CALL FOR PROPOSALS

AERC-OXFAM-IDRC Collaborative Research Project:
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Livelihoods in Africa

Introduction
The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and OXFAM are currently embarking on a collaborative research project that seeks to identify, with a gender perspective, policy options for rebuilding economies in better ways after the COVID-19 crisis. This project is supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). We invite proposals for research projects that build on existing evidence on the gender-differentiated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihoods in selected African countries to provide new insights and respond to the objectives of this collaborative research project which are to:

- Examine and further document gendered socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in order to inform, inspire and influence gender transformative policy responses.
- Evaluate short, medium, and long-term macroeconomic and sectoral policies (fiscal, monetary, regulatory) for their capacity to mitigate negative impacts and promote a gender-equitable economic recovery (e.g., through provision of adequate social protection, basic services, food security, and decent job creation).
- Use analytical evidence to build the capacity of researchers and institutions in target countries for longer term, sustainable policy changes that address root causes of the pandemic’s unequal impact;
- Build a network of stakeholders (policy, research, and practice institutions and individuals) that can continue to track the pandemic’s impacts and design and advocate for practical, gender transformative solutions, for building forward better post-COVID.
- Generate a body of evidence that will form a solid basis for national and continental civil society to advocate for policies and practices that will engender, prevent, and mitigate against current and future pandemics.

The AERC is a premier capacity building institution focusing on advancement of research and graduate training to inform economic policies in Africa. The AERC collaborative research program addresses topical issues of interest to Africa and brings together seasoned researchers from within and outside Africa to generate policy-oriented research. Established in 1988, the consortium’s mandate and strategic mission is built on the basis that sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa requires well trained, locally based professional economists. AERC is a vast network of universities, policy makers, researchers, educators, and international resource persons.

OXFAM is a global movement of people who are fighting inequality to end poverty and injustice. OXFAM is a confederation of more than 20 members which works across regions and is present in more than 90 countries, with thousands of partners, and allies, supporting communities to build better lives for themselves, grow resilience and protect lives and livelihoods also in times of crisis. In Africa, OXFAM has a presence in more than 30 countries organized around regional teams. Within the Pan African Program, there is an Oxfam-AU liaison office in Addis Ababa based on an MOU that commits Oxfam to work with and engage/positively influence the AU and its different directorates and departments on a number of thematic areas including but not limited to Peace and Security, Gender and Women rights, Economic
Development, Climate Change, and Food security as well as Governance. Oxfam also has active strategic and implementing partnerships with a number of Pan African civil society organizations.

**IDRC** was established by an act of Canada’s parliament in 1970 with a mandate “to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions.” As part of Canada’s foreign affairs and development efforts, IDRC funds and supports high-quality research in developing countries, shares knowledge with researchers and policymakers to inform local and global action and mobilizes alliances to drive global positive change.

**The Call for Country Case Study Proposals**

This call is for research proposals to undertake in-depth country studies to provide new evidence to inform policy makers and development practitioners on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and identify policy options for an equitable and sustainable recovery. The call is for research to be undertaken in a specific group of African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia. Within the broader theme of the impact of COVID-19 and livelihoods, interested researchers should build on existing evidence to submit proposals that link micro and macro-level policy analysis along the following dimensions:

A. **Micro-level analysis to further understand the gendered impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in one or more of the following dimensions:**

1) **Livelihoods.** Relevant questions could include:
   - What are the observed unequal gender patterns in wage employment and/or self-employment/own-account work? How have these unequal patterns been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic? How do increased care burdens due to the crisis affect the kind and level of paid jobs women can take on?
   - How has the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing care deficits? Has there been social norm change as a result of the increased care burden and realities, and how have women and carers been coping? Does women’s experience with caring responsibilities vary depending on socio-economic background (e.g., poor rural vs. affluent urban)? What kind of policy support do both unpaid and paid carers need the most in order to cope better?
   - The impacts of increased poverty levels, due to the pandemic, on girls and women. Has there been increase in early (forced) marriages? Have there been impacts on transactional sex (sex work) because of increased poverty levels?

2) **Social protection.** What are the gender impacts of access to social cash transfers designed to address the effects of COVID-19 pandemic? What are the inequalities in access to social cash transfers? Are there particular groups who have been excluded?

3) **Health.** Impacts on reproductive health care, mental health, essential workers, and domestic violence. Relevant questions could include:
   - How have policy responses, including lockdowns, exacerbated violence against women and girls, and what has been the impact on coping and support mechanisms, service provision shelters and sexual assault centers?
   - What has been the impact on family planning, access to safe abortions or pre/post natal care, access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education and services?
   - What are the effects of sexual violence and lack of sexual and reproductive health and services on the incidence of unwanted pregnancies?

4) **Education.** Analysis to examine the effects of school closures on disadvantaged groups, girls, rural populations, and urban poor.

5) **Food security and nutrition.** Impacts on agricultural production, land ownership, and access to markets by small holder farmers, by gender. Food access, hunger, and malnutrition with preference to analyses that include the individual level as well as intra-household and community
6) **Public infrastructure.** Impacts of the pandemic on women’s access to WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), health and care infrastructure and services, mobility, and transport.

B. **Analysis of macro and sectoral level policies that can mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the above dimensions and promote a gender-equitable recovery.** This could include:

1) Analyses to examine existing emergency responses to combat COVID-19 impacts on livelihoods:
   - What policy responses are currently being employed by governments (e.g., social assistance measures), and which groups are benefitting from these policies? Which groups remain excluded?
   - How can such measures be designed and implemented to be more inclusive, by promoting gender equality and reducing other forms of inequality?
   - What are the risks related to the winding down of existing support measures, especially from a gender equality perspective?

2) Analyses to assess adequacy of policy responses to confront the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in the medium to long term, including:
   - Use of gender responsive budgeting tools to assess the extent of public spending both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically on sustaining livelihoods, health and other care-related services. This could involve both quantitative and qualitative analysis and focus on the following aspects:
     - Examine the extent to which equality concerns inform the design and implementation of policies in the areas of social protection; health, education, and other care services; prevention and response to violence; food and nutrition (in relation to the SDGs and related AU frameworks including the Maputo Protocol, Agenda 2063, and the CAADP framework).
     - Examine issues of public debt management and fiscal space in relation to the objective of promoting gender equality through the above policy areas.
   - Macroeconomic modelling to simulate alternative policy scenarios to identify paths of structural transformation that are conducive to greater gender equality.

**In responding to the above themes, proposals should take the following into account:**
   - The micro-level component of the proposed research should include the *livelihoods* dimension (highlighted above) and at least one other dimension (health, education, social protection, food security and nutrition, or public infrastructure). It is important that researchers demonstrate how they plan to link the findings of micro-level research with policies at the macroeconomic level.
   - Analysis should consider how different groups are affected. For example, are there population groups (e.g., pregnant women and adolescents, rural or urban poor) that have been more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic?
   - Researchers should propose studies that build on existing or ongoing research that have examined the impacts of COVID-19 in the countries of interest (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zambia). Applicants are therefore advised to first undertake a review of existing or ongoing studies to identify research areas where there are clear knowledge gaps.

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1 For example, the IDRC has funded various research projects assessing the impacts of COVID on a range of themes. For more information on recent or ongoing research, visit [https://www.idrc.ca/en/stories/idrcs-response-covid-19](https://www.idrc.ca/en/stories/idrcs-response-covid-19)
Proposal Requirements

The full proposal, including references, should not exceed 15 pages. The proposal should contain the following sections:

1) **Objective(s):** a concise and brief background detailing choice of country for proposed study, problem statement, and an outline of the study’s objectives. This should also include a clear motivation for the research objectives.

2) **Literature review:** applicants should demonstrate good understanding of existing evidence and data sources on the impacts of COVID-19 on various socio-economic aspects and outline the research gaps that their studies propose to fill.

3) **Proposed methodology and data:** applicants should discuss how they plan to achieve the research objectives and should describe the data that will be used to investigate the specific issue(s) they will be examining. In addition to this, it is important that the researchers demonstrate the availability and accessibility of the data they propose to use. Researchers can propose the innovative use of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods so long as they can demonstrate practical potential to address the research questions.

4) **Expected Outputs:** successful applicants are expected to produce a high quality, policy relevant and publishable research report to be approved by an independent peer reviewer. A policy brief of no more than five (5) pages should also be produced. In addition to this, researchers will also be expected to participate in research dissemination activities including social media engagements.

5) **Research uptake:** applicants should also illustrate how they intend to use the research outputs, particularly in relation to policy engagement and advocacy.

Eligibility Requirements

Researchers meeting the criteria highlighted below are encouraged to submit a proposal. However, the lead investigator must demonstrate, in their CV, that they have:

- a strong publication record, especially in the project themes; and
- proven expertise in economics and gender analysis; and
- completed at least one AERC research project (either thematic or collaborative project); and/or
- participated in or finalised a research project on a relevant topic not necessarily funded by AERC.

We encourage submissions from those who have completed or are currently doing research on the impacts of COVID-19 and wish to undertake further research in line with this project’s objectives. The researcher or research teams should also demonstrate expertise on the country selected for the study, either through research/publications or team composition. All applicants are required to attach CVs in their submissions. Suitably qualified women are especially encouraged to apply.

Project Timelines

The timeline for the country case studies shall run from **June 2021 to September 2022.** The breakdown of the timeline is as follows:

1. June 2021: kick-off workshop for country case studies and issuance of research grants.
2. September 2021: mid-review workshop - researchers to present reports on preliminary findings from their research.

Please note that researchers will be required to adhere to these timelines. In addition to attending the above workshops, researchers may also be required to attend other project-related events.
Submission Requirements and Key Dates

The submission must consist of:

1) **An abstract**: not more than 300 words, briefly highlighting the problem statement and research objective(s), the proposed methodology and data sources, and country selected for proposed study.

2) **The research proposal**: a maximum of 15 pages, with clear research objectives, brief literature review, proposed data and methods, expected outputs, and research uptake, and bibliography.

3) **Budget**: Estimated expenditure across major line items (for example, honorarium, research assistance, travel). Total budget should not exceed US$15,000.

4) **The researcher’s most recent Curriculum Vitae (CV)**: the CV should not be more than 5 pages and should highlight education levels, research experience, publications, and other information relevant to this call. Additionally, the biographical section of the CV must include the researcher’s nationality, gender, and full contact details. Where the proposed study will involve more than one researcher, the CVs of all researchers must be included as part of the submission.

The lead researcher is responsible for ensuring that a complete application is submitted to the AERC. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

**Complete proposals should be submitted to:**
AERC Director of Research at cresearch@aercafrica.org with a copy to wsambu@aercafrica.org on or before May 7th 2021, 17:00 EAT.
- The subject of your email should read “AERC-OXFAM-IDRC COVID19 AND LIVELIHOODS – PROPOSAL SUBMISSION”.
- All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their proposals by June 14th, 2021.