International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

Request for Qualifications: Impact evaluations of a programme to promote girls’ education implemented by the Government of Benin

3ie Policy Window Three                        RFQ PW3.23.BN.PG

Issue date: 9 January 2015
Deadline: 23:59 GMT 13 February 2015

1. Introduction
The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) requests research or evaluation organisations or consortia to submit qualifications for a proposal preparation grant, under 3ie’s Policy Window Three (PW3) grant programme. The prepared proposal will be for a rigorous impact evaluation of a programme promoting girls’ education implemented by the Government of Benin through the Ministry of Secondary Education.

The selected research team will use the proposal preparation grant to identify questions and design a rigorous and policy-relevant impact evaluation, which includes establishing the theory of change for the promotion of girl’s education in Benin.

2. Overview of Policy Window Three (PW3)
3ie’s PW3 develops and fund rigorous, mixed-methods impact evaluations commissioned by policymakers and programme managers to answer questions about the attributable impact of interventions they implement. 3ie promotes theory-based impact evaluations that make use of a rigorous counterfactual (experimental or quasi-experimental) to examine the full causal chain to answer questions about what works, why, how and at what cost.

PW3 grants are awarded in two phases.

2.1 Phase one: qualifications and proposal preparation
The first phase begins with this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). The qualifications will be reviewed and scored by at least one internal 3ie reviewer, two external reviewers, and one implementing agency representative.

The selected research team will receive a Policy Window Preparation Grant (PWPG) up to US$30,000 (see section 4.3). Please see the 3ie PWPG agreement and grant administration templates for more details.

The PWPG covers costs associated with proposal preparation activities, including costs of engaging with the implementing agency and 3ie. The costs include a
field visit and one or more visits to work with the relevant staff of the implementing agency and to conduct capacity-building workshops with their staff. These visits and meetings help to ensure dialogue between implementing agency staff and the research team, help initiate and sustain an ongoing process of engagement and communication on the impact evaluation questions and design.

At the end of this period, the PWPG grantee will submit the proposal, including proposed budget, using the 3ie PW3 evaluation proposal form. The proposed design is due within three months of the signing of the PWPG grant agreement. More details are provided below.

2.2. Phase two: full proposal and impact evaluation

The proposed impact evaluation design and budget will be reviewed and scored by at least two internal and at least three external reviewers, including a representative of the implementing agency. It is 3ie’s intent, although not a guarantee, to fund at least one proposed evaluation, conditional on the proposal receiving adequate scores on all selection criteria (see section 4.5 for selection criteria). 3ie may provide comments and request a resubmission of a proposal that does not receive adequate scores. 3ie reserves the right not to award any follow-on impact evaluation grant.

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.

3. Background

The Government of Benin, through its Ministry of Secondary Education, Vocational Training and Professional Training is implementing an education programme entitled Promoting girls' schooling. The objective of the programme is to promote girls' education and reduce the educational gap between girls and boys in school and increase the enrolment of girls.

The government piloted the programme from 2005 to 2010 in one of the 12 departments in the country. Following the pilot phase, the government decided to expand the programme by nationally subsidising education for all girls in junior secondary schools. The decision was not based on a rigorous impact evaluation or concrete results of an impact evaluation of the pilot programme of schooling for girls. The government intends to expand the programme to senior high schools in the second phase. This is an opportunity to undertake a quality impact evaluation study to help decision-making.

Key features of the programme are that the Government subsidises school fees for girls’ enrolment for junior secondary school, thus ensuring free schooling for
all girls. The programme targets only girls in secondary school enrolled in general education and those in technical schools. In order to improve educational outcomes, additional activities are undertaken. These include organising excellence camps to grant special awards to the most deserving students, and holding girls counselling groups in schools. In addition, new schools and infrastructure are built to improve girls’ education in the various departments.

4. Policy Window Preparation Grant (phase one)

4.1 Eligibility

1. Only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations, not individuals, may apply.
2. The lead grant-holding organisation making the application must be located in the region, with at least one researcher from this country / region as a principal investigator(s).
3. The application may include other researchers who are not employees of that organisation.
4. Applicants are encouraged to include a researcher with a demonstrated global reputation as one of the principal investigators (PI).

4.2 Preparation process and expectations

During the preparatory phase, 3ie expects the research team to engage with the implementing agency to explain the rationale for conducting an impact evaluation, what will be learned from it and the implications for programme design, data collection, analysis and use of results.

3ie expects the chosen team to hold at least one workshop to build capacity amongst the commissioning and/or implementing agencies to increase understanding of impact evaluation amongst the staff of the implementing agency during the preparation grant period. This workshop can form part of the process of developing the theory of change and discussing possible designs.

During the preparatory phase, the research team is required to ensure the cooperation and agreement of implementing agency programme staff for the chosen evaluation questions and study designs. The workshops for implementing partner staff and other key stakeholders will form the basis for an ongoing dialogue between the implementing agency staff and the research team throughout the study.

The workshops and discussions with the implementing agency staff should cover the following topics:

- Determine evaluation questions and timeframes for evaluation;
- Discuss a feasible evaluation design including identification methods;
• Discuss data collection methods; and
• Carry out scoping and other background information needed to develop a policy engagement and research communication plan, using 3ie guidance and templates.

3ie expects study teams to take stock of administrative and existing survey and other data that may be of use for the evaluation, and to conduct formative, preparatory work.

Research teams must demonstrate their ability to conduct the study for which they win a preparation grant award, and their availability to start and finish the study within the timeframe indicated in this RFQ.

It is mandatory for the study team to have at least one PI involved in capacity-building workshops during field visits.

### 4.3 Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of proposals with differing research questions</th>
<th>1 Protocol</th>
<th>2 Protocols</th>
<th>3 Protocols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum grant size</td>
<td>US$20,000</td>
<td>US$25,000</td>
<td>US$30,000</td>
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</table>

A preparation grant of up to US$30,000 will be made to the qualifying research team. The grant will cover costs associated with the necessary activities for producing a strong impact evaluation research proposal, including evaluation questions, a feasible identification strategy and capacity building plan. Eligible activities include a short and relevant literature review, formative field research, researcher time and travel to meet with implementing partners, engagement workshops (inception and capacity building), preliminary checking of relevant administrative data and site visits and travel and stay for the grantee inception workshop.

The preparation grant will be paid in two tranches. The first tranche will be 60 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 impact evaluation proposal.

### 4.4 Timeline

The following table includes an indicative list of deliverables and deadlines for both the preparatory phase (phase 1) and the full impact evaluation proposal phase (2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity or Deliverable</th>
<th>Key dates (23:59 GMT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFQ is posted</td>
<td>9 January 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for submitting queries related to the RFQ</td>
<td>23 January 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for posting responses to queries on the 3ie website</td>
<td>28 January 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadline for submission of applications to RFQ</td>
<td>13 February 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision about selection announced</td>
<td>6 March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teams contracted</td>
<td>27 March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected team undertakes formative research and engages with implementing agencies</td>
<td>30 March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact evaluation proposal 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</td>
<td>17 July 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals reviewed and scored for impact evaluation grants</td>
<td>10 August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>3ie decision on awarding full impact evaluation (provisional) grant</td>
<td>26 August 2015</td>
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4.5 Selection criteria

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation grant: Phase one</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credentials of the research team</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational capabilities to hold and manage the grant</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sector experience and involvement of developing countries researchers and/or research organisations</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate membership of 3ie</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Full impact evaluation application: Phase two</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification of research team (including credentials, sector experience and involvement of developing countries researchers and/or research organisations)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational capability to hold and manage the grant</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of technical proposal and internal validity</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated relevance of research question to the need of the implementing agency and potential for uptake of study findings</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Qualification review process

Qualifications will be reviewed and scored by one 3ie internal reviewer and at least three external reviewers. It is 3ie’s intent, although not a guarantee, to award the proposal preparation grant, conditional on the applicant receiving adequate scores on all criteria. 3iel may provide comments and request applicants to make change to strengthen their capacities. 3ie reserves the right to not award any grant in case no applicant meet the requirements.

5. Instructions for applicants

RFQ applications must include the following information:

1. Cover letter
2. Completed organisation information form, located on the 3ie website.
3. Curriculum vitae (CV, not to exceed three pages each) of all proposed 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. Applicants are required to provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
4. If applicable, include CVs (not to exceed three pages each) of additional researchers who will be involved in conducting the impact evaluation, if approved. Applicants need to provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
5. Copies of up to three impact evaluation reports or publications relevant for this call, with proposed PIs as named authors.
6. Proposed budget, not to exceed US$30,000 for the proposal preparation costs. The proposed budget must follow 3ie’s direct cost and indirect cost policies, including the cost of two engagement workshops.

6. Submission guidelines

- Please submit all files in a single email message not to exceed [10 MB] to pw3@3ieimpact.org no later than 23:59GMT, 13 February 2015.
- Components three and four, above, should be submitted in a single Microsoft Word or .rtf file in font size equal to or larger than 11 point.
- The signed letters from the PIs and sample impact evaluation studies relevant to the grant 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 not be considered.

Please direct any questions related to this RFQ to pw3@3ieimpact.org mentioning 'Benin girls’ education’ in the subject line with a copy to dhoundolo@3ieimpact.org by 23:59 GMT 23 January 2015. By 28 January 2015, a single document with all questions and answers will be made publicly available at http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/promoting-girls-education-benin/?preview

This RFQ does not constitute a guarantee of an award.