



**EDUCATION
CANNOT
WAIT**

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Teachers Cannot Wait



December 2024

Request for Proposals (RFP)

■ *Teachers Cannot Wait*

The Request for Expressions of Interest consists of this cover page and the following sections:

1. Introduction & Instructions
2. Terms of Reference

Application process:

This RFP will use a three-stage application process.

The first stage is an Expression of Interest (Eol). This includes a narrative technical proposal, plus budget, using the templates provided.

Shortlisted applicants that pass the Eol stage will be invited to an interview, to present and discuss their proposed approach with the ECW Secretariat.

Successful applicants will then be invited to submit a full proposal for review and final selection. The full proposal will include a full narrative technical proposal, results framework, budget, and risk assessment (templates will be provided).

Eol Submission requirements

Deadline: Thursday January 30th

Subject Line: ECW Teacher AF Eol: [Insert Lead Organisation]

Email: rfp@un-ecw.org

The technical and financial proposals should be submitted as separate PDFs in one email. Incomplete Eols received after the deadline will not be considered. Full proposal submission requirements will be communicated to shortlisted applicants once the Eol stage concludes.

For updated information about this RFP – including the details of an online orientation - please visit the Education Cannot Wait website at:

<https://www.educationcannotwait.org/news-stories/featured-content/teachers-cannot-wait-new-open-call-proposals-support-teachers-in>

For questions about this RFP, write to: rfp@un-ecw.org

For full details of the RFP please see section: ‘Terms of Reference’.

1. Introduction & Instructions

1.1 General

Proposers must strictly adhere to all the requirements of the RFP and the guidance of the RFP template. No changes, substitutions or other alterations to the requirements stipulated in the RFP may be made unless agreed in writing by Education Cannot Wait.

Proposers acknowledge that all obligations stipulated by the RFP will be met, unless otherwise specified. The submitting organization will have read and understood all instructions, terms of reference and other requirements.

Submitting a proposal does not constitute or imply the acceptance of the proposal by Education Cannot Wait. No binding contract, including a process contract or other understanding or arrangement will exist between the Proposer and Education Cannot Wait and nothing in or in connection with this RFP shall give rise to any liability on the part of Education Cannot Wait unless and until the Contract is finalized by Education Cannot Wait and the successful organization. Education Cannot Wait is under no obligation to award a contract to any Proposer as a result of the RFP.

Education Cannot Wait may, at its discretion, cancel the requirement in part or in whole.

As a UNICEF hosted fund, Education Cannot Wait adheres to UNICEF policies on fraud, corruption, and unethical practices.

Information relating to the examination, evaluation, and comparison of proposals and the recommendation of contract award shall be treated with appropriate confidentiality.

Proposers should not have been, directly or indirectly, engaged in the preparation of any part of this RFP document or Annexes.

1.2 Eligibility

This RFP is open to all international and national organizations that can provide the requested goods/services/works and are legally constituted or represented in the country where the services will be delivered. Successful applicants will need to be HACT assessed as being either “low” or “medium” risk (in all localities of implementation, not only at HQ level), be able to register at the United Nations partner portal and pass the core assessment and PSEA assessments. Other parties may receive funds as implementing partners of direct grantees in line with the direct grantees’ policies on sub-grants.

1.3 Cost of proposal

The cost of preparing a proposal, attendance at any pre-meetings or oral presentations shall be borne by the proposers, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the solicitation process. The Proposer shall not in any way include these as a direct cost of the assignment. Proposals must offer the services for the total requirement; proposals offering only part of the services will be rejected unless the option of submitting a proposal for any or all lot/s of the requirement has been expressly stated in the terms of reference/statement of work.

1.4 Amendments to the solicitation of documents

Education Cannot Wait retains the right to amend the RFP documents during the solicitation period. Any amendments to the RFP will be noted on ECW's website.

Any errors that are identified in the RFP by potential applicants should be addressed to ECW via the submission email address.

1.5 Withdrawal of submission

Applicants may request to withdraw their submission by writing to the ECW Secretariat. Once a proposal has been withdrawn, it cannot be resubmitted during the same RFP solicitation period.

1.6 Language of the proposal

It is expected that the proposal will be submitted in English. The submitting organization is solely responsible for the cost of any required translation.

1.7 Proposal currency

The proposal must be submitted in US Dollars (US\$).

1.8 Review and selection process

No additional applications will be considered after the deadline has passed. The ECW Secretariat will review each submission to first assess if the proposal is complete. All complete applications will be reviewed against a set of technical and financial criteria as outlined in the Terms of Reference. The proposal(s) receiving the highest technical and financial score will be selected to continue to a full application stage. All organizations will receive an email informing them of the outcome of the selection process.

1.9 Award and contracting

The selected organization(s) may be asked to submit additional information and undergo further assessments. Organizations that pass the Expression of Interest stage will be invited to submit a full proposal for further review and final selection. An award is not considered official and binding until a grant confirmation letter is signed.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Education Cannot Wait

The Education Cannot Wait (ECW) fund was established during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to help reposition education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda, usher in a more collaborative approach among actors on the ground, and raise additional funding to ensure that every crisis-affected child and young person is in education and learning. ECW is a multi-stakeholder fund that funds education in emergencies and protracted crises (EIEPC). ECW's day-to-day operations are carried out by the Secretariat. The fund is administered under UNICEF's financial, human resources and administrative rules and regulations, while operations are run by the fund's own independent governance structure.

ECW's mission is to reach with education the most marginalized girls and boys of all ages in all their diversity in emergencies and protracted crises. ECW utilizes three different funding/program modalities that together aim to achieve collective education outcomes for the hardest-to-reach children and young people: (i) the First Emergency Response (FER) investment window/modality supports education programs immediately in sudden-onset or escalating crises; (ii) the Multi-Year Resilience Program (MYRP) investment window addresses longer-term needs through a multi-year joint program in protracted crises affected countries, enabling humanitarian and development actors to work together; (iii) the Acceleration Facility (AF) focuses on innovation, capacity development and the creation of global public goods for the education in emergency sector to address key priority systemic obstacles.

2.1.2 ECW's Acceleration Facility

ECW's Acceleration Facility provides a flexible financing mechanism to fund strategic initiatives which tackle **systemic barriers** to quality education and catalyze advancements in the EIEPC ecosystem. The Facility is centred on ECW's ambition for global change and ECW's core mandate on global advocacy. ECW's AF grantees are encouraged to think ambitiously and innovatively in the way they deliver their work.

AF grantees undertake a range of activities under their grants. Examples of their work include, but are by no means limited to, the following activities:

- Developing, testing and disseminating meaningful, evidence-based guidance, principles and standards for ECW and for the EIEPC sector, in response to identified gaps and challenges
- Piloting/testing innovations, leading to lessons learned and scalable models which can be shared with other ECW programmes as well as with the broader sector
- Building sustainable capacity for the coordination and delivery of EIEPC
- Building and sharing quality data and analysis that can help the EIEPC sector to advance
- Increasing political will and financing for the EIEPC sector at national and global levels

Notably, the AF is not a programmatic window that funds standard programmatic interventions. Where ECW does fund programmatic country-based work in the AF, it is robustly linked to a wider ambition around building an evidence base, piloting guidance and stronger approaches, or lesson learning. By piloting or delivering these interventions and services the RFP seeks to develop globally relevant public goods and evidence that can be used to strengthen the resilience of EIEPC and uphold children's right to quality education.

All AF grantees are expected to engage in cross-learning with other ECW grantees and the wider sector. This may include, for example, taking part in webinars, writing blogs, presenting in MYRP design or steering committee meetings, presenting findings at academic conferences, and participating in ECW learning events.

2.1.3 ECW's commitment to teachers in EIEPC

As the backbone of education systems, teachers must be a priority in education in emergencies funding and support – and as such teachers have been a long-standing priority for ECW. ECW recognizes that quality teaching is the most important school-level predictor of students' holistic learning and that teachers working on the front-line of protracted crises require support in their own right. Moreover, ECW recognizes that female teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring girls' education access. In 2023, all ECW MYRP and FER programmes included activities to improve teachers' capacity, recruitment, retention, agency, motivation, and well-being.

In the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, ECW commits to improving the quality of support provided to teachers in both formal and non-formal spaces and to helping to resolve the policy barriers affecting teachers in EIEPC settings, using an inclusive and gender transformative and targeted approach. Through this Acceleration Facility, ECW plans to use an evidence-informed strategy to strengthen support to teachers (including female teachers) in ECW country investments, while also helping the sector to understand and address the long-standing and systemic barriers undermining teachers (including the specific barriers facing female teachers) in EIEPC.

2.1.4 Teachers Cannot Wait

Within education systems, qualified, competent, well-supported teachers are central to providing sustained quality education. The central role of teachers is further amplified in EIEPC settings, where teachers are frontline responders and protectors and play an integral role in rebuilding peaceful communities (Mendenhall et al., Falk et al., 2022; 2018; UNHCR, 2017).

Despite this, teachers in crisis contexts face numerous challenges across different systems and within school and community settings. Following the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Teachers in Crisis Context (TiCC) working group, ECW identifies these challenges along four dimensions:

- **Teacher professional development (TPD)** opportunities are often fragmented, inconsistent, and of variable quality. As a result, teachers are left ill-equipped to meet the diverse and evolving demands of their students, which in crisis contexts include a complex array of academic, physical, social, emotional, and health needs due to displacement and trauma.
- **Teacher management policies and practices** – which could provide needed support – instead frequently impose limitations on deployments, compensation, benefits, and long-term career prospects. This further undermines teachers' recruitment, motivation and retention within the profession and exacerbates social and economic inequities along gender and displacement status lines (Mendenhall, Gomez, & Varni, 2018; see below). In crisis settings, these challenges are compounded by the diversity of national, development, humanitarian, and private sector actors working across formal and non-formal spaces, leading to fragmented, inequitable and often un-regulated teacher management policies (Mendenhall et al., 2019).
- **Teachers' well-being is at risk:** Teachers encounter these professional development and management challenges in contexts in which their role is frequently undervalued in the community, compounding trauma and mental health difficulties due to their own experiences of violence, displacement, bereavement, and other adversities.

- **A school environment with strong leadership** could buffer against these risks and provide critical support, too often supervisors and school leaders receive inadequate professional development themselves to create a safe and supportive school climate. This is particularly true in crisis contexts, where schools themselves are often targets for attack or used for military purposes.

SPOTLIGHT ON TEACHER EQUITY IN EIEPC: GENDER AND DISPLACEMENT STATUS

The four challenges described above are often compounded for teachers from contexts of marginalization, including female teachers and displaced teachers.

While female teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring girls' education access and learning

they are underrepresented in the teacher workforce in crisis-affected contexts, and they grapple with additional risk factors – including for example, gendered threats to their safety, gendered barriers to recruitment and retention, and unequitable gender norms, attitudes, and practices in crisis-affected communities. As a consequence, female teachers rarely hold leadership positions in crisis contexts, although research suggests that where women are in leadership positions, attendance, learning outcomes, and safety in schools improves¹. In addition, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the lack of incentives and safe accommodation in remote areas or conflict-riddled zones deters women from joining and staying in the profession. This, in turn, affects the participation of young girls in education (Henderson, 2023).



Hafsat smiles as she teaches her students the alphabet at the ECW-funded temporary learning centre in Hajj Camp. © UNICEF/Ahmad Mari



Rukaya H Umar, Head teacher and Aisha's teacher helps Aisha in the classroom in Pompomari Primary School, Maiduguri, Borno State. © ECW

Refugee, internally displaced, and returnee teachers often share linguistic and cultural traditions and lived experiences with their students,

creating a supportive learning environment that fosters engagement and comprehension. However, they face significant barriers to accessing compensation and professional development opportunities that support short- and long-term social and economic well-being. Refugee teachers, for example, often do not have the legal right to work in host countries, and thus are employed as voluntary teachers in non-formal spaces. There they have limited access to professional development opportunities or equivalency mechanisms that provide

qualifications recognized in host countries or home countries, upon return.

1. See INEE (2023) Mind the Gap 3, Section 3.4

These challenges pose a threat to teachers themselves. And within schools this constellation of challenges can lead to high turnover, a lack of continuity in the classroom, and diminished instructional quality, ultimately threatening learners and communities in need of support. More meaningful support for teachers in EIEPC is urgently needed as a right in itself, and to ensure quality, inclusive education for children and youth (Mendenhall et al., 2019, UNESCO, 2024).

Knowledge and evidence can play a key role in identifying and optimizing promising practices for supporting teachers in EiEPC, and to that end, recent efforts have sought to organize and synthesize the existing evidence on teachers in both development (UNESCO, 2024; GPE, 2024) and humanitarian (ERIC, forthcoming) contexts. Ensuring such evidence is then utilized to inform country-level decision-making, however, will require additional efforts: efforts to ensure the evidence-base is inclusive of tacit and local forms of knowledge and that it is accompanied by clear, concrete and realistic guidance that is appropriate for the context in which it is being used.

2.2. Scope of work

ECW is looking to establish a new Acceleration Facility grant with a consortium of partners **to accelerate support for teachers in EIEPC**.

The successful applicant will deliver **three connected workstreams** which aim to **strengthen teacher support systems at different levels**. The workstreams include: Synthesizing the evidence-base/promising practices and making recommendations to inform ECW's work, advancing systems-strengthening efforts to support teacher capacities at the national and/or sub-national level in a subset of MYRP countries, and supporting global advocacy for teachers in EiEPC.

The workstreams have been developed using evidence from ECW-supported country investments, and careful analysis of systemic sectoral challenges.

ECW welcomes applications from consortium/multiple partners, provided that one organization is **clearly nominated as the lead**. Successful partners will bring significant expertise on teacher support in EIEPC - including demonstrated expertise in gender equality and female teachers support in EiEPC - and combine relevant experience in research, programming and system strengthening in order to deliver the three workstreams (see proposal requirements for full details). The lead partner must also have the capacity to sub-grant to local and national organizations.

Please note this work must prioritize the real lived experiences of teachers (including the specific experiences of female teachers), recognize them as professionals, and elevate their voices – across all workstreams.

Workstreams

ECW is looking for a partner or consortium of partners able to deliver the following interconnected areas of work:

- 1. Draft a detailed background report:** The report should identify the unique challenges faced by teachers—including female teachers—in formal and non-formal settings in EIEPC, while also summarizing promising opportunities and practices for addressing such challenges (where evidence exists). Additionally, this report should provide recommendations on how to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and/or scalability of such promising practices in settings characterized by unpredictability, population

displacement, violence, and resource scarcity. To do so, the report will draw on insights from in-country consultations as well as a high-quality synthesis of academic and grey literature and ECW's own data repositories. The report will include specific recommendations to inform ECW's own approach to supporting teachers in EIEPC, and will also act as the foundation for workstreams 2 and 3. The report will include a specific section on recommendations and actions for supporting targeted interventions for female teachers

2. Drawing on the background report, **work with partners to strengthen systems for teacher capacities in select MYRP contexts**: Drawing on the background report, the Consortium should convene and fund (where appropriate) country and/or regional partners – including those with a dedicated teacher mandate – to plan, implement, test, and iteratively adapt **system strengthening solutions**. This would involve identifying, iteratively addressing and documenting solutions to the context-specific barriers (including gender-specific barriers) facing teachers. To ensure collective learning, the Consortium should at the start of this workstream collaboratively develop a monitoring framework and an associated measurement strategy with in-country partners to track improvements at targeted levels (e.g., systems, schools, teachers) that evidence has shown are associated with improvements in children's holistic learning outcomes.
3. Building on these initiatives, **develop and launch a global report (and/or other advocacy products) on teachers in EIEPC in 2027**, to ensure sector-wide understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing teachers in EIEPC and to advocate for the prioritization and professionalization of teachers. This report should build on the background report and additionally incorporate findings on promising practices from workstream 2. The report should include a dedicated section on female teachers in EiEPC to ensure sector-wide understanding of the gendered challenges and opportunities facing female teachers in EIEPC and to advocate for the prioritization and professionalization of female teachers.

Please note the work should be **iterative**, with the different components feeding into one another, and **linking across local, national and global work**. ECW have created a visual to demonstrate this (Figure 1) which applicants can use/build on in their Expression of Interest.

Proposal requirements:

- **Expertise on:**
 - The issue of teacher support in EIEPC, and in particular:
 - Deep understanding of formal and non-formal teacher support systems in EiEPC, including on barriers and enablers to local, sub-national, and national coordination among relevant country actors
 - Awareness of the evidence base on current global and context-specific initiatives supporting formal and non-formal teachers in EiEPC. This includes efforts at school, community, and sub-national and national policy levels, focusing on teacher professional development, management and rights, and well-being, as well as school management
 - Gender equality and inclusion in EiEPC, with a demonstrated focus on female teachers' support and empowerment in crisis settings and non-formal education systems.
 - Evidence synthesis and communication methods, including: novel approaches to ensuring inclusivity of a diversity of evidence sources while maintaining rigor; and strategies for

ensuring findings from evidence syntheses are relevant, clear and practical for practitioner and policymaker users.

- Convening, funding, and guiding diverse networks of country-level stakeholders to develop and execute a dynamic learning agenda, with attention to issues of power, privilege, and capacity in EiEPC.
- Working with and/or influencing entities with a mandate for teacher support (and particularly teacher policy and initial and continuous professional development) at country and regional levels (e.g. Teacher Training Institutes, relevant Ministries)
- ECW's mandate, ways of working, and country-level programming, and an ability to analyze and identify ECW's value-add.
- Given the diversity of expertise required, preference will be given to applications from a consortium of partners with relevant programmatic, research and advocacy experience, with a track record of evidence-informed system strengthening work.

• *A clear methodology for each workstream that outlines effective and inclusive approaches to:*

- Synthesizing evidence and developing practical, actionable recommendations to strengthen teacher support, with a focus on ECW's own in-country investments and activities. From the outset, the challenges to/opportunities for supporting teachers should be collaboratively identified with a community of stakeholders (including teachers) from select MYRP countries. The background report should identify promising practices at global and country levels based on a scientifically sound methodology² that synthesizes academic and grey literature as well as ECW own's programmatic work and results databases. The report and/or guidance should define ECW's specific value-add on this issue and produce a report and/or guidance that is as meaningful and usable as possible across ECW's investments, while also developing recommendations for specific types of context/needs. Specific strategies for teacher support in EiEPC will be developed with regards to female teachers given the specific gendered barriers they face.
- Supporting learning and system-strengthening in a sub-set of MYRP countries that builds on the initial background analysis and focuses on teacher capacities. The partners will be expected to convene and fund a 'networked improvement community'³ of stakeholders from select MYRP countries (identified in the initial background report, likely to include teachers, unions, Teacher Training Institutes, Ministry officials including Gender and Inclusion units, policy makers, universities, MYRP partners) to iteratively plan, implement, test, and integrate systems-strengthening strategies to support and empower teachers. The applicant should explain how they will identify relevant in-country partners, and how they will collectively design and implement an improvement monitoring framework and corresponding measurement strategy that allows for synthesis of learnings at the conclusion of the initiative. The applicant should ensure appropriate funding for national partners is budgeted for in the overall budget. In addition, the applicant should detail their approach to establishing trusting and equitable relationships within the network improvement community, and demonstrate awareness of how issues of power and privilege can influence dynamics within the community.
- Developing and launching a global report on teachers in EiEPC (and/or other advocacy products), including a specific section on female teachers, in 2027 in the most

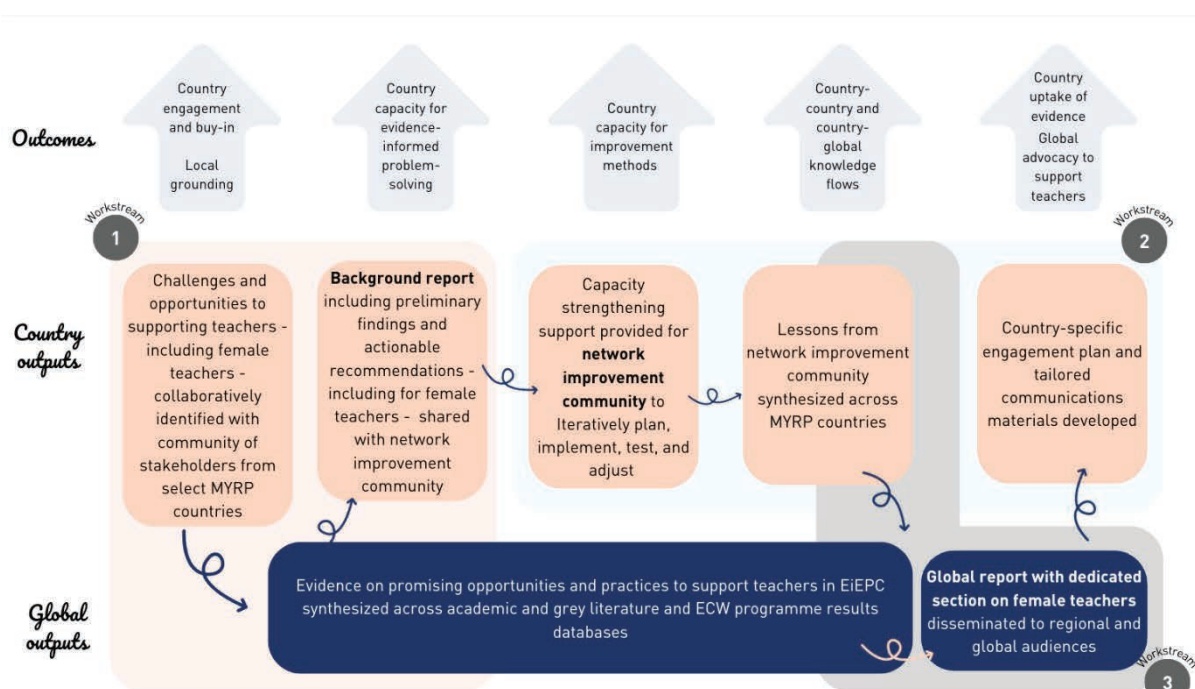
2. This includes the establishment of clear criteria to facilitate replicability at two stages: (a) criteria for inclusion of quantitative and qualitative evidence; and (b) criteria for identification of promising practices (e.g., information on the extent and strength of evidence; the scope of applicability, etc.)

3. Network improvement communities are structured and intentional group of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds that aim to collaboratively identify, test, and refine solutions to problems of practice using a variety of methods of inquiry. For further reading, see: Russell, J. L., Bryk, A. S., Dolle, J. R., Gomez, L. M., Lemahieu, P. G., & Grunow, A. (2017). A framework for the initiation of networked improvement communities. *Teachers College Record*, 119(5), 1-36.

meaningful and relevant way possible – including cutting edge data-analysis, relevant case studies and teacher stories, and clear identification of challenges, opportunities and recommendations. The applicant should consider innovative ways to ensure the reach and influence of the report/products, and ensure the report links to other global and country initiatives (such as the UNESCO Teacher Task Force, ERICC, INEE's TICC, INEE Gender Reference Group, IGAD etc).

- *A clear description of how the consortium will deliver the following across the workstreams:*
 - An engagement strategy for the initiative – recognizing the different audiences and stakeholders involved in the different workstreams.
 - An approach to sequencing of the different activities, and how the process will ensure learning across activities and connect the global, national and local elements of the work – please see Figure 1 by way of example. Please feel free to utilize and build on this diagram to support your proposal.
 - A clear plan for how the partners in the consortium will work together within, and across workstreams. The applicant may also want to consider establishing a reference group of teacher specialists to support this work.
 - The prioritization of the real lived experiences of teachers, recognizing them as professionals, and elevating their voices.

FIGURE 1



2.3 Implementation Modalities

2.3.1 General information

Through this RFP, ECW seeks to fund one partnership that can deliver across all three workstreams. There is USD \$2.2 million available to deliver the full scope of work. The grant is expected to run for 3 years. The lead consortium partner will be accountable to ECW for the entire grant.

Sub-contracted partners will directly report to and be financially accountable to the lead partner of this RFP.

2.3.2. Linkages with FERs and MYRPs

The Acceleration Facility aims to foster innovative approaches in both programmatic work and the strengthening of capacities and systems. As such, this investment window should not duplicate activities that are commonly designed and included in FERs and MYRPs to enhance access and learning. However, ECW is seeking partners with capacities to work closely alongside MYRP grantees in emergencies and protracted crises.

The focus countries for this work will be defined by ECW and the partner in the early phases of the work – depending on the outcomes of the background analysis. However, the focus countries will be contexts where ECW has active MYRP grants (see Annex A). ECW and the partner may identify specific MYRP countries for a focus on female teachers.

2.3.3 Connection with other national, regional and global initiatives or actors

As a global fund focused on education in emergencies and protracted crises and with its mandate to create, facilitate and share knowledge on education for those affected by conflict, ECW is committed to collective action and collective outcomes. In this spirit, AF proposals should clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities will build on and link to existing work, evidence and actors in the sector – at national, regional, and global levels.

A partnership approach to implementing the recommended activities is encouraged, including in-country partners, government partners and education in emergencies and protracted crises country-level stakeholders, ECW Secretariat staff, and other relevant organizations at global, regional and national levels, particularly national and local women and girls' organizations.

2.3.4 Timeline and deliverables

We envision a grant start date in the first quarter of 2025. The envisioned budget is US\$ 2.2 million in total, for the full portfolio of work that responds to this call. ECW suggests a 3-year grant proposal period from disbursement but is open to bids covering a shorter/longer period if there is a compelling rationale.

2.3.5 Assessment criteria

The application process will be in three stages. The first stage is an Expression of Interest (Eoi) stage. All eligible proposals will be assessed based on these Terms of Reference. ECW will shortlist applicants based on this Eoi stage and invite the highest-scoring applicants that meet a minimum benchmark to interview. The successful applicants will then be invited to submit the full proposal.

Annex A: Relevant MYRP country contexts

All 28 MYRP countries are relevant for workstreams I & III:

Afghanistan	Libya
Bangladesh	Mali
Burkina Faso	Myanmar
Burundi	Niger
Cameroon	Nigeria
CAR	Pakistan
Chad	Peru
Colombia	Somalia
DRC	South Sudan
Ecuador	State of Palestine
Ethiopia	Sudan
Haiti	Syria
Iraq	Uganda
Lebanon	Ukraine

For workstream II, ECW would like applicants to focus on up to three MYRP countries from the following list:

Burkina Faso
Chad
DRC
Ethiopia
Mali
Nigeria
South Sudan
Sudan

Final decisions will be discussed and agreed between the successful grantees and the ECW Secretariat before implementation begins.