

Call for Outline Research Proposals

Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW)

Generating evidence on women's economic empowerment, gender equality and growth

Date Issued: July 25th, 2013

Deadline for Submission of Proposals: October 25, 2013 at 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 is pleased to launch a call for research proposals on Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) – generating evidence on women's economic empowerment, gender equality and growth in low-income countries.

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1. ABOUT IDRC, DFID AND THE HEWLETT FOUNDATION

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.

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. This research program focuses on women's economic empowerment – in labor markets, entrepreneurship, and the care economy – and the patterns of economic growth that benefit women's economic empowerment in different low-income contexts.

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. Barriers range from social norms that constrain women's choices and actions, to discriminatory legal and regulatory frameworks that restrict women's opportunities to engage fully in markets and economic institutions. 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 hampers efforts to enhance women's economic lives and to unlock their economic opportunities. Evidence gaps also exist in understanding the pathways through which women's economic empowerment advances, how gender equality and economic growth are connected, and whether rapid economic change may create the possibility of social change as economic roles change for women and men. We need to know more about what is different about fast-growing economies that make gender inequalities better or worse, in terms of the pattern of growth and employment. We need to also understand better how growth might be harnessed to close persistent gender gaps in opportunities, earnings, assets, and productivity.

This research program on Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) aims to address key evidence and knowledge gaps through the generation of rigorous empirical evidence and new and cutting edge knowledge that can better inform policies and practices. It also aims to 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.

The program will support researchers from around the world to work collaboratively in addressing critical knowledge gaps. Moreover, the program will 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 in ways that produce better development outcomes for women, and economies and societies more broadly.

3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF GrOW

GrOW aims to address knowledge gaps around three themes:

- 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 proposals on **themes 1 and 2**, as specified in Section 4 below. A separate call will be issued at a later date for a consortium for theme 3.

The program will focus on low-income countries, initially in **sub-Saharan Africa** and **South Asia**. The program will support high quality research involving local researchers, strengthening their capacity as needed. Research on middle-income countries that provides lessons for low-income countries (for example, on changes in women's economic empowerment during past episodes of growth, and accompanying policies) may be supported, but will constitute a small minority of the research supported.

The program will support a variety of research methodologies and approaches, with an emphasis on inter- and multi-disciplinarity (where appropriate).

The program aims to increase policy makers' knowledge of evidence-based policies and programs that improve economic opportunities and outcomes for poor women in low-income countries, which in turn can facilitate the enhanced uptake of such policies and programs. For this, GrOW aims to deliver: a strengthened evidence-base, validated by a community of researchers; increased capacity to produce locally-relevant high-quality evidence, and to communicate and engage with policy and public debate; and research findings that can inform on-going policy processes.

4. PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research findings need to provide insight into the institutions, policies, and practices that can promote positive change, and allow policy makers to formulate more effective ways of addressing these barriers.

Outline research proposals¹ should address two main themes specified below, with the types of empirical questions that fit within these. Questions below are provided as examples. The questions

¹ The contents and requirements of outline research proposals are described in sections 7 and 8 below.

are not exhaustive, and research proposals can address any of these questions, combinations of questions, and other questions fitting within the overall themes.

Theme 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?

This theme focuses on the barriers that lock women out of economic opportunities: the constraints and decisions women face as workers, entrepreneurs, and care givers; women's preferences and choices, and whether decisions can be attributed to choices, preferences, and/or constraints. This theme also focuses on what interventions work to address these barriers. Within this theme, the following questions are illustrative, and *may* be addressed:

- In different labour markets, what are the barriers and constraints to women's mobility to better jobs, more highly remunerated formal wage employment, entrepreneurship, increased productivity or transition to higher value added enterprises? What choices and preferences do/can they exercise?
- Which factors explain gender earnings gaps in specific contexts? How can these be addressed? To what extent have specific interventions closed the gap in labour market participation between young women and men?
- Using data on a wide range of gender-specific constraints in a cross-country analysis, which individual or combined sets of constraints are shared by women who have very restricted and unequal participation in profitable small enterprises? What interventions work to support women move from survivalist to growth-oriented activities?
- Do better availability of family planning and/or better availability of childcare options facilitate more productive participation of women in wage employment or profitable self-employment?
- What impact does access to quality childcare, and other interventions to support the care economy (including social protection), have on women's participation in labour markets, and on accessing opportunities such as training, income generating activity or microfinance programs?
- What are the trends and characteristics of the market(s) for paid care work? What policies and programs affect the quality of paid care work in homes, cooperatives, institutions or other settings?
- What interventions or combination of interventions work best, for whom, and in what context, to give women control over economic resources (jobs, property, finance and other assets, incomes) and to increase their productivity and earnings? For example, what impact do specific legal and regulatory reforms have on women's economic opportunities and the investment climate for women?

Theme 2: How do specific patterns of economic growth and types of structural change affect women's economic empowerment and gender equality?

This theme focuses on the impact of economic growth on women's economic participation and gender gaps. Proposed research *may address* the following illustrative questions:

- What patterns of rapid growth, in which sectoral/industry pathways have shown the most empowering effects for women and why?

- What are the effects of structural change and globalisation, including skill-biased technological change, on women's economic opportunities and gender inequality?
- What patterns of growth, in terms of speed and sustainability of growth, have shown the most empowering effects for women and why? Do shorter bursts of growth which subsequently collapse have different impacts compared to sustained and steady growth?
- Is progress at risk during economic crises? What are the changes in men's roles and gender relations in the face of economic transformations and crises? Do economic reversals re-establish gender constraints, or are changes in gender constraints resilient to economic crisis?
- What is the evidence, circumstances and dynamics of increases in gender inequalities in the labour market over periods of rapid growth? Do disparities reduce or increase differently at higher and lower ends of the wage/income distribution?
- Are there combinations of growth and human development policies (such as childcare) that are empowering to women in each of the scenarios above?
- What is the relationship between women's employment and the prospects for countries to benefit from the "demographic dividend"? And what are policy implications of this analysis?

Research can be carried out in one or multiple countries. Comparative research is encouraged. We particularly encourage proposals for collaborative projects that emphasise peer support and capacity building.

Outline proposals need to demonstrate how the research will add to existing knowledge (see the literature reviews prepared by Naila Kabeer and IDRC www.idrc.ca/grow)

Proposals from all social-science disciplines that can contribute to the theme are encouraged. Multi-disciplinary research, where appropriate, is encouraged.

All proposals should clearly identify how the research can help improve policies and development outcomes, and what activities are planned to enhance research uptake, collaboration with policy makers and practitioners, etc.

5. FUNDING SCOPE AND DURATION

The program will award grants to institutions on a **competitive basis**.

As a result of this Call, we expect to fund **approximately 15 institutions** with grants ranging from \$ CAD 300,000 to an amount not exceeding \$ CAD 1 million.

Projects should be scheduled to be completed within a timeframe of no less than **18 months** and not exceeding **36 months**, including all research activities and final reporting.

6. 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.

Applications should be completed using the online GrOW Application Form for Outline Research Proposals (see sections below for more details).

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

- Proposed projects must be carried out in or on one or more eligible **low-income countries** in **Sub-Saharan Africa** and/or **South Asia**. A list of low income countries can be found at: http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups#Low_income.
- A smaller number of proposals for research on middle-income countries can be considered if the proposed work clearly demonstrates that the research will provide lessons for low-income countries.
- Proposed projects are to be undertaken by – or in the case of a research consortium, led by – a research-oriented institution with legal corporate registration.
- Research consortia comprised of up to three institutional partners may 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.²
- More than one research proposal may be submitted per institution if projects are led by different principal investigators. The final selection process will take into account the need for a balanced portfolio of projects engaging a variety of researchers, themes and regions.
- UN, donor and multi-lateral organizations are NOT eligible to apply.
- Applications from individual persons will NOT be accepted.
- Research organisations in the following countries are NOT eligible for research grants as lead institutions: Cape Verde, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritius, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia.

7. SELECTION PROCESS

The selection follows a **three-stage process – the current call refers to the first stage; notes on the other stages are provided for information only**. We expect to shortlist approximately 25 outline research proposals at Stage 1, and to invite these 25 to submit full proposals at Stage 2, with approximately 15 full proposals being successful at Stage 3.

STAGE 1: COMPETITIVE CALL FOR OUTLINE PROPOSALS

Timeline: July 25 - October 25, 2013

Applicants are required to submit a completed application package using the online application. Only those applications that have submitted completed application packages on time and complied with all eligibility criteria will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria (outlined in Section 10).

Applicants will be informed of the status of their outline proposal in January 2014. Approximately 25 institutions will be short-listed and invited to submit full proposals.

² 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.

STAGE 2: SHORT-LISTED INSTITUTIONS SUBMIT FULL PROPOSALS

Timeline: January – March, 2014

Short-listed institutions will be invited to prepare full proposals. They will be sent the reviewers' comments to take into account in the preparation of their full proposals.

IDRC will carry out initial institutional and risk assessments of the shortlisted candidates at this stage. This step assesses the potential risk of material loss of IDRC funds due to weaknesses in the capacity of an applicant institution to manage or report on the financial aspects of project activities; or through economic and political conditions relating to the institution's operating environment. There is the need for IDRC to review three broad areas in its assessment of what measures should be applied to minimize such risk: the materiality of the investment, the management capacity of the applicant institution, and the wider environment within which the organization operates.

Throughout this phase, IDRC program staff will engage with short-listed institutions as they refine and revise their proposals.

STAGE 3: FINAL SELECTION AND GRANT NEGOTIATION

Timeline: April – June, 2014

Approximately 15 research proposals will be selected for funding. Selection will be made in April 2014.

IDRC will carry out internal project approval and grant negotiation processes according to its policies and procedures.

The final selection process will take into account the need for a balanced portfolio of projects that engages a variety of research disciplines, covers the various themes within the program, regional balance, and balance between objectives of quality research, capacity building, and research uptake.

8. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

All applications must be submitted using the online GrOW Application Form <https://grow-cedef.myreviewroom.com/a/>.

Applications must be submitted either in English or French.

For an application to be considered complete, each section of the application must be filled, and all supporting documents included in the application.

Incomplete applications, applications received after the October 25th deadline, or applications with missing components, will not be considered for funding.

The GrOW Application Form includes the following sections:

Section A - Project Summary

Project title, project duration, country(ies) where research will take place, estimated total budget, project abstract

Section B - General Information

Principal investigator (PI), lead institution, participating institutions, overview of institutions

Section C - Research Proposal

Research problem and justification (including potential value for policy formulation), research questions and methodology, expected outcome and outputs, expected activities and monitoring.

9. SUMMARY OF REQUIRED INFORMATION

STAGE 1: OUTLINE PROPOSALS

As part of completing the online application, the documents listed below must also be included. Applicants will attach the following documents when submitting the online application:

A. Letter of intent

An official, signed letter in the name of the applicant/lead institution (e.g. from the executive director) endorsing the proposed research project and confirming the ability and willingness of the institution to carry out the research project for which IDRC support is being requested.

B. CVs of research team

Applications must include the CV of the principal investigator from the lead institution, and CVs of the lead researchers of each participating institution, if applicable.

Each CV must not exceed **2 pages**.

C. Samples of work

Applications must include two (2) samples of work produced by the principal investigator and/or the applicant/lead institution.

Samples could include research outputs (journal article, book chapter, research report, etc.) and/or communications materials (op-ed, a policy brief, a video, etc.).

Samples of work should demonstrate capacity to carry out rigorous research on issues of women's economic empowerment and/or the capacity and commitment to disseminate findings and facilitate research uptake among policy-makers, and communities of practice.

D. Preliminary Budget Summary

Applicants must provide a preliminary budget summary following the guidelines provided in the online application form. The total contribution of IDRC towards the budget of the project will be between **CAD \$ 300,000** and an amount not exceeding **CAD \$ 1,000,000**.

E. Provisional Timeline

Applicants must provide a provisional timeline summarising main outputs and activities.

STAGE 2: FULL PROPOSALS

Approximately 25 short-listed institutions will be invited to submit Full Proposals. It is anticipated that 15 institutions will be successful. At this point in time, additional information and documentation may include but is not limited to:

- A. Capacity building strategy: how the project will contribute to building capacities to achieve the intended outcomes.

- B. Strategy for research uptake: how research findings will be disseminated, the target audiences, how and when these audiences will be engaged throughout the research cycle, how research results could be used and what their impact might be.
- C. Risk and risk mitigation: outline of the political, reputational and operational risks associated with the project and strategies for mitigating these. This applies to both the research process and the dissemination of results.
- D. Ethical considerations.
- E. Access and data management strategy.
- F. Monitoring progress: applicants will be asked to indicate the staff, mechanisms and methods that will be in place to monitor project progress and indicators of success.
- G. A detailed budget and timeline, including planned activities and outputs.
- H. Bibliography.
- I. Official confirmation from each participating organization in each proposal.

In order for IDRC to enter into an agreement with an organization, IDRC must also be satisfied that the institution has independent legal status and is capable of contracting in its own right and name. Institutions must provide a copy of the legal documentation by which the applicant/lead institution was founded or created in the location in which it is based. Such legal documentation of course varies depending on the location and the type of organization.

By way of illustration to assist applicants in providing the necessary documentation, such legal documentation may include:

For private institutions/non-governmental organizations: letters patent; articles of incorporation; articles of association; certificates of incorporation; certificates of registration*

For public institutions: legislation (acts of a legislature), creating public sector or governmental/quasi-governmental bodies*

*The documentation provided to IDRC should clearly indicate the name of the organization and must be provided to IDRC in English or French. If the original documentation is not available in one of these languages, a certified translation into one of these languages should be provided together with a copy of the original document. A certified translation means the translation is completed by someone who is an external translator (not part of the organization) and who certifies that the translation is accurate to the best of their knowledge.

10. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The goal of GrOW is to support research excellence which has the potential to inform policy. In selecting final projects, weighting will be given to Southern-based research institutions, and North-South research consortiums. All proposals will be evaluated by the same evaluation criteria, independent of grant size. Final grant size and number of grants will be determined after the selection of Full Proposals.

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

	Weight (%)
A. Quality of Research Proposal	
1. Clear description of the research questions and objectives	15
2. Methodological rigour and appropriateness of the proposed conceptual/analytical framework and methodology	10
3. Demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the issue, demonstration of how the research will add to existing knowledge and theoretical debates, citing past work done on the theme and in the region	10
B. Relevance	
4. Extent to which research is relevant to the policy of the country of research	10
5. Plans for research uptake, capacity to generate policy-relevant outputs	15
C. Quality of Research Team	
6. Track record of peer-reviewed publications in relevant area	10
7. Team skills for the research, including capacity to integrate a range of relevant disciplines	10
8. Commitment to developing national or regional research capacity, involvement of Southern-based researchers	10
D. Quality Project Management: to include adequacy of planning, quality control and monitoring	10

The final selection process (Stage 3) will take into account the need for a balanced portfolio of projects that engages a variety of research disciplines, covers the various themes within the program, regional balance, and balance between objectives of quality research, capacity building, and research uptake.

11. COMMUNICATION WITH APPLICANTS

All inquiries related to this Call must 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 applicants have been selected for short-listing.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ) will be collected and posted on the IDRC webpage throughout the outline proposal application phase.

12. COUNTRY CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

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 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

14. PROGRESS REPORTING BY GRANTEES

Normally, grantees must submit at least two documents annually: an interim technical report, which marks the project's technical progress; and a financial report, which outlines the financial status of the project. These are usually submitted at the same time. They also have to submit final technical and financial reports as a condition for receiving the final payment from IDRC after the project is completed. The grant agreement will spell out project-specific milestones, and payment schedules linked to agreed outputs. The responsible officer and administrative contact person at IDRC will be available to answer any questions.

15. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND RESEARCH ETHICS POLICIES

This program will 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 grant agreement 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.

16. PERMISSION FOR USE AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

By way of submitting an application under this Call for competitive grants, 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. The applicant further consents to the disclosure of the name of the applicant, the name of the lead researcher and the name of the proposed project, in any announcement of selected proposals.

All personal information collected by IDRC about grant, scholarship and fellowship applicants is used to review applications, to administer and monitor awards, and to promote and support international development research in Canada and in the regions where IDRC operates. Consistent with these purposes, applicants should expect that information collected by IDRC may come to be used and disclosed in IDRC supported activities.