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KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

AERC-ODI-ERF-INCLUDE Collaborative Research Project on “Work and Income for Young Men and Women in Africa: A Political Economy and Social Equity Approach to the Employment Potential of Specific Sectors and Subsectors in African Economies.”

Introduction

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Economic Research Forum (ERF) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) are currently embarking on a collaborative research project that seeks to identify the economic sectors with the greatest potential to increase youth employment. This project has been commissioned by the INCLUDE Platform. We are inviting proposals for research projects that are in line with the collaborative research project’s objectives.

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. A highly integrated knowledge organization spanning research, training, and policy outreach, AERC is a vast network of universities, policy makers, researchers, educators, and international resource persons.

Established in 1993, the [ERF](#) is a regional network dedicated to promoting high quality economic research which contributes to sustainable development in the Arab countries, Iran, and Turkey. ERF’s core objectives are to build strong research capacity in the ERF region; to lead and support the production of independent, high quality economic research; and to disseminate research output to a wide and diverse audience.

The [ODI](#) is an independent, global think tank that undertakes cutting-edge research and analysis to generate evidence, ideas, and solutions. Established in 1960, ODI is non-partisan, non-profit and evidence driven and has staff, partners, and ODI fellows in 50 countries.

[INCLUDE](#) is a platform that brings together researchers and policymakers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, NGOs, and governments. The platform was established to facilitate the exchange knowledge and ideas on achieving better, and more evidence-based, inclusive development policies and practice in Africa.

The Project and its Context

Poverty and inequality are among the root causes of armed conflict, instability, and irregular migration from Africa. In the context of high population growth rates, enhancing decent employment for young men and women is a key policy priority to reduce poverty and inequality because youth are three times as likely to be un(der)employed relative to adults. Furthermore, while many interventions that promote employability of young men and women focus on skills training, the question on where these trained youth will find work and income remains unexplored, particularly considering that some economies lack structural transformation and are characterised by fragility. Although there are various studies that have been conducted to understand the trends and drivers of youth employment, there is limited robust evidence on which sectors can have the greatest potential to create jobs for young people.

This collaborative research project, therefore, aims to strengthen the evidence base on youth employment, drawing on research that will be carried out to examine the growth sectors with the highest multipliers and potential to create employment opportunities. In particular, the research aims to:

- identify promising economic sectors or value chains for job creation for young men and women in selected countries in Africa.
- determine the country specific conditions needed for local and foreign private sectors to invest in these sectors or value chains.
- identify the country specific actors that are needed to create these conditions that enhance or reduce investment security.
- explore ways to promote equal access and opportunity for youth to these new sources of work and income, addressing inequality related to gender, socio-economic background, and place of residence.

This project is implemented by AERC in collaboration with ERF and ODI and commissioned by the INCLUDE Platform with support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The research project is implemented over a 1-year period in three phases.

- 1) The first phase of the project is currently ongoing and involves the writing and publication of background/framework papers to help draw out some general characteristics of decent employment for Africa's youth and provide a range of suggestions for undertaking country level research and analysis.
- 2) The second phase, **which is the focus of this call**, will include 10 country case studies (CCSs) that will focus on in-depth research on work and income for young women and men in individual countries. Through this phase, the project will enable the identification and explanation of nuances and peculiarities of these countries, thus allowing for more pointed policy recommendations.
- 3) To ensure that the research findings feed into employment policy dialogues in general, and to policymaking in Africa in particular, the first and second phases of the project will be followed by a final phase involving enhanced policy outreach and knowledge management activities that include publications, national dissemination of research workshops, and a continent-wide policy dialogue modelled along AERC's [senior policy seminars](#).

The Call for Country Case Study Proposals

This call is for research proposals to undertake in-depth country studies to inform policy makers and development practitioners on the economic sectors with the highest multipliers and potential to create employment opportunities¹, and the country-specific conditions and stakeholders needed to support these sectors. The call is for research to be undertaken in a specific group of African countries: Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, and Uganda. Interested researchers should submit proposals that address **all** the following key themes:

Background analysis on work and income for young men and women

- 1) Identification of growth sectors: which are the most promising sectors and activities that have the potential to improve youth employment, and why?**
- 2) Analysis of economic sectors and youth employment nexus: examining the causal mechanisms and types of impact.
- 3) Use of analytical methods to identify inequalities related to gender, spatial, or socio-economic background, and their effects on youth's access to employment in the growth sectors.

Analysis around barriers and policies for work and income for young men and women

- 4) Analysis to identify factors underlying youth's access to employment opportunities in the growth sectors.**
- 5) Analysis of country-specific conditions and relevant stakeholders needed to support local and foreign investment in growth sectors.

Political economy around actions for work and income for young men and women

- 6) Political economy analysis to identify country-specific policies (if any) that relate to economic sectors and value chains, and to demonstrate the extent to which they support economic sectors and their potential impact on youth employment.

In addition to addressing the above questions in their proposals, researchers are also encouraged to submit proposals that highlight **at least one** of the following themes:

- Agglomerations: a review of spatial industrial policy and an evaluation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) programmes in promoting growth sectors such as agro-industry or IT-enabled services.
- Value chain analysis and “mapping” of firm capabilities (horizontal and vertical) in identified/specific growth sectors.

¹ For more information on the classification of economic sectors/activities, please refer to the International Standard Industrial Classification:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/classifications/Econ/ISIC.cshtml#:~:text=The%20International%20Standard%20Industrial%20Classification,statistics%20according%20to%20such%20activities.>

- How trade policy and exchange rate regime influences incentives for non-traditional exports and how institutional framework can offset anti-export bias functions. Examples of non-traditional sectors include creative, automotive, electrical and electronics industries.
- The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on job creation in potential growth sectors.
- Analysis on job reallocation dynamics in potential growth sectors.

Project timelines

The timeline for the country case studies shall run from March to November 2021. The breakdown of the timeline is as follows:

1. March 2021: kick-off workshop for country case studies.
2. June 2021: 2nd Workshop - researchers to present reports on preliminary findings from their research.
3. October 2021: case studies completed.
4. November 2021: regional policy seminar – researchers to present final research reports and policy briefs.
5. November-December 2021: submission of research reports to peer-reviewed journal.

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.

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 theme; 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.

All applicants are required to attach their CVs in the submissions. Qualified women are especially encouraged to apply.

Proposal Requirements

The proposal should not exceed 15 pages and should contain the following sections:

- 1) **Objective(s):** a concise and brief background discussion on the problem statement and an outline of the study's objectives.
- 2) **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. We welcome proposals that propose the innovative use of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods if they can demonstrate practical potential to address the research questions.
- 3) **Expected Outputs:** Please note that 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, the researchers will be required to participate in research dissemination activities including social media engagements and encouraged to publish short blogs about their research findings.

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), and the proposed methodology and data sources.
- 2) **The research proposal:** a maximum of 15 pages, with clear research objectives, brief literature review, and proposed data and methods.
- 3) **The researcher's most recent Curriculum Vitae (CV):** the CV should include a statement of qualification at the beginning. 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 investigator 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 winnie.sambu@aercafrica.org on or before February 19th, 2021.

- The subject of your email should read “**AERC-ERF-ODI-INCLUDE GROWTH SECTORS PROJECT – PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**”.
- All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their proposals by **March 19th, 2021**.