International Initiative for Impact evaluation
*Improving lives through impact evaluation*

**3ie’s Democratic Republic of Congo Humanitarian Assistance Thematic Window**

**Request for Qualifications for Proposal Preparation Grants:**
*Humanitarian Interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

**Issue date:** 14 May 2014  
**Deadline:** 23:59 EST, 13 June 2014

1. Introduction

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) is pleased to announce a request for qualifications (RFQs) from research or evaluation institutions or consortia for proposal preparation grants under its Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Humanitarian Assistance Thematic Window. 3ie’s overall Thematic Window grants programme is designed to support the generation of rigorous evidence on important topics in development for which evidence is lacking.

With this RFQ, 3ie seeks applications to prepare proposals for rigorous impact evaluations of humanitarian assistance related to on-going water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security, and/or multi-sectoral humanitarian programming in the DRC.

Humanitarian aid, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states, where the provision of basic services has failed and infrastructure is weak or non-existent, presents considerable challenges for impact evaluation. Major problems in undertaking impact evaluations in this sector include a lack of sufficient and good quality data, the constant and prolonged displacement of populations, lack of access and security, the difficulty of identifying comparison groups and very complex and dynamic contexts, making it hard to define expected impacts. Attributable impact measurement is severely constrained by practical as well as methodological issues. Nonetheless, organisations implementing humanitarian programmes need to address critical questions about their effectiveness in relation to the most vulnerable and affected populations. There is increasing recognition among donors, partners and the humanitarian community in DRC of the importance of having better evidence to direct limited resources, and to strive to accomplish more durable results.

Under the aegis of 3ie’s DRC Humanitarian Assistance Thematic window, 3ie in cooperation with the DRC Humanitarian Pooled Fund (PF) will help assess how and when more robust evidence can be obtained and under what conditions good theory-based evaluation methods can provide valid and generalisable findings that will be useful for policymakers and practitioners in humanitarian situations. The PF is financing short impact feasibility studies to
produce evaluation designs that can be used by implementing partners in tandem with seeking funding for and running humanitarian programmes.

The precise questions for evaluation will be determined in consultation with the DRC PF project implementation partners. Common Humanitarian Pooled Fund supported projects usually last for 1-2 years and are implemented in camps in DRC. In previous years projects that have focused on WASH interventions have aimed to increase the preparedness and strengthen response mechanisms for cholera epidemics and endemic diseases in health zones. The projects have also supported communities and local stakeholders to better prepare and prevent water-borne diseases, and have set up early warning systems for disease outbreaks in project areas. In addition, they have organised coordination meetings to prevent and reduce cholera, have set up and maintained chlorination points, sprayed infected homes and their surroundings, constructed and/or rehabilitated / restored water points (intakes, springs and wells), and have constructed latrines in health centers and schools, etc. within and outside of camps in areas affected by conflict. Food security projects supported by the pooled fund have focused on restoring livelihoods of affected communities (that are selected using vulnerability criteria). In these projects, severe and acutely malnourished children are admitted into nutritional treatment units and in others, households receive agricultural inputs (consisting of seeds and / or agricultural tool kits). In this case, PF supported projects have aimed to enhance the availability, access and utilisation of food for households in humanitarian contexts.

2. Overview of the DRC Humanitarian Assistance Thematic Window

The DRC Humanitarian Assistance Thematic Window aims to improve the quality and durability of outcomes resulting from humanitarian assistance including improved recovery and resilience efforts. This overall objective will be achieved through the following intermediate objectives:

1. Increasing the evidence base of what works, why and at what cost in the field of humanitarian aid, with a focus on learning about innovative approaches, impact trajectories and contextual factors affecting impact;

2. Generating lessons learned through the synthesis of high quality evidence on implementation and effectiveness;

3. Building capacity of implementing agencies and of common pooled funding bodies to produce and use evidence from high quality impact evaluations and reviews; and

4. Ensuring that evidence is available to policymakers in policy-friendly formats.

3ie intends to award grants to undertake feasibility studies of potential impact evaluations of humanitarian crisis interventions in DRC. The proposals will be scored and, if they are sufficiently robust and the findings are considered to be of major interest to the humanitarian community working in protracted crises, they will then be put forward for evaluation grants. This will be carried out over two phases in 2014:
1. Preparation grants (Phase I): Three preparation grants will be awarded to work on feasibility studies to develop impact evaluation proposals with the DRC Humanitarian Pooled Fund and its implementing partners. Each feasibility study team will receive a preparation grant of US$ 45,000 to US$ 85,000 to prepare one impact evaluation proposal. This will include identifying the main questions which are also relevant from a policy and programmatic point of view, undertaking formative work and piloting a baseline survey to inform the proposal, articulating the main theory of change and submitting a technical proposal that meets 3ie’s technical standards as well as a timeline and a budget for the full evaluation.

2. Impact evaluation grants (Phase II): Proposals received in Phase I will be reviewed and scored according to the 3ie selection criteria and selected proposals will be considered for evaluation grants. Awarding a preparation grant does not guarantee a grant for the full impact evaluation, nor does it obligate 3ie or any of its partners to provide any funding beyond the preparation phase.

3. Timeline

The DRC Humanitarian Assistance Window has a tight timeline and selected grantees will have to be cognizant of this. It is expected that the proposal preparation will be completed in two stages (please see Table 1). An initial interim report to 3ie and the DRC Humanitarian Pooled Fund is required by 8 September 2014. Teams are expected to pilot the baseline survey instrument, undertake formative research and use it to refine and submit full technical proposals to 3ie. If the proposal is selected and an evaluation grant is awarded, the impact evaluations will be undertaken alongside project implementation in 2015. We expect that the duration of the impact evaluations will last for up to two years.

Table 1 Deliverables and deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity or Deliverable</th>
<th>Key dates (all by 23:59 EST)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for queries related to the RFQ</td>
<td>26 May 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for posting of responses to queries on the 3ie website</td>
<td>30 May 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for submission of applications to RFQ*</td>
<td>13 June 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision about selection announced and teams contracted</td>
<td>14 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected teams undertake formative research and engage with implementing agencies. Field survey teams are put</td>
<td>15 July 2014 onwards</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interim report is submitted to 3ie. This includes the primary evaluation question, the main outcomes, the identification strategy, a piloted survey instrument and a provisional overall budget for a full evaluation

8 September 2014

Comments from and engagement with 3ie

9-15 September 2014

Submission of final proposals (in 3ie technical proposal format) to 3ie and DRC Pooled Fund

15 November 2014

Proposals reviewed and scored for impact evaluation grants

15 December 2014

* Applications submitted before the deadline would be appreciated.

It is expected that trips to the areas in which interventions are taking place will be required over the timeframe for the studies. Seasonal conditions affect the timing of collection of data in DRC, and in the study area the rainy season starts mid-August. Specifically, formative work and baseline surveys will therefore need to be piloted and this phase completed in time before sites become inaccessible.

Successful applicants will be required to submit an interim report as specified above with a provisional overall budget by 8 September 2014 and the final evaluation proposal(s) by 15 November 2014 (23:59 EST).

4. Humanitarian Assistance Thematic Window Preparation Grant

Eligibility

1. Only institutions or research teams, not individuals, may apply. The lead institution making the application must have at least one researcher of African nationality acting as the lead or a co-lead Principal Investigator (PI). The application may include other researchers from outside Africa, who are not employees of that institution. Applicants are advised that including a researcher with a good international reputation in an advisory capacity is encouraged. We also encourage applicants to team-up with researchers in universities in the DRC, if possible.

3ie strongly encourages the substantive involvement of developing country researchers. Substantive involvement means being part of the study design, implementation, analysis and writing. Developing country researchers are developing country nationals resident in their country of origin.
2. Good experience and knowledge of humanitarian operations and/or experience and knowledge of working in fragile and conflict-affected states is essential.

3. Knowledge of DRC or the Great Lakes region amongst team members is essential.

4. Team members must be able to communicate fluently in French, both orally and in writing. The technical proposal will however need to be submitted in English.

**Budget**

The preparation grant ranges from US$ 45,000 to US$ 85,000 for each qualifying team. The grant will cover costs associated with necessary activities for producing impact evaluation research questions, a technical evaluation proposal using 3ie’s technical proposal template and for collecting baseline data. Eligible activities include a short and relevant literature review, formative field research, researcher time and travel to meet with implementing partners and staff at the Pooled Fund and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in DRC and preliminary checking of relevant administrative data and site visits.

The preparation grant will be paid in three tranches. The first tranche will be 30 per cent of approved budget, paid on contract signing. The second tranche will be 40 per cent of approved budget which will be paid after review and approval of the interim report, and before the beginning of the second stage. The final tranche of 30 per cent will be paid after final review and approval of the impact evaluation proposal.

**Preparation process**

The Humanitarian Pooled Fund in the DRC will provide selected feasibility study teams with a list of on-going potential programmes covering water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and/or multi-sectoral humanitarian programming to be evaluated. It will also provide indicative evaluation questions. The selection of final evaluation questions will be made by the evaluation team in consultation with implementing partners in DRC and the Humanitarian Pooled Fund during bi-lateral meetings and field visits. Study teams will prepare the impact evaluation proposals and work alongside the implementing partners.

3ie expects chosen study teams to hold at least one if not two workshop style presentations that may generate wider discussion and understanding within the implementing agency and its staff during the preparation grant period. Selected study teams are expected to engage with implementing partners to explain the rationale for conducting an impact evaluation, what will be learned from it, and the implications for programme design, data collection and analysis. During the preparatory phase the chosen study needs to ensure buy-in and support for the study by the in-country programme staff of the implementing agency. It is hoped that the workshops for implementing partner staff and other stakeholders will build understanding and ownership by co-creating the proposal.
Specifically workshop style presentations and discussions with implementing agency staff should have the following ingredients:

- Identify programmes to be evaluated;
- Determine evaluation questions and timeframes for evaluation;
- Discuss a feasible evaluation design including identification methods;
- Discuss data collection methods and selecting and enumerator training;
- Draw up a budget for impact evaluation.

Study teams must demonstrate their ability to conduct the study for which they win an award, and their availability to start and finish the study within the timeframe.

**Preparation proposal review**

Each proposal will be reviewed and scored by at least one internal and two to three external reviewers. External reviewers will include staff from the Humanitarian Pooled Fund and OCHA. It is 3ie’s intent, although not guarantee, to fund three impact evaluation proposals. 3ie may provide comments and request for a resubmission of a proposal that does not receive an adequate score. 3ie reserves the right not to award the stated number of impact evaluation proposal preparation grants.

**Selection criteria**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credentials of PIs and proposed staff including impact evaluation experience</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of African researchers and institutions in the team and proposed work</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian sector experience of the study team and experience of working with African researchers</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional capabilities to undertake impact evaluation work in the humanitarian sector</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate membership of 3ie</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Full impact evaluation proposals will be reviewed and scored according to the following criteria:*
### Criteria and Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of proposed staff</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of African researchers</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of technical proposal: internal validity</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of technical proposal: external validity and potential policy impact</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of proposed evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Instructions for applicants

RFQ applications must include all of the following information and be submitted according to the instructions:

1. A covering email stating whether the study team intends to work around water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, multi-sectoral programming or any combination of these sectors. It should also indicate the levels of fluency in English, French and local languages for each proposed team member as well as previous experience and evidence of impact evaluation related work.

2. Completed organization information form, which can be found on the 3ie website here

3. Curriculum vitae/vita (not to exceed three pages each) for each of the proposed PIs. This should emphasise publications and experience in rigorous impact evaluation, particularly in the context of international development. The qualifications should also highlight experience in carrying out field work. There should also be a signed letter from each PI indicating the share of working time during the preparation period s/he commits to spend and confirming her/his availability for that expected share of working time. 3ie expects that these PIs will work the indicated time.

4. Curriculum vitae (not to exceed three pages each) of one to four additional researchers who may be involved in conducting the study, highlighting their previous experience with theory-based impact evaluations (where impact evaluations are defined as evaluations that explicitly and quantitatively measure the change in outputs/outcomes/impacts caused by the intervention using implicit or explicit counterfactuals and an identification method. For more information on how 3ie defines rigorous impact evaluations, please see the [3ie Principles of Impact Evaluation document](#).

5. Copies of (1) up to three impact evaluation studies with proposed PIs as named authors; and (2) a sample study conducted by the PI in collaboration with a developing
country researcher. The second element is only required for PIs who are based in a developed country research institution or who are developed country nationals.

6. A statement (not to exceed five pages) containing the following information: (1) the research team’s knowledge of and experience in the DRC or the Great Lakes and other similar working environments; and (2) any plans for including local researchers in the team, along with a summary of their qualifications.

7. Proposed budget for proposal preparation costs. The proposed budget must follow 3ie’s direct cost and indirect cost policies and submitted in the 3ie budget format.

Submission guidelines

- Please submit all files in a single email message not to exceed 5MB to tw6@3ieimpact.org no later than 23:59 EST, 13 June 2014.

- Components three and four should be submitted in a single Microsoft Word or .rtf file in font size equal to or larger than 11.

- 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. Budget notes may be submitted as a separate Microsoft Word or .rtf file in font size equal to or larger than 11.

- Incomplete submissions will be considered ineligible.

Please direct any questions related to this RFQ to dhoundolo@3ieimpact.org by 23:59 EST, 26 May 2014. A single document with all questions and answers will be made publicly available on 3ie website within three working days.