2020 GRANTEE PERCEPTION SURVEY (GPS) REPORT
Prepared for the Board of Trustees of the Kiisi Trust
INTRODUCTION

Grantmaking for the Kiisi Trust officially began in early 2018, after the inaugural Advisory Council gave their first grant recommendations to the Board of Trustees in December 2017. Currently, the Kiisi Trust gives out small grants of less than $10,000 in 7 thematic areas (peacebuilding, health, education/adult literacy, youth skills development/SME support, women’s programs, agriculture/environmental rights, and governance/voice/accountability). Projects are a minimum of six-months and a maximum of 12-months, depending on the project activities and objectives. Grant cycles are administered twice during the fiscal year (April – March), with a grantees’ forum conducted at the end of each grant cycle that officially signals the start of funded projects in that cycle.

After two years of grantmaking, the Trust is interested in learning from its grantmaking processes from 2018 – 2020 and seeking ways to improve on them going forward. As an organization, the Trust wants to continually seek ways to become more efficient and more impactful in its philanthropic efforts. This process can involve self-examination, but it can and should also involve seeking feedback and recommendations from those the Trust works closely with, our grantee-partners.
In June 2020, the Trust conducted an online survey of all organizations that received grants from the Trust. 85 percent of our grantees responded (30 out of 35 grantees responded) to the request to the survey with a 90 percent completion rate (averaging 19 minutes to complete the survey). The executive summary below outlines the key findings and recommendations from the Trust’s Grantee Perception Survey (GPS) Report. These perceptions should be interpreted considering the Trust's strategy and capacity at the time of the survey.

This executive summary accompanies the comprehensive survey result, which would also be shared with all grantee-partners and stakeholders of the Trust. The full report also contains more information about the survey analysis and methodology.
Overall, the Kiisi Trust's grantee-partners hold very positive perceptions of the Trust. On key measures in the survey, including perceptions of impact and understanding of grantees' field, the Trust's impact on grantees' organizations, and donor-grantee relationship, the Trust was rated high.

- When asked to describe the Trust in one word, grantees most frequently used the word “dependable.”

- Over 50 percent of grantees rated the Trust's impact in local communities they have worked in as “good” and another 29 percent rated the Trust's impact as “very good.”

- The average grant amount awarded to grantees was $8,000.
Application and Reporting Process

It’s not too surprising to discover that the majority of our grantees came to us through referrals (over 70 percent), as the Trust predominately worked through an Advisory Council made up of NGO and Ogoni representatives who were tasked with identifying potential organizations for funding and making grant recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Considering that for over half of our grantees this was their first time receiving a grant from a donor, 83 percent reported that the Trust’s application process and grant templates (concept note form, grant narrative form, budget form, and activities and outcomes forms) were “easy/somewhat easy” to use.

Also, using Fluxx, the Trust's online grants management platform, proved to be relatively easy to use for first-time grantee-partners, with 87 percent reporting that the online grants management platform was “easy/somewhat easy” to use.

Impact On and Understanding of Grantees’ Field and Organization

Though 61 percent of grantees rated the Trust as understanding their beneficiaries’ needs as “very well/extremely well”, the Trust still needs to put in more effort in clearly understanding local communities and the needs of its grantees’ beneficiaries. The Trust received a 37 percent poor rating in this aspect.

86 percent of grantees rated the Trust as having improved their ability to sustain their organization/project beyond the support from the Trust, showing improved capacity on resource mobilization for local community-based organizations.

“The Trust has helped us improve on our budgetary, accountability, and administrative issues.”
-Grantee-Partner

“The Trust’s advocacy on sustainability helped our organization leverage on more external assistance from public-private partnerships.”
-Grantee-Partner
Donor-Grantee Relationship

Understanding the power dynamics inherent in donor-grantee relationships and the need to be supportive in providing additional technical assistance in working through grant application materials, the Trust attempted to position itself to be accessible for questions and concerns to prospective and active grantees as much as possible.

- 90 percent of grantees reported having a good relationship with the Trust's team.
- 75 percent of grantees rated the Trust's team as being “responsive/very responsive” to them on issues or challenges they experienced during their project implementation, while another 17 percent rated the Trust's team as “somewhat responsive.”
- It wasn’t always possible to attend every project activity of grantees for monitoring and evaluation purposes, but over 70 percent of grantees indicated that the Trust team did conduct site-visits to offices and to project activities. Only 10 percent reported that the Trust team did not make any site-visits or attend project activities.
- Most grantees communicated with the Trust team regularly, only 7 percent interacted with the Trust team during reporting times.
- It was gratifying to learn that over 80 percent of grantees found the grantees forums hosted by the Trust “useful/extremely useful.” The grantees’ forum is for successful grantees to help them become familiarized with the Trust's team and other fellow grantees. It is also an opportunity for grantees to discuss their projects, finalize any remaining conditional issues with their grant applications, and learn more about the Trust and its grants' processes.
PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE TRUST

It was extremely important for the Trust to understand how it was perceived externally. Anecdotal feedback from Council members, stakeholders, Trustees, and community representatives helped the Trust to adjust some of its grantmaking guidelines and approaches. It is also important to note that during the period analyzed for this survey (2018-2020), the Trust was the recipient of a petition against it, with the majority of the complaints centered around lack of access to the Trust, vague grantmaking processes, and [inaccurate] accusations of favoritism on awarding contracts. The Trust has responded to and worked hard to address some of the underlying issues in the petition.

- 69 percent of grantees reported that the Trust is either “known” or “well known” in local communities across Ogoniland.

- Over 75 percent of grantees rated the Trust as having either a “good” or “very good” impact on local communities through project activities.

“Kiisi Trust Fund should interface more with local NGOs and communities as “Kiisi Trust” and not as “TrustAfrica” as this would give greater visibility and presence of Kiisi Trust in Ogoniland.”

-Grantee-Partner
RECOMMENDATIONS

Success to the Trust is an empowered Ogoniland with strong institutions mandated to provide services for the benefit of the Ogoni people. Championing voice (agency) of disenfranchised groups and communities, facilitating and providing platforms for entrepreneurship to thrive, connecting and building networks of partners and groups for effective knowledge exchange and capacity strengthening, and rebuilding trust in broken communities for effective dialogue and peacebuilding to take root are all elements of what needs to happen overtime for sustainable development in Ogoniland. An underlying thread amongst all these components and aspirations is the need to change mindsets from an entitled mentality to an empowered and accountable mentality. This approach emphasizes participatory thinking with collaborative power from and with the Trust to communities.
Grantees suggested new thematic areas of funding that the Trust should incorporate into its grantmaking guidelines going forward. These new thematic areas are:

- Renewable energy
- Climate change
- ICT and new media
- Food security
- Programs/initiatives targeting the physically challenged/disability rights

On areas for improvement on the Trust’s grantmaking, the following recommendations were given:

- Increase grant ceiling of $10,000.
- Disbursement of second and third grant payments should be processed faster as delays in payment results in temporary pauses in project implementation which can lead to tensions with some local communities.
- Communication with grantees should be more open and accessible.
- Monitoring and evaluation of funded projects should not be limited to just when the project is active; ongoing evaluation and follow-up with beneficiaries even after the project has ended would help to track the full impact of projects.
- Organize annual organization capacity strengthening training for grantees.

On the part of the Trust, we recognize that effective and clear communication can go a long way in resolving issues and in setting expectations. As a young donor in the region, the Trust is committed to improving its operations by:

- Exploring additional ways to communicate through its various and widely used written materials (funding guidelines, website, social media, newsletter) with prospective and current grantees who experience more low-touch relationships.
- Insist that grantees continue to receive consistent, responsive communication throughout their application and grant period.
- Considering more frequent and regular opportunities to interact with grantees either through scheduled phone calls/office hours or by attending even more grantee events.
- Conveying approachability when grantees have questions or issues, including setting expectations for when and how grantees could best communicate with the Trust.
CONTACT INFORMATION

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