

Call for synthesis paper:

“Boosting decent employment for Africa’s youth”

About INCLUDE

The Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa. Its members consist of African and Dutch researchers, academics, policymakers, diplomats and representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. The Secretariat of INCLUDE is coordinated by the African Studies Centre at Leiden University and run together with the African Economic Research Consortium in Nairobi and The Broker in The Hague.

Since its inception, [the Dutch Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies \(INCLUDE\)](#) has supported and led 6 research programmes with over 50 projects on topics related to inclusive development in Africa. The research framework for the current phase of the platform, which runs from 2019-2022, is centred around four core themes: economic growth with structural transformation, decent work and income for women and youth, access to and use of basic services, and meaningful political participation and empowerment.

Boosting decent employment for Africa’s youth

Research initiative ‘[Boosting decent employment for Africa’s youth](#)’ is a joint effort of INCLUDE, [Canada's International Development Research Centre \(IDRC\)](#) and the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), under the aegis of the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#). This three-year (2019-2022) multi-funder partnership aims to support cutting-edge research in Africa in the following priority areas: enhancing soft and digital skills for youth; fostering effective work-based learning programmes and mentorships; tackling gender constraints; and identifying strategies for boosting the demand for labour. On this basis, and leveraging existing evidence and innovations, selected research projects investigated what works to address these priorities in specific country contexts, taking into account the structure of the economy, the quality of the education system, and any fragility to conflict, among other things. This in-depth empirical research has been complemented, under the lead of INCLUDE’s team, by a number of evidence synthesis papers.

INCLUDE invites proposals for a synthesis paper that will bring together the knowledge products produced in the frame of the partnership between 2019 and 2022. Ultimately, it is expected that this synthesis paper will provide insights into the most important findings from the projects and papers produced in the frame of the partnership and draws out recommendations to help policymakers and practitioners realize effective and evidence-driven programs for youth employment in Africa.

Issue date: 24 June 2022

Deadline for submission of proposals: 20 July 2022

1. Rationale and goals of the partnership

In Africa, an estimated 122 million young people will join the labour force in the next decade – nearly three times more than the rate at which stable wage paying jobs are expected to be created. Millions of young people in Africa already work in insecure, low-income and often unsafe jobs with little or no pay. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, especially for the most vulnerable groups. The need to create more decent jobs for youth has been more urgent.

Harnessing the potential of Africa's youth continues to be a priority for governments and donors. Yet while the topic has galvanized political commitment and resources across the region, progress has been fragmented and slow. Moreover, there is a lack of robust and comprehensive evidence that could inform the policies and interventions on the most effective ways to boost productive employment for youth.

The activities undertaken in the frame of the partnership built on the strength of each of the organization and aimed at closing the knowledge gap through the following complementary activities:

1. Generate new, rigorous evidence on how soft skills development and work-based learning may boost economic opportunities for youth.
2. Synthesize and share evidence about why and how best to support youth employment.
3. Develop a community of practice and engage youth to foster learning and policy outreach through multi-stakeholder dialogue within and between countries.

Key research and knowledge products in the framework of the partnership include:

- Led by INCLUDE, eleven evidence synthesis papers bringing together information from a range of robust sources to inform debate and decision making in key areas relevant to youth employment in Africa. These areas are as follows:
 1. Work-based learning schemes
 2. Sustainable job creation
 3. Gender barriers and constraints on the job market
 4. Employment creation in fragile contexts and host communities
 5. Digital skills and literacy in light of future of work
 6. Youth employment in the rural economy
 7. Green jobs for youth
 8. Governments' action on youth employment
 9. Impact of different types of crisis and conflicts on youth employment
 10. Empowerment and enabling environment for youth employment
 11. The impact of the fourth industrial revolution for youth employment
- Led by IDRC, eight research projects in several sub-Saharan African countries (Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda). These projects investigate the impact of various innovative approaches which:
 - a. Help youth develop soft skills, and be better equipped for digital jobs, and
 - b. Support work-based learning programs and mentorship opportunities.
- Led by ILO, a number of strategic publications, including five policy briefs, six flagship reports and 17 thematic publications (a detailed list to be provided).
- Additional resources: conference reports, workshop/webinar reports, two-pagers produced by the partners.

2. Goals of the synthesis paper

The synthesis paper should capitalize on the knowledge products produced and strategically position it within different contexts beyond the income group of countries¹. Therefore, it should consider the differences and similarities in terms of labour market institutions, level of development, youth employment challenges (including the challenges faced by urban and rural youth separately), inclusive growth challenges and demographic shifts between different countries in Africa.

The synthesis paper should have a thematic focus on a) future of work (digital economy and tech), b) impact of the climate change and sustainability on the decent jobs for youth, c) gender, and reflect the impact of the recent pandemic on youth employment in Africa. The paper shall have four main objectives:

1. To take a cross-cutting comparative approach to the evidence generated in the frame of the partnership and present it in a nuanced and context-specific way.
2. To summarise, compare and contrast the (existing) evidence in order to organise overarching insights into what works to boost productive employment for youth in Africa with regards to the themes mentioned above.
3. To strategically situate all findings within ongoing debates and (scientific) literature on the future of work and climate change, while keeping a strong gender lens. Reflect on the impact of COVID-19 on the situation. Highlight critical gaps for knowledge and practice.
4. To generate recommendations that would inform policy and practice on what works to boost productive employment for youth in Africa and in which context. These recommendations shall address an audience of both European and African policy-makers and practitioners.

The synthesis papers should be more than a summary. Authors should distil insightful conclusions from the existing literature and knowledge products in order to provide quality and context-specific policy recommendations.

3. Methodology of the synthesis

The synthesis will use the majority of the knowledge products elaborated in the frame of the partnership between 2019-2022 as input for analysis, but this could be supplemented with additional resources and (scientific and grey) literature review to provide context for more robust conclusions. The framework for comparing evidence across countries and sectors should be proposed by the applicants for the synthesis in their proposals.

If deemed necessary, (online) interviews with the consortium partners may be arranged.

4. Format of synthesis report

Final paper should **not** exceed 30 pages (A4) excluding references (APA style, 6th Edition) and annexes. The font should be Calibri font, size 11, line height 1.15, and standard margins. The synthesis should include a two-page summary with key points, main policy recommendations and future research directions. The final paper is also expected to be copyedited.

The synthesis paper will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-International (CC BY), version 4.0.

¹ An example of the classification may be: (i) middle income/transforming countries, (ii) middle income/not transforming, (iii) low income/nascent transformation, and (iv) low income, fragile or conflict affected, not transforming, low growth.

5. Funding scope and duration

The budget available is maximum of **EUR 25,000 (including VAT)**, depending on the scope of the paper, and including copyediting. The writing process should commence in August/September (at the latest) and should be completed by 20 November 2022.

The authors may be invited to present and discuss their paper in a webinar or workshop organized by the partnership to share insights and recommendations. These opportunities will be discussed once papers are finalized. Whenever applicable, related expenses will be covered by the partnership.

6. Required format of the proposal

In line with INCLUDE's aim of promoting African scholars and strengthening local knowledge production, the lead author should be African. We particularly welcome proposals from and general involvement of youth organisations.

Proposals for the synthesis should provide a sufficiently detailed outline of the paper, clearly indicating sound knowledge of the field and debates and the direction the authors plan to take.

Proposal should contain in particular the following information:

- Name and affiliation of the author(s).
- An abstract (max 250 words)
- A sufficiently detailed summary of the proposed paper (max 1,000 words)
- A preliminary outline of the proposed paper with a short elaboration on the relevance of each of the proposed sections
- A short note on the proposed methodological approach (max 100 words)
- An overview of preliminary identified sources
- Annexes:
 - Budget
 - Short two-page CV(s) and list of major publications of the author(s)
 - General statement by the applicant that he or she endorses and follows [the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#), which is aimed at strengthening data protection for all individuals within the European Union. In the Netherlands the regulation is implemented as the 'Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming (AVG)'.

7. Submission and selection process

Proposals must be submitted via email to Agnieszka Kazimierczuk (agnieszka@thebrokeronline.eu) before **12:00 CET on 20 July 2022**. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered.

Submitted proposals will be reviewed by the **selection committee**. Criteria for the evaluation of proposals include:

- Quality of the proposal
- Structure and coverage of the synthesis
- Qualifications and relevant experience of the author(s)

Successful applicants will be notified by **1 August 2022**.

8. Timeline of the call

- Launch of call **24 June 2022**
- Deadline for submission of completed application **20 July 2022**
- Successful applicant(s) informed by **1 August 2022**
- Elaborated outline of the synthesis paper by **10 September 2022** (feedback by 19 September)
- Draft synthesis paper by **17 October 2022** (feedback by 24 October)
- Final synthesis paper by **20 November 2022**

9. Permission for use and disclosure of information

By way of submitting an application under this call for synthesis papers, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers involved in the selection process, both within INCLUDE and externally. The applicant further consents to the disclosure of the name of the applicant/lead researcher in any announcement about the selection of proposals or other INCLUDE supported activities.

10. Contact

For specific questions about this call for proposals please contact:

Agnieszka Kazimierczuk
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