

Call for applications – Head of Finance (Consultant) – “Strengthening Social Cohesion and Dispute Resolution” (SSCDR) Project in Sri Lanka

Title	Head of Finance
Objective	To ensure the accountable and effective end-to-end financial management, accounting and reporting of the Strengthening Social Cohesion and Dispute Resolution (SSCDR) Project
Period	Four years – expected start date September 1 st 2026 (220 billable days per year)
Location	Colombo, Sri Lanka (with periodic travel to the Northern, Eastern and Uva Provinces).
Reports to	Team Leader: Strengthening Social Cohesion and Dispute Resolution (SSCDR) Project
DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS	Friday 3 rd July 2026, 23.59 CET

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. British Council Sri Lanka is a vibrant operation delivering a high impact portfolio of projects across Education and Society, Exams and English and the Arts, across three offices in Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna.

About the SSCDR project

Through its 2025 Annual Action Plan, the European Union (EU), with strategic partners the British Council and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*, propose to support the Government of Sri Lanka in its continued efforts to strengthen social cohesion and improve dispute resolution services across the country. Through addressing exclusion, strengthening access to justice and supporting inter-communal economic cooperation, the European Union plans to support the Government’s efforts to foster a more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful, and cohesive society in Sri Lanka.

The European Union proposes to engage the British Council and GIZ to strengthen social cohesion and support an enabling environment for economic growth by building the capacity and resilience of communities, institutions, and businesses. This will be done through building on the successes and lessons of both the EU-funded Supporting Effective Dispute Resolution (SEDR) and the Strengthening Social Cohesion and Peace (SCOPE) projects. This means: i) working with institutions and communities to address inclusion and strengthen reconciliation to promote inclusive policy formulation driven by evidence; ii) strengthening alternative dispute resolution, with a focus on land and financial disputes; and iii) working with national and local

governments and non-state actors to enhance economic cooperation and inclusion with a focus on women and youth.

SSCDR Objectives and Result Areas

These are derived from the European Union's 2025 Action Document for Sri Lanka.

Overall Objective:

To foster a more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful and cohesive society in Sri Lanka.

Specific Objectives:

1. To address exclusion and intolerance in Sri Lanka, with a specific focus on women and youth.
2. To strengthen access to justice, and efficiency of the justice system on land and financial disputes.
3. To support intercommunal economic cooperation and economic inclusion with a focus on women and youth.

These Specific Objectives will be achieved by the delivery of four inter-connected Result Areas (RA).

- Result Area 1: Strengthened policy, practices and institutional framework that address inclusion and promote reconciliation.
- Result Area 2: Enhanced availability of factual, evidence-based information.
- Result Area 3: Enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms to increase the efficiency of - and accessibility to - the justice system.
- Result area 4: Increased intercommunal economic cooperation and economic inclusion with a focus on women and youth in the Northern, Eastern and Uva provinces.

The British Council is the lead implementing agency for the SSCDR project and is responsible for overall implementation and oversight including technical, administrative, financial and contractual management, as well as management of project subcontractors and partners.

Head of Finance - Role Purpose

The British Council is recruiting for a Head of Finance (HoF) to ensure the accountable and effective end-to-end financial management, accounting and reporting across the Strengthening Social Cohesion and Dispute Resolution (SSCDR) Project. The role will ensure high quality consistent, accurate and robust financial management processes in line British Council and European Union standards, so that financial targets and value for money are achieved throughout the SSCDR project cycle.

This is a senior post within the SSCDR project, and the successful candidate will be part of the project's Senior Management Team.

Appointment to this role is subject to the signature of a Financing Agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the European Union, and subsequently a contract being signed between the British Council and the EU.

Accountabilities and Responsibilities

Finance Management:

- Responsible for the effective operation of all aspects of finance including financial control and management, risk management, financial planning and delivery and reporting.
- Manage the financial month end processes as well as being accountable for the pre-closing and month end closing steps, including maintenance of accounting records.
- Responsible for review and monitoring all accounting transactions and adjustments on SAP (accruals, deferrals and provisions), including Intercompany accounting, and ensuring appropriate use of these in line with British Council accounting rules and procedures.
- Perform reconciliation of all relevant accounts and ensure that this is completed to corporate standards.
- Accountable for secure management of online and offline documentation including all time sheets and financial documentation.

Management Reporting & Financial Analysis:

- Review of Project's financial performance ensuring clear reporting on funding utilisation, contract performance, cost recovery and any financial risks.
- Provide project leadership with in-depth financial analysis on contract and partnership performance, identifying key trends, risks and opportunities to optimise funding impact.
- Lead the annual and multi-year financial planning process for project finance, ensuring strategic alignment and financial viability.
- Implement robust Budget Management controls against client facing budget and ensure timely submission of annual forecasts and linked invoicing.
- Drive rolling forecasts and scenario planning, enabling agility in financial management and ensuring responsiveness to external funding shifts.
- Embed a culture of financial accountability among programme team members enabling a culture that utilises tools, training, and insights to enhance financial decision-making.

Finance Reporting:

- Accountable for high quality and accurate internal and external financial reporting, monthly, quarterly, six-monthly and annually.
- Accountable for high quality and accurate data being on SAP including forecasting and planning according to internal British Council standards.
- Responsible for project financial reporting to the European Union, including submission of invoices.
- Responsible for quarterly project financial reporting to the national Treasury's External Resources Department (ERD), via the Ministry of Justice and National Integration's Reform Unit.
- Accountable for ensuring all relevant financial documentation is correctly stored, retained and available for internal and external audit as required.

- Accountable for reporting on Value for Money (VfM) and delivery of improved VfM over the duration of the project.
- Preparing inputs into presentations, technical papers, decisions notes and risk reports for internal and external projects governance fora, including six-monthly Project Steering Committee and monthly Project Boards, in close liaison with the Team Leader and Senior Project Manager.
- Regular liaison and close coordination with British Council Sri Lanka country finance team as well as South Asia Regional and UK commercial finance teams.

Financial Compliance:

- Ensures the SSCDR project meets all British Council and European Union financial requirements and compliance standards.
- Review all manual journals and off-system payments to ensure accuracy and compliance with relevant policies.
- Responsible for managing the procurement of external auditors for the project, as and when required – as well as coordination of all audits.
- Ensure that local external accounting requirements are adhered to. This may include managing local providers such as tax accountants or auditors.
- Quality assurance and compliance review of invoices for payments to delivery partners and other sub-contractors including GIZ and CSO grant partners.
- Conduct periodic expenditure verification visits to national and regional offices of CSO grant partners, as and when required.
- Lead by example and model a culture of corporate compliance, ensuring that all necessary policies and procedures (e.g. Code of Conduct, HR, Finance, Legal, EDI, anti-racism, Safeguarding, data privacy, cyber security etc) are implemented and maintained across the project, so that organisational risks are managed effectively.

Line Management & Leadership:

- Line-management of x 1 Finance Officer through applying British Council people management policies and principles, including performance management.
- Ensure that capability and capacity in the Financial Controlling and Accounting team is fit-for-purpose and able to respond flexibly to changes in the operating context.
- Ensure required financial training for project team members so that all project staff are aware of roles and responsibilities in relation to financial management.
- Deliver and conduct financial briefings, guidance and capacity development of service providers, and CSO grant partners in line with British Council financial policies and requirements.
- Supporting the recruitment of relevant SSCDR team members in collaboration with the Team Leader and Senior Project Manager during the project's Inception Phase, and thereafter as required.
- Acting as a role model, ensuring effective skills transfer and capacity building through mentoring and coaching of line-managees and wider project staff.
- Actively contributes to an inclusive and anti-racist organisational culture, being aware of own biases, and taking action to mitigate against these, while ensuring people feel

valued and are treated equitably, with support for people’s well-being and mental health.

- Working with the Team Leader to create an inclusive, dynamic, positive and productive environment for colleagues across the SSCDR project team.

Business Partnering & Stakeholder Engagement:

- Act as a trusted advisor to the Team Leader and Project Director/SRO, ensuring financial risk management and project finance operations support broader British Council cultural engagement goals.
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with client representatives and key partners, ensuring financial compliance and fostering long-term collaboration.
- Pro-actively share insights to challenge, influence and add value to financial management decision making, optimising opportunity whilst balancing risk.
- Advise on project budgetary decisions that are compliant with finance related dependencies and implications linked to Head Contract and British Council policies.

Key Relationships

External

- Representatives from the European Union Delegation finance and contracts team, through the Senior Project Manager.
- Finance counterparts from main delivery partners (GIZ), subcontractors, grantees, consultants and other suppliers.
- Internal and external Auditors.

Internal

- SSCDR leadership team, including the Project Director/SRO, Team Leader and the Senior Project Manager.
- British Council Country Director, Sri Lanka and Country Financial Controller.
- British Council Regional Head of Contract Finance, Head of Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A), International Operations and the EU Brussels team.
- British Council’s UK Cultural Engagement Financial Controller and FP&A strand.
- Relevant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Managed Service Provider representatives.

Profile/Requirements Qualifications

Qualifications	<p><u>Essential:</u></p> <p>Bachelor’s degree in accounting, finance, business or relevant field.</p> <p>Professional member of a chartered institute of accountancy e.g., ACCA/CIMA/CPA or equivalent.</p> <p><u>Desirable:</u></p> <p>Master’s degree in finance, accounting or business.</p>
Knowledge, Skills and Experience	<p><u>Essential/Minimum:</u></p>

	<p>Significant (>10 years) progressive experience in financial management and accounting.</p> <p>Experience in monitoring and controlling an agreed budget within a defined area, producing reports and contributing to financial planning and analysis.</p> <p>Experience of managing and reporting on financial software systems.</p> <p>Proven ability to line-manage and supervise finance/accounting staff and using capacity building- and mentoring approaches.</p> <p>Excellent written and oral communication skills.</p> <p>High proficiency in English, Tamil and/or Sinhala language.</p> <p><u>Desirable:</u></p> <p>At least 3 years' financial management experience in the international development sector.</p> <p>A proven experience in managing and coordination of audits.</p> <p>Experience in managing grants, including financial reporting and monitoring.</p> <p>Good understanding of Sri Lankan tax laws, systems and requirements.</p> <p>Experience in the financial management of EU projects.</p> <p>Good working knowledge of SAP financial software system.</p>
<p>Competencies (To be assessed at interview)</p>	<p>Leadership – able to motivate and proactively lead diverse teams.</p> <p>Initiative - able to work with a high level of autonomy and flexibility, drawing on previous policy and practice while also creating new and innovative solutions.</p> <p>Intercultural fluency – able to navigate complex and sensitive cultural dynamics to ensure delivery.</p> <p>Action-focused – using advanced problem-solving abilities to identify and pre-empt challenges.</p> <p>Learning focused – able to proactively identify, share and respond to learning points.</p> <p>EDI - Recognises and acts to reduce bias, including taking action based on an evidenced understanding of the experiences and barriers for people from diverse equality backgrounds.</p>

How to apply

Interested eligible applicants can submit (i) their CVs (in no more than 2 pages), and (ii) a one-page covering letter (indicating an all-inclusive per day consultancy fee rate in Euro) to SABD@britishcouncil.org by 23.59 Central European Time on Friday 3rd July 2026. Please mention “Application for Head of Finance/ SSCDR” in the subject of the e-mail.

Note: The confirmation of this role is contingent upon the approval of funding by the European Union and subsequent organisational contracting agreements being in place.