seed beds and young transplants shouldn't be allowed to dry out—the germinating seeds or seedling roots are near the soil surface, which needs to stay moist. As the plants mature and their roots lengthen, they can tolerate longer intervals between waterings.
- **Water early in the day**, when cooler temperatures and calm conditions slow evaporation. Allow enough time for plants to dry out before evening to prevent fungus and mildew problems.
- **Keep an eye on the weather** as you make your watering decisions. A series of cool, cloudy or foggy days will lengthen the time needed between watering sessions.
- **Mulch can help slow evaporation.** Anything that covers the ground and blocks light can act as a mulch. This includes inorganic material such as plastic sheeting, polypropylene or polyester landscape fabrics, and old carpet. Organic mulches range from compost, leaves, straw, and hay, to newspaper, cardboard, wood chips, bark, and sawdust.
- **Drip irrigation** aids conservation. The idea behind any drip irrigation system is to conserve water by directing it to the base of the plants, where it's most needed. By keeping the foliage dry, drip irrigation also helps control mildew and fungus problems, as well as limiting weed growth. Drip irrigation is especially useful for plants that are sensitive to moisture-related diseases, such as cucumbers, squashes, potatoes, and many annual flowers. For densely planted beds of lettuce, carrots, beets, and other small plants, overhead watering with high-quality oscillating sprinklers remains the best option.

To read the entire report, please visit: <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/publications/for->

(Report) How to Adapt to Drought

Human-induced climate change is resulting in less and more erratic rainfall, especially in regions where food security is very low. The poor in rural and dry areas will suffer the most and will require cheap and accessible strategies to adapt to erratic weather. This adaptation will need to take into account not only less water and droughts, but also the increased chance of extreme events like floods.

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Under large perturbations, like heavy rains and hurricanes, ecological farming practices appear to be more resistant to damage and capable of much quicker recovery than conventional farms. For example, ecological agriculture practices such as terrace bunds, cover crops and agro-forestry were found to be more resilient to the impact of Hurricane Mitch in Central America in 1998. Also, in coffee farms in Chiapas, Mexico, farmers were able to reduce their vulnerability to heavy rain damage (e.g., landslides) by increasing farm vegetation complexity (both biodiversity and canopy structure).

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Tips on How to Adapt:

1. Build a Healthy Soil – A critical component in enabling farms to cope with drought. Healthy soils rich in organic matter, as the ones nurtured by agroecological fertilisers (green manures, compost, animal dung, reduced tillage, fallowing techniques, etc), are less prone to erosion and more able to hold water. All these characteristics make soils rich in organic matter more drought-resistant, increasing the water-use efficiency of not only the crop but the whole farm. Crops fertilised with organic methods have been shown to more successfully resist both droughts and torrential rains and also contribute to climate change mitigation through sequestration of soil carbon.

2. Diversify Crops – High soil biodiversity also helps with drought-resistance. Plants are not organisms that can be considered independently from the medium in which they grow. In fact, the vast majority of plants in nature are thought to be associated with some kind of fungi in the soil. Many fungi associated with plants (both mycorrhizal and endophytic species) increase plant resistance to drought and plant water uptake. Diversity allows the agroecosystem to remain productive over a wider range of conditions, conferring potential resistance to drought. For example, in Malawi, intercropping maize with the legume tree, gliricidia, has been shown in long-term studies to improve soil nutrients and fertility, providing inexpensive organic fertiliser for resource-poor farmers. In addition, fields with intercropped maize and gliricidia trees hold about 50% more water two weeks after a rain than soil in fields with maize monoculture. This is an example of the combined benefits of more biodiversity and healthier soils for coping with less water, in addition to being

an example of farm-level cropping diversity.

4. Use Water Effectively – Collect and concentrate rainfall, use drip irrigation systems, or prevent water evaporation using mulch. One man from Burkina Faso added manure to shallow pits that collected and concentrated scarce rainfall onto the roots of his crops. In doing so, his crop yields duly increased. This addition also resulted in the growth of trees amid his rows of millet and sorghum, thanks to the seeds contained in the manure, which leads to the final suggestion...

5. Plant Trees – Mixing trees and crops—a practice now called “farmer-managed natural regeneration,” or FMNR, known generally as agro-forestry—brings a range of benefits. The trees’ shade and bulk offer crops relief from the overwhelming heat and gusting winds, resulting in less need to sow the land. The trees’ leaves also act as mulch, boosting soil fertility and providing fodder for livestock in a season when little other food is available. In emergencies, people too can eat the leaves to avoid starvation. Trees can also be harvested—their branches pruned and sold—and then they grow back, and their benefits to the soil make it easier for additional trees to grow. The trees’ wood can be used for cooking, furniture making, and construction—additional ways to diversify income. Trees can also serve as a source of natural medicines. **For more information on tree planting, click this link:** <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=farmers-in-sahel-beat-back-drought-and-climate-change-with-trees>

To read the entire report, please visit: <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/publications/for-the-gardener>

As part of the Firelight Foundation’s Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides “Newsflashes” to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>. We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.

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