

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons:
**How do women’s economic empowerment and gender equality
contribute to growth?**

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Deadline for Submission of Proposals: December 5, 2013 16:59 EDT (Ottawa Time)

In partnership with the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the International Development Research Centre’s program on Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) is pleased to launch a call for Expressions of Interest (EoI) for a synthesis of evidence and lessons on women’s economic empowerment, gender equality, and economic growth.

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1. ABOUT IDRC, DFID AND THE HEWLETT FOUNDATION AND THE GROW PARTNERSHIP

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a Crown corporation created in 1970 by the Parliament of Canada. IDRC builds the capacity of people and institutions in developing countries to undertake the research that they identify as most urgent. It works with researchers as they confront contemporary challenges within their own countries and contribute to global advances in their fields. For more information, please visit www.idrc.ca.

The UK Department for International Development (DfID) leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty. It aims to end the need for aid by creating jobs, unlocking the potential of girls and women, and helping to save lives in emergencies. DfID is responsible for honouring the UK's international commitments and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For further information, please visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has been making grants since 1967 to solve social and environmental problems at home and around the world. The Foundation's goals include: helping to reduce global poverty, limiting the risk of climate change, improving reproductive health and rights worldwide, and advancing the field of philanthropy. For more information, please visit www.hewlett.org.

The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program aims to:

- address the key evidence and knowledge gaps on women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and economic growth through the generation of rigorous empirical evidence and new and cutting edge knowledge that can better inform policies and practices, with a focus on low-income countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa;
- stimulate innovative partnerships and ways of working to ensure that robust evidence leads to better policies and outcomes for women and for societies as a whole;
- support researchers from around the world to work collaboratively in addressing critical knowledge gaps;
- engage with key policy makers and agencies working on related themes, identify areas of mutual learning, and inform debates and programming priorities to help shape public policies.

2. BACKGROUND RATIONALE

While gender inequality is a universal phenomenon, and aspects of gender inequality exist in all countries, it manifests itself differently in each context, and is caused by a multiplicity of factors. Despite marked progress in women's participation in economic activities, important challenges remain for women in obtaining better remunerated and productive jobs, in maximising their returns on investments, including in small enterprises, and in accumulating assets. Gender inequalities arise from deep-rooted and durable social norms, constraints on women's choices and actions, and discriminatory laws and regulations. Women face particular challenges stemming from

their dual role as caregivers and breadwinners, and the lack of recognition given to their care responsibilities.

Policies and programs are essential to help address these barriers, enable more equal access to and reward from productive opportunities, while simultaneously promoting economic growth, particularly in low-income contexts. Lack of solid evidence on what works and what does not work to remove barriers in different low-income contexts often hampers efforts to enhance women's economic lives and to unlock their economic opportunities. Evidence gaps exist in understanding the pathways through which women's economic empowerment advances, and on how gender equality and economic growth are connected.

The research under GrOW aims to address knowledge gaps related to women's economic empowerment – in labour markets, entrepreneurship, and the care economy – and on the links between women's economic empowerment and gender equality and economic growth. GrOW has identified **three key themes** for research:

- 1) What are the nature and magnitude of barriers to women's economic empowerment and to closing gender gaps in earnings and productivity? How can these barriers be overcome?
- 2) How do specific patterns of economic growth and types of structural change affect women's economic empowerment and gender equality?
- 3) How do women's economic empowerment and gender equality affect economic growth?

This call invites **Expressions of Interest** on **Theme 3**, as detailed below. **Calls for proposals under Themes 1 and 2 are already underway.**

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE AND LESSONS

There is a growing body of evidence on the links between gender equality and economic growth. There is fairly strong empirical support for the claim that gender equality can have a positive impact on economic growth, particularly with regard to education (the most widely studied) and employment (less frequently studied). But evidence is far from conclusive, the relationships are complex, are shaped by different factors, and play out differently in various contexts.

This Synthesis of Evidence and Lessons will **analyse the pathways through which women's economic empowerment and gender equality affect economic growth** ("Theme 3" of GrOW). **This will test the hypothesis that more equal economic participation of women and gender equality would not only enhance their well-being, but also improve efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, raise incomes, and improve conditions for growth.**

Review of the literature by [Naila Kabeer](#), [the GrOW program](#) and more recently [Kabeer and Natali](#) indicates that there is a considerable amount of evidence regarding the question how women's economic empowerment and gender equality affects economic growth; but there is an urgent need to systematically synthesise the existing evidence, assess the rigour of existing publications and research, and ensure that findings are accessible for a wide range of policy makers.

4. PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question for this Synthesis is to what extent, and how women's economic empowerment and gender equality contribute to economic growth. Does more equal participation of women in economic spheres improve efficiency, competitiveness, productivity? Does it raise average incomes? Does it raise long-run growth and/or improve conditions for a surge in growth?

Specific, preliminary questions that have been identified include but are not limited to:

- Is a less restricted female workforce with more equal participation in (parts of) the labour market associated with higher levels of average income or higher levels of growth? If so, what are the equity characteristics of increased incomes or growth?
- What happens to average worker productivity where there is more equal participation of women in (parts of) the labour market? What happens to other costs of production?
- Through which pathways does women's economic empowerment contribute to economic growth: through increasing the supply of workers, and/or with increased firm productivity and competitiveness?
- If there is a major income effect from more equal economic participation, can this boost long run growth or improve conditions for a transformational surge of growth?
- Are there multi-generational effects, such as:
 - Do higher levels of women's economic participation consistently lead to reduced gender constraints for the economic participation in the next generation?
 - Are higher levels of women's economic participation (controlling for parental education and income) associated with better child health and nutrition, increased investment in girls, delayed marriage, or smaller family size in the next generation?
 - What features of women's economic participation (e.g. formal vs. non-formal, entrepreneurial vs. salaried work) are associated with better or worse multigenerational outcomes?
 - Is there sustained or aggravated intergenerational transfer of poverty via a cycle of relaxed gender constraints (eg. shifting social norms) leading to a higher level of women's economic participation but lower quality of childcare? What are the long- term implications for human capital and economic growth?

The list of questions to be answered (and papers to be commissioned) will be finalised at the start of the project, in discussion between grantee and the GrOW program.

5. METHODOLOGY OF EVIDENCE SYNTHESSES

The grantee will be responsible for the development of approximately **eight Evidence Syntheses (ES)**, on the sub-questions as illustrated in section 4 above, and other questions as agreed at the start of the project, and organised within an overarching Conceptual Framework/Theory of Change. Each ES should consist of extensive, comprehensive syntheses of existing evidence in the field, carefully reviewing all relevant knowledge using systematic principles. Together, these should add

up to a body of evidence that seeks to test the hypothesis set out above and test pathways in the theory of change. Where possible, these should be in the form of the 'gold standard' of systematic reviews using Cochrane/Campbell/3iE principles. However, this may not be feasible for all sub-questions, especially those where qualitative data is the main source. In all cases, the ES should use systematic principles, including:

- Clear inclusion/exclusion criteria;
- Clear search plan – to allow for replication of the way in which evidence was sourced, appraised and synthesised;
- Management of references in database;
- Quality assessment of sources (critical appraisal) – valuing rigorous qualitative and quantitative research;
- The ES should be externally peer reviewed, and are expected to be published in peer-reviewed journals.

However, it is not necessary to register and publish the ES protocols with 3iE/EPPI Centre.

6. PROCESS OF PREPARING SYNTHESSES OF EVIDENCE AND LESSONS

The grantee will develop an overarching Theory of Change as a conceptual framework, and within this will assign (8) questions to (8) researchers (or teams of researchers). These researchers (teams) can be based within the same organisation, or be contracted by the grantee from other organisations. This may be done through a call for proposals led by the grantee; the process and final selection will be agreed with the GrOW program (CVs of each of the researchers and proposed outlines of ES will be shared with the GrOW Program).

The grantee will:

- develop a Theory of Change as the conceptual framework for the inter-related set of ES, and ensure coherence between each ES;
- be responsible for commissioning and (where needed) contracting the researchers for each ES, with clearly specified assignments, outputs, delivery and payment/milestones;
- review annotated outlines for each of the ES and provide feedback;
- assess outputs of ES, provide feedback, request revision when necessary;
- support publication of ES;
- synthesise and summarise the eight ES, and present this to the GrOW program and at year 1 learning event (possibly initial findings);
- strive to publicise 1) summary of ES empirical findings; 2) methodological reflections on practice of ES;
- ensure (summary) findings are articulated in appropriate media (research briefs, social media, presentations, etc) to ensure research uptake by decision-makers.
- deliver a summary of the evidence gaps in low income countries, identified through the ES process (this may be used to inform future calls for empirical research).

7. FUNDING SCOPE AND DURATION

A **single organization or consortium of organizations** will be selected for this purpose (the 'grantee'). One grant between CAD\$ 500,000 and 600,000 will be issued. The grantee will be responsible for contracting other researchers.

The project duration will not exceed 15 months, including all research activities and final reporting, divided approximately as follows:

- 4 months for the finalisation of the (8) questions, and finding suitable researchers, including systematic review expertise, for each;
- 7 months to complete the ES;
- and 4 months for synthesis of the 8 ES, and paper on evidence gaps.

IDRC's obligations herein are subject to sufficient funds being made available to IDRC by the Parliament of Canada, DFID and Hewlett.

8. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

IDRC funds research in locations that best suit the corporate and program objectives approved by the Board of Governors. The primary considerations in selecting projects will be the scientific merit of the research proposal and its potential for development impact, including capacity building.

However, the selection of projects may also be influenced by operational considerations, e.g., Canadian law; knowledge of research settings; ability to monitor research activities; conditions that may make it difficult, costly, dangerous or onerous for IDRC to carry out its objectives; or exercise proper stewardship of its resources. IDRC reserves the right to cancel the process at any time without prior notice and/or at its discretion to grant all or none of the awards under this process.

Only applications that meet the following eligibility criteria will be considered for funding:

- The proposed project is to be led by a research-oriented institution with legal corporate registration. IDRC enters into agreement with legal entities only.
- Research consortia comprised of up to three institutional partners may also apply, however one partner must be designated as the lead institution. The lead institutions should submit the application to IDRC on behalf of the consortium. The lead institution will sign the grant agreement with IDRC and as such be responsible for receiving and administering the funds, and ensuring that all grant conditions are met. Research-oriented institutions can include academic, governmental, private sector and non-profit organizations.
- UN, donor and multi-lateral organizations are NOT eligible to apply.
- Applications from individual persons will NOT be accepted.

International partnerships are strongly encouraged, particularly those that involve Southern-based researchers.

NOTE: While the GrOW program focuses on low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and/or South Asia, this synthesis of evidence does NOT need to be restricted to those countries. However, the syntheses should clearly demonstrate the existing or potential relevance of lessons and evidence for low-income contexts.

9. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

An organisation to carry out this Synthesis will be selected following a 2-stage process. At the current stage, organisations are invited to submit an Expressions of Interest; on the basis of these, 3-5 organisations will be invited to prepare full proposals.

Expressions of Interest should include the following:

- demonstration of understanding of key issues;
- description of a convincing methodology(ies) to achieve results, whilst ensuring optimal value for money over the lifetime of the project;
- indication of monitoring, performance and risk management tools, and communications plans;
- examples that demonstrate the proposed methodology(ies) has been applied successfully in environments relevant to this project;
- initial proposal of researchers to carry out the Eight Evidence Synthesis. Researchers can be employees of the same organisation, and/or can be contracted from other organisations. The proposed group needs to be well balanced, have the right mix and level of skills, including systematic review skills, with assured availability at the right time.

Expressions of Interest must be short, and provide all of the following information:

- initial proposal for the project, including indication of outline Theory of Change and methodology for each ES (2-3 pages);
- initial proposal for team, to manage the assignment as well as researchers for each ES (1-2 pages);
- capability statement of the organisation, with emphasis on ability to carry out the assignment, in terms of technical (years of expertise of key researchers, publications in relevant field) and management/contracting skills (2 pages);
- 2-page CV of lead researcher;
- preliminary Budget Summary, with estimated costs of each ES, synthesis and publication and dissemination.

2 Samples of Work produced by the principal investigator and/or the applicant/lead institution.

Expressions of Interest must be sent as a single package to grow@idrc.ca by December 5, 2013.

When submitting an EoI, the email subject line must read: EoI_ES_NameofPrincipalInvestiagor.

EoIs received after the December 5 deadline, or applications with any missing components, will not be considered for funding.

Note: By way of submitting an application under this Call for Proposals, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process, both within IDRC and externally. If selected, the applicant further consents to the disclosure of the name of the applicant, the name of the principal investigator and the title of the proposed project in any announcement of selected projects.

10. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to pre-established evaluation criteria:

Criteria	Weighting
Quality of personnel (quality of team leader, quality of project team, quality of partner organisations – where relevant).	30%
Research experience and methodology (experience on GrOW themes, experiences of ES methodologies, experience of previous assignments of a similar size and nature, experience of delivering high quality published research, and experience of framing specific research agendas to meet a broad requirement).	40%
Management (team structure, team management, risks management, strategy to ensure research has impact).	20%
Outreach/research uptake (ability to articulate results for a broad range of stakeholders)	10%
Total	100%

11. Communication with Applicants

All inquiries related to this Call should be sent to grow@idrc.ca. All applicants will be advised of their application status by email (at the address used to submit the application package) after the 3-5 organisations have been selected to prepare full proposals. GrOW aims to inform all applicants by 15 January 2013.

12. Country Clearance Requirements

IDRC has concluded general agreements for scientific and technical cooperation with a number of governments. These agreements establish the framework for IDRC cooperation with that country by defining the rights and obligations of both IDRC and the government. As such, the applicant/lead institution may be required to obtain country approval from governmental authorities in relation to the research project. Where this is required obtaining such country approval will be a precondition of receiving funding from IDRC.

In addition, each proposal will be subject to IDRC's risk management process which assesses the ability of IDRC to support programming in proposed countries or territories taking into account

Canadian law and IDRC's knowledge of the research setting, and ability to monitor activities. Therefore, IDRC reserves the right to reject applications proposing research in countries not appearing on this list, if the research location is deemed by IDRC to pose an unacceptable risk.

13. IDRC Standard Grant Conditions

Applicants will be required to sign IDRC's standard grant agreement, which is periodically amended by IDRC. In the case of research consortia, the applicant/lead institution will sign the grant agreement with IDRC and will be responsible for receiving and administering the funds, and ensuring that all grant conditions are met.

For a sample of the general terms and conditions, please refer to the following link: [http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Funding/Guides and Forms/Documents/MGC-Att-A-e.pdf](http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Funding/Guides%20and%20Forms/Documents/MGC-Att-A-e.pdf)

14. Conflicts of Interest and Research Ethics Policies

This program will be underpinned by structures designed to promote strong ethics practices. Short-listed applicants will be asked to identify possible ethical risks associated with the project. Projects that will collect corporate or personal information must detail how informed consent will be obtained, confidentiality maintained and data stored during and after the project. Applicants will be asked to highlight whether the proposal will be/has been submitted to an ethics review board.

IDRC grant terms and conditions contain clauses that impose an obligation on Recipients to conduct Research Work involving human subjects or animals in accordance with established standards. The signature of the Recipient on the Memorandum signifies that the Recipient fully complies with these standards. The Recipient shall immediately report to the Centre any difficulties it encounters in complying with the ethical standards described. In the final technical report, the Recipient must describe how it complied with the ethical standards in carrying out the project.