
Invitation of observers to sessions of the Governing Council: Lions Clubs International and the Sasakawa Africa Association

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Useful references: Invitation of observers to sessions of the Governing Council (EB 87/31/R.57).

Action: The Executive Board is invited to approve the invitation of Lions Clubs International and the Sasakawa Africa Association, which meet the criteria set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of document EB 87/31/R.57, as observers to sessions of the Governing Council.

Technical questions:

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Invitation of observers to sessions of the Governing Council: Lions Clubs International and the Sasakawa Africa Association

I. Background

1. Observers are invited to attend IFAD Governing Council sessions in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement Establishing IFAD and various Governing Council and Executive Board rules and decisions, in particular those set out in document EB 87/31/R.57.
2. The Executive Board accepted that invitations to sessions of the Governing Council should be extended to entities concerned with promoting agricultural development in the developing Member States of IFAD and whose presence at Governing Council sessions could help to achieve the realization of IFAD's objectives. The Executive Board decided that these entities should be capable of assisting in the achievement of IFAD's purposes by: (i) cofinancing projects or programmes with IFAD; or (ii) providing direct support to IFAD's operations and activities. In this connection, IFAD has received applications for observer status at Governing Council sessions from Lions Clubs International (LCI) and the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA). Information on the organizations is provided in the annexes.

II. Recommendation

3. Whereas LCI and SAA meet the criteria established by the Executive Board, as stipulated in paragraphs 8 and 9 of document EB 87/31/R.57, and whereas LCI's mission is to establish strong networks of partners to strengthen communities, support those in need through service, assistance and grants that improve lives globally, and promote stability, peace and livelihoods;
4. And whereas SAA's mission is to catalyse knowledge-sharing with African farmers, thereby enabling food, nutrition and income security in their communities, which aligns with IFAD's approach, it is therefore proposed that the Executive Board authorize the President to invite the above-mentioned organizations to attend the fiftieth session and future sessions of the Governing Council as observers.

Lions Clubs International

I. Introduction

1. Lions Clubs International (LCI) is the world's largest non-profit, membership-based service organization focused on serving communities, including by financing and carrying out projects related to hunger, the environment and disaster relief. Its 1.4 million members operate through more than 49,000 clubs to serve across 200 countries and regions. Since 1917, LCI members have improved the health and well-being of disadvantaged communities under the motto "We Serve".
2. To implement solidarity work and service at home and globally, LCI members are supported through grants provided by the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF). Since its founding in 1968, LCIF has awarded more than 24,000 grants totalling more than US\$1.2 billion to improve health and well-being, strengthen communities and support those in need, locally and globally.

A. Mission

3. LCI's mission is to empower Lions clubs, volunteers and partners to improve health and well-being, strengthen communities and support those in need through service and grants that improve lives globally and encourage peace.

B. Activities and objectives

4. LCI's activities and objectives closely align with those of IFAD, particularly through its water and hunger and sustainable agriculture projects implemented across developing regions, including Africa. LCI's Euro-Africa Committee and Euro-Asia Committee coordinate projects that address the emerging needs of these regions.
5. Many projects focus on water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH), followed by agriculture. In Europe, the Lions Europa Forum's WaSH Committee coordinates efforts among several countries implementing WaSH projects in Africa and Asia, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Somalia, Tajikistan and United Republic of Tanzania. Some initiatives also support sustainable agriculture and product marketing. LCIF most commonly provides matching grants of up to US\$100,000, with 25 per cent local matching funds, and hunger grants, averaging US\$150,000, for food security initiatives such as school meals. The grants are often used to cofinance larger initiatives.
6. Individual Lions clubs also receive funding to carry out community-based volunteer activities tailored to local needs under the following eight global causes:
 - (i) **Childhood cancer:** We provide support to children and families affected by childhood cancer.
 - (ii) **Diabetes:** We work to reduce the prevalence of diabetes and improve the quality of life for those living with diabetes.
 - (iii) **Disaster relief:** We take steps to meet immediate needs and provide long-term support for communities devastated by natural disasters.
 - (iv) **Environment:** We find ways to protect the environment and create healthier communities and a more sustainable world.
 - (v) **Humanitarian:** We identify the world's most crucial needs and provide humanitarian aid where it is needed most.
 - (vi) **Hunger:** We strive to improve food security and access to nutritious food to help alleviate hunger.
 - (vii) **Vision:** We help prevent avoidable blindness and improve the quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired.

- (viii) **Youth:** We support young people so they can make positive choices, lead healthy and productive lives and become the next generation of service leaders.

C. Membership and governance

7. LCI is a global, membership-based service organization comprising approximately 1.4 million members organized in over 49,000 local clubs across 200 countries and regions. Membership is voluntary and is exercised through local clubs chartered by LCI.

II. Structure

8. LCI is governed by its membership through a representative system established under its constitution and by-laws. The organization's authority and oversight are exercised through the following bodies:
- **The International Convention** is the supreme governing authority of LCI. It is composed of duly accredited delegates representing chartered Lions clubs worldwide. The Convention meets annually and is responsible for electing international officers and directors, adopting resolutions, amending governing documents and determining the general policies of the association.
 - **The International Board of Directors** exercises executive authority on behalf of the Convention between sessions. The Board is composed of the international president, the immediate past president, vice presidents and elected international directors representing the eight constitutional areas. The Board meets regularly to oversee the implementation of policies, approve programmes and budgets and provide strategic direction.
 - **The international headquarters** is responsible for the day-to-day administration of LCI, operating from Oak Brook, Illinois, United States of America, and through regional and field offices. The headquarters functions under the authority of the International Board of Directors and the direction of the executive administrator and administrative officers, including the chief financial officer, chief of technology and secretary.
 - **District and regional structures.** For administrative and governance purposes, LCI is organized into constitutional areas, multiple districts and districts. District governors and multiple district council chairs are elected by the membership within their respective jurisdictions and are responsible for the coordination, supervision and representation of Lions at the district and multiple district levels.

A. Regions of operation

9. Lions serve globally, with 49,000 clubs and 1.4 million members supporting communities across 200 countries and regions.

B. Funding

10. LCI's revenue is obtained through international dues charged to chartered Lions clubs on a per-member basis.

C. Relationships with IFAD and other international organizations

11. Since 2021, when LCI designated a representative to collaborate with IFAD, both organizations have been exploring opportunities to collaborate on topics of mutual interest, including advocacy, youth, nutrition, water and sanitation, agriculture and rural development. This alignment creates meaningful opportunities to combine IFAD's technical expertise and country-level operations with LCI's ability to mobilize local communities, expand outreach, raise awareness and support service delivery.
12. LCI and the United Nations have a long and rich history. LCI helped establish the NGO section of the United Nations in 1945. In 1947, the United Nations granted LCI

consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). LCI enjoys special NGO status with the United Nations.

13. LCI also collaborates with several international organizations, including ECOSOC, the United Nations Department of Global Communications, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the United Nations offices in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.

D. Location

14. Lions Clubs International has its headquarters in Oak Brook, Illinois, United States of America, with regional offices in India, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

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Sasakawa Africa Association

I. Introduction

1. Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) is an international NGO established in 1986, originally registered in Geneva and now operating as a general incorporated foundation in Japan. Since 1986, SAA has worked hand in hand with African smallholder farmers under its long-standing approach of “walking with the farmer”, supporting agricultural development through strengthened extension and advisory systems.
2. Since its establishment, SAA has supported smallholder farmers across Africa through field-based, farmer-centred capacity-building. SAA currently maintains offices in four focus countries – Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda – and has worked in a total of 17 countries over time.

A. Mission

3. SAA’s mission is to catalyse knowledge-sharing with African farmers and enable food, nutrition and income security in their communities in pursuit of its vision of supporting Africa’s aspirations for resilient and sustainable food systems.

B. Activities and objectives

4. SAA’s activities align closely with IFAD’s mandate through a practical, systems-strengthening approach that improves the delivery of agricultural knowledge and technologies to rural communities. SAA implements programmes across the food system, from production and post-harvest handling to agroprocessing, marketing and consumption, with a strong emphasis on strengthening national and local agricultural extension and advisory services. SAA’s current strategic focus areas include:
 - (i) Regenerative agriculture;
 - (ii) Nutrition-sensitive agriculture; and
 - (iii) Market-oriented agriculture, supported by cross-cutting priorities such as capacity-building, inclusiveness and digitalization.
5. SAA aims to increase farmers’ income and food and nutrition security by promoting market-oriented, sustainable, resilient, regenerative and nutrition-sensitive agricultural innovations and building the capacity of extension agents and farmers.

C. Membership and governance

6. SAA is governed by its Board of Directors and Board of Councillors, supported by an executive leadership team.

II. Structure

7. SAA operates through its headquarters in Japan and country offices in Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda, supported by professional staff and senior directors who oversee programme implementation and partnerships. In addition, SAA maintains a Strategic Partnership Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which plays a key role in strengthening partnerships with regional and international organizations, including engagement with the African Union and other development partners. SAA reports that about 150 staff work across the organization.

A. Regions of operation

8. SAA currently operates through offices in Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda, and has implemented programmes across a wider set of African countries since 1986.

B. Funding

9. Since its establishment, the Nippon Foundation has been SAA's principal donor, funding the majority of its work. In addition, SAA has diversified its funding base in recent years through project-based partnerships with a range of development and research organizations, including United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme and UN Women, regional development finance institutions such as the Islamic Development Bank and the African Development Bank, CGIAR centres such as the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and the International Food Policy Research Institute, and organizations such as AGRA.

C. Relationships with IFAD and other international organizations

10. SAA has a proven track record of collaboration with IFAD.
11. In Nigeria:
 - SAA engaged in the IFAD-funded Climate Change Adaptation and Agribusiness Support Programme in the Savannah Belt between 2017 and 2018 to strengthen maize and rice dry-season value chain activities.
 - SAA participated in the start-up workshop of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones Programme and provided strategic guidance for its effective and efficient implementation.
 - SAA contributed technical inputs during the design of the Value Chain Programme in Northern Nigeria.
 - SAA was consulted during the drafting of the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP), ensuring alignment with field-level realities. The COSOP document identifies SAA as one of the key strategic partners supporting the implementation of the COSOP through the delivery of extension services to smallholder farmers.
12. In Uganda, SAA was awarded a contract as a private service provider for agribusiness development services under the National Oilseeds Project in May 2025. The contract is for a period of 36 months and is worth US\$700,000 (approximately UGX 2.5 billion).
13. In Japan, SAA is a strong advocacy ally of IFAD. For example, SAA and IFAD partnered at the Eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, with SAA's then-President participating as a panellist in an IFAD-led side event in September 2022.

D. Location

14. SAA is headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, and maintains offices in Ethiopia (including a Strategic Partnership Office in Addis Ababa), Mali (Bamako), Nigeria (Kano and Abuja) and Uganda (Kampala).

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