English

EDUCATION OUT LOUD (EOL)
Advocacy & Social Accountability

Call for Concept Notes July 2020
Guidelines for Applicants - Transnational Alliances -

Operational Component 3 (OC3): Create a stronger global and transnational enabling environment for national civil society advocacy and transparency efforts

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EDUCATIONOUTLOUD
advocacy & social accountability

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION

1. WHAT IS THIS CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES ABOUT?

Civil society partners can play a formative role in shaping education policy that will better serve a wide range of communities, especially of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. They can also help build public support for the government's long-term education plans and monitor how the government is keeping up with the commitments in those plans.

This is the need Education Out Loud, the Global Partnership for Education's new advocacy and social accountability fund, intends to meet. Education Out Loud supports greater involvement of civil society groups in building strong and sustainable education systems.

With an overall allocation of US$55.5 million from GPE, Education Out Loud is the largest fund in the world dedicated to support civil society capacity building and engagement in education policy processes.

Education Out Loud provides funding to support civil society to be active and influential in shaping education policy to better meet the needs of communities, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations. It is resourced by the GPE and managed by Oxfam IBIS.

GPE is dedicated to building stronger education systems in the world´s poorest countries in order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality learning. GPE brings together governments from developing countries, donors, international organisations, civil society, teachers´ organisations, the private sector and foundations. It is active in more than 65 countries, and it prioritizes support to fragile and conflict-affected countries.

The five-year 'GPE 2020' strategic plan[1] includes three goals and five objectives to support the vision of the partnership, with clear roles and responsibilities which embed and promote mutual accountability and transparency for delivery across the partnership. As part of this, GPE actively encourages civil society organisations to participate in the partnership, enabling inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue, so that they can monitor plans and help ensure democratic oversight of education policy.

Education Out Loud builds on lessons learned from the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) that supported the Global Campaign for Education's National Education Coalitions in the 2009-19 period. Support was provided for efforts to engage in monitoring implementation of quality education sector plans at the country level.

The Theory of Change underlying EOL assumes that education outcomes are more likely to be achieved when there is widespread public engagement in and demand for equitable, inclusive quality education. EOL intends to build the capacity of civic groups to strengthen the mutual accountability of education policy dialogue and monitoring and it includes a broader diversity of civil society actors. Increasing the effective representation of civil society in institutional policy dialogue, improving the availability of relevant information to enable the development of more informed policy responses, and supporting advocacy to advance the public interest in education, all comprise important strategies to help build strong public education systems.

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[1] For more information, see GPE 2020 Strategic Plan, available for download here**:** www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2020-strategic-plan

Education Out Loud has the overall goal to "enhance civil society capacity to further GPE 2020 goals in learning, equity, and stronger systems, by improving the participation of civil society, their efforts to strengthen advocacy and to ensure transparency and increased effectiveness in national educational policy and implementation processes".

The development of strategies and activities through the Education Out Loud fund has led to the articulation of three funding streams, or "Operational Components" (OCs), to meet each of the three objectives. Each OC has specific emphasis on one of the three objectives. EOL's goal will be realized through the following three objectives:

Objective 1 (OC1): Strengthen national civil society engagement in education planning, policy dialogue and monitoring
This objective aims at improving inward accountability of governments to their citizens. The participation of a diverse range of civil society groups is vital to prevent 'elite capture' of policy spaces, ensure that there is healthy debate and deliberation, and to ensure that civic space is inclusive even of those traditionally lacking in institutional power. Facilitated processes to ensure equitable participation of marginalized groups is critical because the most marginalized people are often the least able to participate due to constraints in terms of time and opportunities costs, but also the norms that influence their relative power and position in society.

Objective 2 (OC2): Strengthen civil society roles in promoting the transparency and accountability of national education sector policy and implementation
This objective aims to ensure that civil society groups are able to undertake strategic multi-level monitoring of education policy and budget implementation, and to use the evidence generated to formulate and act on relevant policy solutions and redress mechanisms. Groups working on transparency, governance and other sectors, on behalf of the public interest may be able to contribute valuable skills, creative strategies, and wider networks for collecting and disseminating information that can be used to strengthen education accountability. Consequently, EOL seeks to diversify the range of actors – and the evidence base – contributing to operationalizing the principle of diversity as a vehicle for increased accountability and transparency in the education sector.
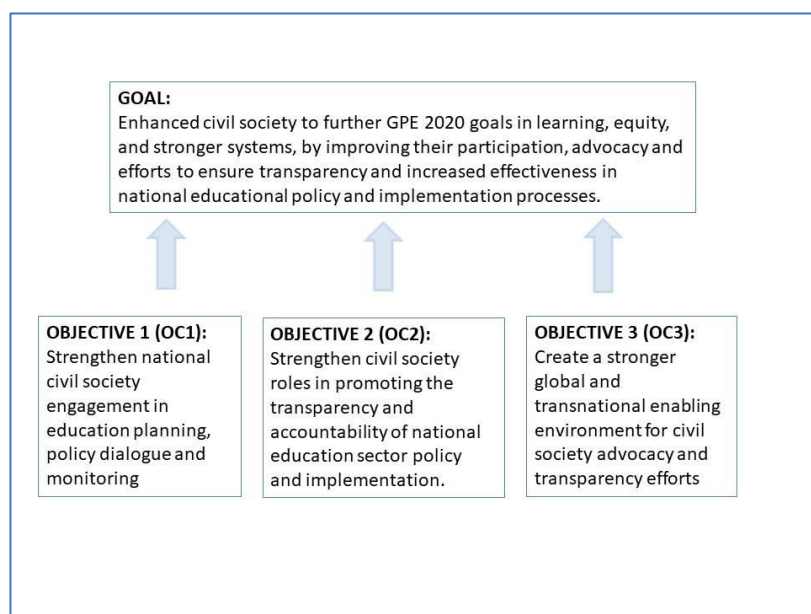
Objective 3 (OC3): Create a stronger global and transnational enabling environment for national civil society advocacy and transparency efforts.
This third objective aims to bring together alliances of civil society actors to work collaboratively on transnational initiatives or campaigns that bear on GPE country level work, particularly in the areas of aid effectiveness, financing, and cross-sectoral synergies. This is important because in the current global system, many of the enabling conditions for effective national education policy planning and implementation in low- and middle-income countries remain subject to powerful influences generated outside the national sphere.

Together, these three objectives tie in with the overall theory of change of the GPE, especially objectives 2 and 5, which speak to the need for "supporting mutual accountability through effective and inclusive sector policy dialogue and monitoring" (objective 2, country-level) and "building stronger partnerships" (objective 5, global/cross-national level).

Illustration of Education Out Loud's overall goal and three objectives

This Call for Concept Notes is only related to OC3: Create a stronger global and transnational enabling environment for national civil society advocacy and transparency efforts. Oxfam IBIS closed a call for proposals for OC1 in October 2019 and a first call for OC3 proposals was closed in January this year. A first call for proposals for concept notes for OC2 closed in June 2020.

EOL implementation strategies
An important design feature of the EOL strategy and implementation is a strong focus on learning, capacity building and adaptive management throughout the planning and implementation phases of the operational components.

In all three operational components *learning* is a core implementation strategy focusing both on capacity building as part of implementation, and on learning as a strategic management principle. Through adaptive and contextual approaches, and with a sustainability goal, this will support an ongoing focus on enhancing advocacy and effectiveness in activities.

When working for creating change through enhanced social accountability and advocacy processes in a given context, a profound and in-depth understanding of that context is essential. Understanding the context and the specific change pathways is the groundwork for developing a clear Theory of Change showing how and why the desired change is expected to happen in that particular context.

A sound analysis of the context for the chosen education problem to be addressed, will need to include all those aspects of society, being social, political, institutional, cultural and even environmental, that will have implication for understanding the change processes and the pathways of change.

Moreover, the contexts we work in are most often complex systems which are not static but rather constantly changing on one or more parameters. Consequently, being aware of, and able to adapt to the changing contexts is crucial for a project to remain effective and relevant. Such an adaptive management approach is part EOLs strategy and

provides the flexibility for civil society grantees to adapt to changing circumstances and contexts.

EOL has set out a deliberately phased, investigative, and flexible approach to planning and implementation, organized and operationalized through adaptive management processes and a Learning Agenda. This includes focus on ongoing learning and capacity building and ensuring flexibility and adaptive management processes.

There are four main approaches and tools to implement the Learning agenda supported by the Grant Agent:

- As the first step a **Year Zero** is introduced as an opportunity for facilitation and collaboration between the Grant Agent and the applicant in the period between concept note and full proposal submission (see section 8).
- Support to development and implementation of **Learning Plans** throughout the implementation period. Applicants should propose learning needs as part of their proposal (see section 6).
- All grantees in OC1, OC2 and OC3 will be eligible for tailored **Learning Partner** support. Applicants can propose learning partners as part of their proposal.
- A **learning collaborative** approach in the learning agenda seeks to strengthen development of mutual partnership between grantees, with a focus on long term sustainability.

An alarming example of changed context is the current pandemic crises followed by the spreading of the COVID-19 virus. According to UNESCO, over 156 countries have implemented nationwide closures and several other countries have implemented localized school closures affecting close to 1,5 billion learners worldwide. This is an immediate, severe and thorough change in the context in the whole education sector and at the same time an emergency situation with a need for immediate solutions for the many children affected, not least the most vulnerable marginalized groups.

The changed situation also has critical implication for the work of civil society and serious risks of deepening inequality for different groups' access to quality education. EOLs objectives and goals continue to be the same but the changed context offers opportunities for addressing new types of problems and approaches for implementation, for instance combining immediate needs with innovative social accountability processes and monitoring tools. The flexible approach of EOL can accommodate such strategies and projects.

2. WHAT CAN BE FUNDED UNDER THIS CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES?

Operational Component 3 (OC3) aims to create a stronger global and transnational enabling environment for national civil society advocacy and transparency efforts.

The Concept Note submitted by an applicant needs to explain how the applicant and its alliance will:

a) Create transnational and/or "vertically integrated" civil society alliances that represent diverse social actors and that are formed around identified strategic policy changes or areas related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and GPE (EOL Outcome 3.1)

b) Increase transnational civil society alliances´ capacities, particularly in relation to advocacy (EOL Outcome 3.2)

c) Change global, regional or national strategic policies or practices through civil society transnational alliances, advocacy and campaigns (EOL Outcome 3.3)

d) Create or strengthen social accountability mechanisms, spaces, institutions or commissions that follow up on global, regional or national commitments related to the right to equitable and quality education (EOL Outcome 3.4)

e) Establish and strengthen "Learning Collaboratives" on effective advocacy strategies (EOL Outcome 3.5).

In general terms, Concept Notes should be developed with the overall aim of:
- Opening up transnational policy debates to citizen voices and engaging more civic representatives embodying a wider range of opinions and lived realities in transnational spaces;
- Contributing to the democratization and responsiveness of transnational policymaking;
- Promoting policy agendas that are more responsive to citizens' interests as rights holders; and
- Developing more conducive transnational and regional conditions for relevant national policy setting.

Education Out Loud is particularly keen on Concept Notes coming from alliances that include vertically integrated memberships and issue- or constituency-based networks, such as teachers' or youth networks. 'Vertical integration' is understood to be inclusive alliances allowing for elevation of traditionally local/national voices into transnational policy arenas, and the coordination of citizen action across local, subnational, national and transnational levels.

Applicants are therefore expected to tie together convincingly interventions reaching from e.g. community to national and further on to regional and international levels.

Accordingly, this operational component calls for efforts to
- connect national strategies and tactics in a multi-country approach to influence global and regional policies;
- elevate and connect traditionally excluded local and national voices in transnational and global policy arenas; and
- ensure that advocacy at transnational levels in turn is followed up and leveraged for an impact on national realities.

The strongest applications will be those that integrate a wide mix of voices and influencers seeking influence in regional (e.g. EU, ECOWAS, ADB), global (e.g. UN, WTO, ICC) or other transnational (e.g. G7, G20) policy spaces where pre-conditions of national policy are formed.

Concept Notes should also to the extent possible:
(1) Identify the set of problems that can best be solved through multi-country advocacy tactics which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, and describe why the issue is best solved at the global, regional or transnational level rather than locally or nationally; It should demonstrate sufficient assessment of links between needs, interventions and intended outcomes.

- Describe the transnational policy frameworks or international decision-making arenas which provide the potential for supporting increased progress in education in GPE eligible countries, with a clear feedback loop to country level advocacy and change;
- Articulate the multi-country or transnational accountability mechanisms which will be leveraged to influence national education strategies, such as the SDG monitoring architecture, regional mechanisms, etc.;
- State the purpose for the strategic approach and potential for experimentation in the approach, including rationale for that approach and whether or how they will know if it is working;
- EOL aims to stimulate learning and reflection among individual grantees and across the portfolio. Concept note should sufficiently address how the project would test new methodologies or approaches. It should include considerations on how the alliance would stimulate learning and how such insights would be shared with a larger number of relevant stakeholders. It should describe whether and how the alliance will support peer learning amongst members on advocacy approaches.
- Demonstrate broad collaboration, including meaningful participation or collaboration with marginalized groups including people with disabilities, refugees and displaced persons, religious and ethnic minority groups, children/youth or other groups otherwise not traditionally represented at regional or global levels.

(2) Proposals are expected to represent a genuine partnership between alliance members and with expected results in targeted GPE partner countries, not limited to global and regional level. The applicant alliance will provide information on what the different members offer in terms of complementarity and how collaboration around the project would be organised. It should also describe how the core group of organisations in the alliance would reach out to other stakeholders including intended beneficiaries.

3. WHO CAN APPLY FOR THIS CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES?

The present Call for Concept Notes falls under the **Operational Component 3** that provides **support for Transnational Alliances**. This call aims to support transnational civil society alliances to carry out innovative multi-country advocacy to influence transnational and national policy frameworks.

Proposals should be submitted by a single organisation, based anywhere in the world, on behalf of an alliance of civil society actors who are working to create an enabling environment for successful national education advocacy in GPE eligible countries. This should be undertaken in conjunction with at least one civil society actor originating in a partner developing country (a list of partner countries in annex 1).

The alliances of civil society actors should thus include partners working at national or sub-national level in a GPE partner country but may include partners working outside of GPE partner countries as well. International NGOs (INGOs) working solely with their national offices will not be considered as sufficiently diverse but would need to partner with other national or local civil society organisations in order to qualify. There is no limit to the number of organisations who may participate in an alliance, but each alliance must consist of a minimum of 3 unique organisations.

The lead applicant must be a formally registered organisation/association with a bank account in the name of the organisation. It is not required for other members of the alliance to be registered organisations or associations.

It will be considered favourable if the Alliance:
- includes actors not traditionally working in education but that have education as a cross-sectoral priority;
- includes actors not traditionally working in education but that have skills and tools which are relevant and/or scalable in education;
- reflects a diversity of approaches to advocacy which are complementary and will strengthen the wider education movement

Applications from organisations which are already receiving funding from another OC will not be eligible for receiving additional funding from this component. Such organisations can, however, be considered partners for strategic collaboration within an applicant alliance for OC3 while demonstrating how this will help leverage the funding already received from another EOL OC.

Applicants who fail to submit the required documents or who do not respect the word limits indicated in the template will not be considered.

4. WHICH GRANT AMOUNT AND DURATION IS IT POSSIBLE TO APPLY FOR?

Education Out Loud Operational Component 3 (OC3) will provide grants for a period between 24 and 36 months from 2021-2024. All applications must be between USD450,000 and USD1,200,000; applications costed at less or more than this amount will not be accepted. Applications for OC3 of less than 24 or more than 36 months will not be considered.

Within the Concept Note Narrative template there is a section for applicants to provide indicative budget figures. It is not expected that detailed budget figures will be provided at the concept note stage, however, indicative budget figures should be provided. If an application advances beyond the concept note stage, a more detailed and finalized budget must be provided following the conclusion of the Year Zero planning period.

5. HOW TO APPLY?

All eligible applicants are invited to apply for funding. Interested alliances can find further information online at www.educationoutloud.org. Here, applicants will find a link to register as an Applicant as well as access to the relevant Concept Note proposal information and templates. Only one member of each alliance need register as an applicant in order to submit the alliance's concept note. After registering and completing the templates, the documents must be uploaded to the system. Applications will not be accepted outside of this system. Applicants should not upload other documents than those requested and must respect the maximum number of words where indicated.

A Concept Note application consists of the following documents:

1. Concept Note Narrative (completed template)

2. Budget Template
3. CVs of 2-3 key project responsible persons

All documents must be uploaded before the Application Deadline and you *must* press "Finalize and Submit the Concept Note" in order to complete the application process. The Application Deadline is **August 28, 2020** (at 23:59 GMT at the latest). No applications will be accepted after this date or time. Uploading your documents can take up to 20 minutes. It is therefore highly encouraged that applicants complete their applications early to avoid any complications. Upon pressing "Submit" you will receive an email that confirms that your application has been uploaded to the system. The required formats can be downloaded via the webpage. Applications not containing the required documents will not be considered.

If an applicant's Concept Note is selected to advance to the next phase, the applicant will be required to submit Due-diligence Self-Assessment Forms and other required documents prior to engaging in the next phase of the application process.

Should an applicant encounter technical problems while registering as applicant or in uploading the application, then the applicant should take a screenshot and send it to info@educationoutloud.org from the same email address utilized for registering. Upon receiving the screenshot, the applicant will be contacted for technical support.

6. WHAT SHOULD BE CONTAINED IN THE CONCEPT NOTE?

Concept Note proposals that comply with the general criteria for funding and basic requirements will be assessed and scored according to the following weighted areas/topics. The maximum number of points for an application is 50.

- **Situation and context analysis (25%)**
  Clear and coherent context-based situation analysis, including:
  o Analysis of the context of the identified education problem for which regional or global policy forums can be important change scenarios or influencers
  o Analysis of the contextual relations between national and global and transnational policy arenas relevant for the project
  o Inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative information in the analysis.

- **Description of the Project Strategy and Action (25%)**
  o Clear presentation of the strategic logic anticipated for project theory of change and expected results
  o Quality of the strategy (including types of activities, clarity of assumptions and evidence for changes)
  o Realistic concept note (to what extent are the outcomes likely to be achieved)
  o Human rights-based approach underlying the project strategy;
  o Incorporation of the gender perspective
  o Sustainability (how the project intervention´s benefits continue after funding has ceased)

  Project Relevance (20%)
  o Relevance of interventions (includes views and interests of beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders)
  o Alignment to GPE/Education Out Loud-OC3 objective and five outcomes
  o Alignment to SDG4 (coherence with SDG4 goals and strategies)

- **Organisational capacities for implementing the project (15%)**
  - o Experience in the areas of intervention (organisational trajectory in education, policy influencing, partner strengthening)
  - o Technical competence available for the implementation
  - o Relevance of organisational composition of the Alliance (including strategy for the inclusion of local and/or marginalized groups (vertical and transnational collaboration).

- **Learning approach and alliance development (15%)**
  - o The concept note demonstrates acknowledgement of institutional learning needs and strategies for transnational learning
  - o The concept note includes strategies for dissemination to relevant education sector stakeholders and sharing of learnings and utilizing learning collaboratives and learning partners
  - o How is it foreseen to develop and include adaptive planning and management strategies.

Applicants are required not only to address each of the above areas/topics but also to demonstrate how these interrelate, e.g. major issues raised in the context analysis must subsequently be addressed as part of the project strategy.

7. HOW WILL THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS TAKE PLACE?

STEP 1: All Concept Note proposals received within the deadline of August 28, 2020 will be assessed. The Concept Notes will be checked against the general criteria outlined in this document to confirm eligibility for funding and that all required documentation is duly completed. Concept Notes that do not comply with the general eligibility criteria for funding and basic requirements will be rejected and not reviewed further. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed accordingly.

STEP 2: The Concept Note proposals that comply with general criteria and basic requirements will in the first instance be assessed by the Oxfam IBIS Education Out Loud Secretariat's Regional Management Units that will score each Concept Note according to the above-mentioned pre-established criteria and weight.

Scoring is only one of the parameters for assessing the Concept Notes. Though applications will be scored individually, they will also be assessed to create a balanced portfolio; there is no guarantee that even a highly scored application will move to the next phase.

The Regional Independent Selection Panel (RISPs) will assess and rank the proposals in their respective portfolio and submit their ranked choices of the best proposals to the Grant Agent´s Global Management Unit (GMU).

STEP 3: After the first assessment and scoring process, the Oxfam IBIS Education Out Loud Secretariat´s Global Management Unit (GMU) will review and comment on each of the Concept Note proposals. The GMU will identify technically acceptable Concept Note proposals for further development and it will seek to reach a balance of the **entire Concept Note proposal portfolio**. Thus, the final list of Concept Notes recommended for the next phase of the approval process will take into account all geographical regions, fragile/non-fragile countries and size of projects.

STEP 4: After the GMU has created a list of recommended Concept Notes, GMU will send this longlist of Concept Note proposals to the Global Independent Selection Panel (GISP) so that they can assess and approve those Concept Notes that will move forward into the next phase of the approval process.

EOL expects to be able to communicate decisions from the process to applicants in December 2020.

8. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE DECISION ON THE CONCEPT NOTE?

Approved Concept Notes

If a Concept Note is selected, the applicant will have to pass a due diligence process, before moving into the next phase of the application process.

All selected alliances that have passed the due diligence process will move forward into the next phase of the application process: "Year Zero".

"Year Zero" is a six months period of capacity support – similar to an inception phase and/or learning plan process focusing on the full proposal development and organisational capacity. During this period Oxfam IBIS and learning partners will work together with the selected alliances on the development of a full proposal, a sound theory of change and the strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation systems.

During "year zero", modest financial support will be available for institutional and planning costs such as:

- Undertaking an assessment of the environment for the work.
- Undertaking an organisational assessment as the basis for the Learning Plan to ensure long-term results.
- Relationship building with key partners and allies to enhance the probability of success.
- Developing an elaborated theory of change related to the problem proposed to address.
- Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.
- Testing approaches for advocacy and social accountability and finalizing the programme of work in a final proposal, including budget levels and activities

After "Year Zero" the applicant will submit a full proposal to the EOL Secretariats which afterwards forward it to the Global Independent Selection Panel for final approval. There is no guarantee that an applicant who participates in "Year Zero" will be selected for funding. An eventual grant for the full proposal may be less than the amount indicated in the Concept Note proposal. Approval for grant funding after "Year Zero" would depend on demonstrated progress on agreed learning goals and the organisational willingness to invest in learning as well as in presenting a satisfactory full proposal. The Global Independent Selection Panel decision is final.

The applicants of the approved full proposals will then be invited to sign a financial funding agreement.

After the financial agreement has been signed, the applicant has the responsibility to implement the project, carry out the project activities and to monitor that the expected

results are achieved. It will also have to collect lessons learned and to present financial and narrative reports to Oxfam IBIS on project progress.

Unsuccessful Concept Notes
Unsuccessful Concept Notes will not be reassessed. The Global Independent Selection Panel decisions are final. For qualified concept notes which are rejected because of lack of funds EOL may share such proposals with relevant funders unless applicants want to decline this option.

ANNEX 1- LIST OF ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Benin
Bhutan	Bolivia	Burkina Faso
Burundi	Cabo Verde	Cambodia
Cameroon	Central African Republic	Chad
Comoros	Dem. Republic of Congo	Republic of Congo
Cote d'Ivoire	Djibouti	Dominica
El Salvador	Eritrea	Ethiopia
Eswatini	The Gambia	Ghana
Grenada	Guatemala	Guinea
Guinea- Bissau	Guyana	Haiti
Honduras	Kenya	Kiribati
Kyrgyz Republic	Lao PDR	Lesotho
Liberia	Madagascar	Malawi
Maldives	Mali	Marshall Islands
FS Micronesia	Mauritania	Moldova
Mongolia	Mozambique	Myanmar
Nepal	Nicaragua	Niger
Nigeria	Pakistan	Papua New Guinea
Philippines	Rwanda	Samoa
Saint Lucia	Saint Vincent & Grenadines	Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal	Sierra Leone	Solomon Islands
Somalia	South Sudan	Sudan
Tajikistan	Tanzania	Timor-Leste
Togo	Tonga	Tuvalu
Uganda	Uzbekistan	Vanuatu
Vietnam	Yemen	Zambia
Zimbabwe		

ANNEX 2 - ILLUSTRATION OF THE OC3 APPROVAL PROCESS
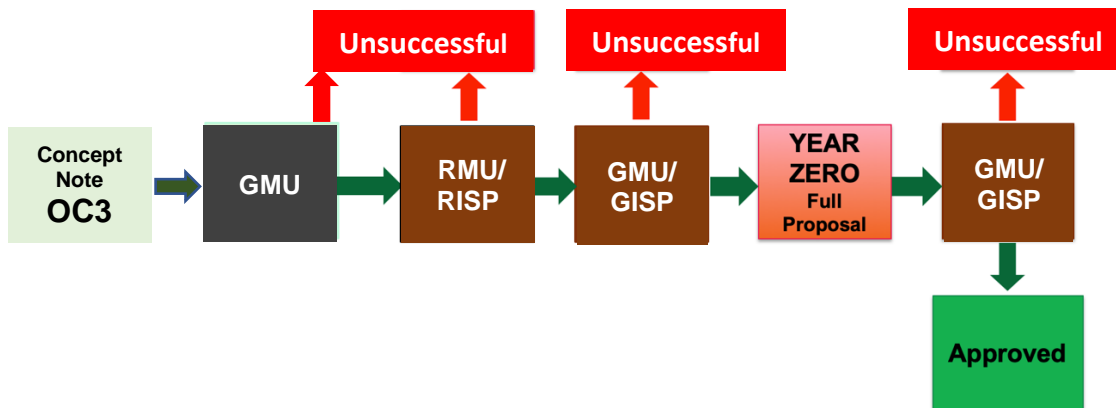
RMU – Oxfam IBIS Regional Management Unit
RISP – Regional Independent Selection Panel
GMU – Oxfam IBIS Global Management Unit
GISP – Global Independent Selection Panel
OC3 – Operational Component 3