Request for Qualifications: Universal Health Coverage, East, Central and Southern Africa

3ie Policy Window Two

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Introduction

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) seeks applications for a policy window preparation grant under the Policy Window Two grants programme to conduct an impact evaluation of the contribution of the removal of user fees on universal health coverage in the eastern, central and southern Africa region implemented by East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC).

Overview of Policy Window Two

3ie’s Policy Window Two (PW2) grants programme is designed to fund impact evaluations that are commissioned by the policymakers and programme managers responsible for the development interventions to be evaluated.

PW2 grants are awarded in two phases. In the first phase, 3ie issues a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from researchers interested in collaborating with the designated government or NGO implementing agency to design and conduct one or more impact evaluations of the agency’s development interventions. The qualifications will be reviewed and scored by at least one internal reviewer, one external reviewer, and one representative of the implementing agency.

The selected research team receives a policy window preparation grant (PWPG) up to a predetermined amount. Please see http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/ for the 3ie policy window preparation grant agreement and grant administration agreement templates.

The PWPG covers costs associated with activities, such as travel to meet with the implementing agency, preliminary checking of administrative or secondary data, piloting surveys, site visits or researcher time necessary to develop one or more impact evaluation designs.

During the PWPG phase, the research team is also expected to conduct one or more workshops for the relevant implementing agency officials and other stakeholders in
order to build capacity for identifying programmes to be evaluated, determining evaluation questions and participating in impact evaluation design discussions.

At the end of Phase 1, the PWPG grantee submits the proposed design, including a proposed budget, in the 3ie PW2 application form. Please see http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/ to view the PW2 application form and the review form, which fully defines the selection criteria. The proposed design is due within four months of the signing of the PWPG grant agreement.

In Phase 2, the proposed design is reviewed and scored by at least one internal and at least three external reviewers. It is 3ie’s intent, although not guarantee, to fund the proposed evaluation, conditional on the proposal receiving adequate scores on all criteria. 3ie may provide comments and request a resubmission of proposals that do not receive adequate scores. 3ie reserves the right not to award any follow-on research grant. Designs submitted after the PWPG grant agreement deadline or resubmissions submitted after the stated deadline may or may not be considered for funding.

If the proposal is accepted, 3ie will award the research team a grant to conduct the impact evaluation under 3ie’s standard terms and conditions. Please see http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/ for the 3ie grant agreement and grant administration agreement templates.

**Background**

The ESCA-HC is an intergovernmental body that was established in 1974 and is made up of 10 member states (Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The organization is governed by the Conference of Health Ministers that meets semi-annually to discuss and set policy direction in the region.

Over the past 10 years in the ECSA region, several countries have introduced a policy on removal of user fees, mainly to increase access to basic healthcare services especially by the poor and consequently contribute to achieving universal health coverage. A recent report by Regional Equity Watch shows that, with the exception of Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania and Swaziland, all member states in the ECSA region, have been implementing the policy on user fee removal for at least the past five to ten years.

The focus of the policy has varied between member states. A majority of member states have targeted user fee removal at the primary health care level, whilst others have waived fees for the elderly, pregnant women and children under the age of 12 in district hospitals.

In pursuit of attaining health for all, removal of user fees has been considered (or even favoured) by most governments as one of the possible interventions. However, evidence from some countries shows that this has been fraught with
many challenges. For instance in Uganda, it was noted that although there have been positive effects of this policy intervention (e.g. increased use of services by the poor), out-of-pocket expenditure still remains high and financial protection has not been achieved.

Notably in the region, only Kenya and Uganda have attempted to evaluate the effects of this policy. Other countries are yet to undertake such an evaluation. As a call to increase Universal Health Care intensifies across the world, it is important to determine the extent to which user fees have contributed to attaining it.

The objective of this study will be to evaluate the extent to which this policy on removal of user fees has contributed to universal health coverage in the ECSA region. The evaluation will examine this question in two to three countries. Although many studies on the effectiveness of the removal of user fees have been conducted in the past, there are few impact evaluations that examine the magnitude of causal linkages between user fees on one side and health coverage, higher use and financial protection on the other side. Some measures of cost and utility are also expected from the study conducted under the aegis of the RFQ.

**Instructions for applicants**

Responses to this RFQ shall include five components:

1. Completed organization information form, which can be found on the 3ie website: [http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/](http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/)

2. Curriculum vitae (not to exceed three pages each) of all proposed principal investigators (PIs), along with a signed letter from each indicating the share of working time during the three months of the preparation grant expected to be spent on the proposal preparation work and confirming availability for that expected share of working time. It is expected that these PIs will participate in the proposed impact evaluation.

3. If applicable, curriculum vitae (not to exceed three pages each) of additional researchers who will be involved in conducting the impact evaluation if approved.

4. Copies of up to three impact evaluation studies with proposed PIs as named authors.

5. Proposed budget, not to exceed $25,000, for the proposal preparation costs. The proposed budget must follow 3ie’s direct cost and indirect cost policies.

The first three components should be submitted in a single Microsoft Word-compatible file, with all font sizes greater than or equal to 11 point. The signed letters from the PIs and sample impact evaluation studies may be submitted as separate PDF files. The budget should be presented in 3ie budget format and follow
3ie budget guidelines. Any budget notes may be submitted as a separate Microsoft Word-compatible file with all font sizes greater than or equal to 11 point.

Please submit all files in a single email message not to exceed 5MB to PW2@3ieimpact.org no later than 23:59 GMT on 30 October, 2013.

Incomplete submissions will be considered ineligible.

This RFQ does not constitute a guarantee of award. Please direct any questions to PW2@3ieimpact.org by 23:59 GMT on 1 October, 2013. A single document with all questions and answers will be made publicly available on the Request for Qualifications ECSA webpage within three working days of that date.

Eligibility

Only institutions, not individuals, may apply. The lead institution making the application must be located in eastern, central or southern Africa, with national researchers as the lead PI(s). The application may include other researchers, including from outside of the region, who are not employees of that institution. (Applicants are encouraged to include a researcher with a good international reputation in an advisory capacity).

Selection criteria

The qualifications submitted in response to the RFQ will be reviewed and scored according to the following criteria:

- Credentials of PIs: 45%
- Credentials of other researchers: 15%
- Institutional capabilities: 20%
- Sector experience and involvement: 15%
- Associate membership of 3ie: 5%

The application(s) submitted as the deliverable(s) for Phase I will be reviewed and scored according to the following criteria:

- Qualifications of proposed staff: 20%
- Involvement of developing country researchers: 20%
- Quality of technical proposal, internal validity: 25%
- Quality of technical proposal, external validity: 25%
- Cost: 10%