



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR THEMATIC PROPOSALS

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA (HCD)

A. Introduction

Established in 1988, **African Economic Research Consortium** (AERC) has grown to be a premier capacity building institution for the advancement of research and graduate training to inform economic policies in Africa. 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. A highly integrated knowledge organization spanning research, training, and policy outreach, AERC is now a vast network of universities, policy makers, researchers, educators, and international resource persons. To compliment AERC Collaborative Research, the AERC Thematic Research Program is calling out for researchers in Sub Saharan Africa to undertake research on Human Capital Development in Africa.

B. The Project and Its Context

Recent surveys of policymakers and public policy dialogues on policy and financing strategies on the World Bank's launch of the Human Capital Index (HCI) in 2018 show that human capital (both health and education) has risen significantly as a priority in developing countries due to its link to inclusive growth and human capital development. Many African countries have equally signaled the aspiration to improve the quality of human capital formation in their countries and improve their scores on the HCI. They particularly aspire to strengthen and adopt policy and financing strategies that can deliver better health and education outcomes. The human capital gains won over time are however at a risk of being eroded by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Human capital—the education, skills, and health of people—will play a pivotal role in the transformation of African economies. Sub-Saharan Africa scores the lowest of all the world's regions on the World Bank's Human Capital Index, a measurement of how well countries invest in the next generation of workers (World Bank). The score is explained by high mortality and stunting rates in the region, as well as inadequate student learning outcomes – all of which have a direct effect on economic productivity. Structurally, the index therefore takes into account child survival, school enrollment, quality of learning, healthy growth, and adult survival. Africa's low human capital can be explained by three interlinked factors:

1. Survival: Will children born today survive to school age?
2. School: How much school will children complete and how much will they learn?
3. Health: Will they leave school in good health, ready for further learning and/or work?

Developing human capital in Africa requires a massive and coordinated effort to strengthen the quantity, efficiency, and impact of investments in people. In order to prioritize development of human capital for

inclusive growth and shared prosperity in Africa, there's need to support/facilitate regional as well as country-owned policy reforms, action plans and cross-country learning in four key areas, such as:

- ✓ Expanding effective government investment in social services.
- ✓ Introducing reforms and innovation to improve service delivery.
- ✓ Committing to equity and inclusiveness.
- ✓ Addressing fertility and gender issues to harness a demographic dividend.

Against this backdrop, this AERC Thematic Research Project seeks to better understand human capital development in Africa, with a view to improve generation and management of knowledge on Africa's human capital and address key constraints on human capital accumulation, such as weak public financial management (PFM) and service delivery systems. In addition, this Thematic Research Project seeks to complement AERC Collaborative Research in providing policy reforms that would enable Africa's young people to grow up with optimal health and equipped with the right skills to compete in the digitizing global economy.

C. The Call for Thematic Proposals

This Call is for Research Proposals to undertake in-depth thematic studies to inform policy makers and development practitioners on Human Capital Development in Africa from the viewpoint of individual countries and/or sub-regions (or group of countries).

The project prioritizes studies on the following seven (7) Sub-Saharan African countries: *Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Madagascar*. To that end, proposals should identify and briefly describe the datasets to be used (see below). The thematic papers will focus on, but are not limited to the following themes:

- 1. Human Capital Formation and Its Determinants (i.e., fertility, education and skills, health)**
 - Understanding Human Capital Formation and its Determinants
 - Measuring and Interpreting Inequality both Within and Across Countries
 - Family Economics and Human Capital in the Family
 - Health human capital and economic growth in Africa
- 2. Human Capital Drivers and Consequences (Population, Skills Acquisition, Migration and Impacts)**
 - Measuring and Assessing Skills
 - Human capital flight: stratification, globalization, and the challenges to tertiary education in Africa
 - The human resource crisis in health services in Africa
 - Labor market implications of migrations
 - Digitization: Promise and Peril of Infinite Bandwidth for African Human Capital

3. Human Capital Depletion (Health and longevity, Investment/Financing quantum)

- Health and Schooling Investments in Africa
- Financing Human Capital Investment
- Macroeconomic stability, policy and regulatory consistency, sector reforms, and human capital development
- Climate change and human capital
- Climate Change, Disease and Gender Gaps in Human Capital Investment
- Human capital formation and foreign direct investment
- The Cost of HIV/AIDS and Disease on Human Capital Investment in Africa

4. COVID 19 and Human Capital Development

- Covid 19 Impacts on Human Capital Development (Macro, Micro, Gendered)
- Vulnerability of African Economies to COVID-19 and human capital development
- Human capital development within COVID-19 Economic Recovery

D. Proposal Requirements:

Each proposal should not exceed 15 pages with 1.5 spacing. The proposal should include the following:

- a) **Introduction/Objective (s):** A well-motivated introduction clearly stating the specific objectives of the study and country(ies) of focus. *We are interested in proposals with original and innovative ideas, including ones that can challenge the dominant global thinking and its relevance to contemporary African conditions, are of policy relevance (even if this involves quite radical shifts from the "business as usual" policies), and can add value to the existing global knowledge by bringing the depth and complexity of contextual knowledge of country conditions to bear.*
- b) **Methodology and Data:** In addition to the usual statement detailing how the research objectives are to be achieved, researchers intending to investigate specific issue(s) drawing on country data must demonstrate availability and access to the requisite data required for the study. *We are interested in applications proposing innovative use of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods development if they can demonstrate practical potential to address programmatic and development needs.*
- c) **Expected Outputs:** A high quality, policy relevant and publishable research paper to be approved by independent peer reviewers. A policy brief of no more than 5 pages should also be produced.
- d) **Statement of Qualification and Current CV(s) for each author** (include in the CV: nationality, gender, and full contact details). *Women are particularly encouraged to apply.*
- e) **Work Programme and Timeline:** A brief description of the activities and timeline needed for each activity. Total duration of the study should not exceed 12 months
- f) **Budget:** Estimated expenditure by major line items, e.g., research assistance; travel; computer time; secretarial support; honorarium etc. Total budget should range between **USD9000-USD 12,000**.

E. Submission Requirements and Key Dates:

The submissions must consist of a **15-page proposal** with all the requirements stipulated in **D** above as well as 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 researcher or research teams should also demonstrate expertise on the theme selected for the study, either through research/publications or team composition. The lead researcher is responsible for ensuring that a **complete application** is submitted to the AERC. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Suitably qualified women are especially encouraged to apply.

Project Timelines

This call for proposals is the first stage in the application process. The proposals will be reviewed, and the successful researchers informed about the outcome. Researchers who submit applications that meet the necessary criteria in the second stage will present their proposals at AERC June 2023 Biannual Workshop. Those that have potential will be issued with grants. The breakdown of the timeline is as follows:

- **20 February 2023:** Close of submissions.
- **27 February 2023:** Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their Expressions of Interest.

Complete proposals should be submitted to:

- AERC Director of Research at research@aercafrica.org with a collaborative.research@aercafrica.org
- The subject of your email should read "AERC- Human Capital in Africa (HCD) –Thematic proposal submission".