CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Research Project on:

Gender and Enterprise Development in Africa: A Cross-Country Comparative Study

The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana, with the support of Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is calling for research proposals from researchers based in Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique or Zambia who are interested in undertaking country-based research as part of a cross-country collaborative research project on Gender and Enterprise Development in Africa: A Cross-Country Comparative Study (GENDA Project). Proposals must be country-based studies that empirically investigate the nature and dynamism of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) addressing the research questions outlined below. All proposals must explicitly incorporate a gender perspective. Terms of Reference for the study are included hereunder, along with eligibility criteria for applications.

Deadline for submission of proposals: April 14, 2013. Proposals received after this date will not be considered.

Background and objectives:

There is a general recognition that enterprises play a key role in creating productive and decent work that contributes towards the well-being and social aspirations of women and men. MSMEs are a dynamic engine for economic growth and employment in all countries. Entrepreneurial activities by women have attracted a considerable amount of interest among policy-makers who have recognized the potential of female entrepreneurship for increasing economic growth and job creation.

In spite of the importance of women workers and entrepreneurs to growth and the economic security of households, several challenges confront them: on average women employees receive lower pay than do men, even for the same work; women entrepreneurs are often marginalized in the informal sector. Moreover, there is a consistent partitioning of women into activities deemed to constitute “women’s work”. For example, many more women work in the services sector (mainly commerce, particularly informal trading) compared to men. In
addition, for numerous developing countries, there has been a growing tendency for more women to be engaged in the informal sector than men (United Nations, 2010). Among the self-employed, women disproportionately work in very small-scale enterprises, often as own-account workers or unpaid contributing family workers. The ability of women to formalize and grow their businesses, to create jobs, and to enhance productivity is hampered where legal, social, and institutional barriers exist that affect men’s and women’s enterprises differently. There is growing evidence - especially at the micro level - suggesting that gender disparities do not only disadvantage women but also reduce the growth potential of Africa as a whole. The existence of gender-related barriers can thwart the ability of women to realize their full economic potential as entrepreneurs and workers, and such barriers have an adverse impact on enterprise development, productivity and competitiveness in Africa. Consequently, addressing gender-specific barriers to entrepreneurship and leveraging the full participation of both men and women in the development of Africa’s private sector together represent a significant opportunity to unleash Africa’s productive potential and to strengthen economic growth.

The purpose of the GENDA project is to expand the boundaries of knowledge on enterprise development and entrepreneurship in Africa by examining the dynamics of female and male-owned businesses and the factors that shape their characteristics and growth trajectories. Africa has seen a rising number of businesses founded by female entrepreneurs but very little research has been done on this group. Information on the number, characteristics and growth dynamics of women-owned enterprises exist only for few African countries, and have limited cross-national comparability given that they are based on different definitions and different methodologies. While the extant literature on women entrepreneurship in the African context has provided fruitful initial insights into factors affecting female entrepreneurship on the continent, the research available to us admittedly has a number of limitations. The availability of rigorous recent empirical evidence is still scarce. There is little systematic and up-to-date evidence on the characteristics, motivations and growth dynamics of female-owned businesses in Africa that compares it with their male counterparts. There is little analysis of the gender differences in the constraints which limit the development of enterprises operated by women and men, including such issues as access to and use of technology. We know surprisingly little about differences in entrepreneurial practices, business survival and growth strategies and perceptions of entrepreneurial aspirations.

Sound policies and effective assistance programmes can only be developed if policy makers have a good understanding of the challenges, prospects and dynamism of the MSME sector. Policy makers need more and fresh knowledge about the processes by which men and women move differently into various activities associated with entrepreneurship and what explains the differences, constraints and performance gaps between male and female-owned/managed enterprises.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of the GENDA project is to contribute to deeper understanding of the nature and dynamism of MSMEs in sub-Saharan Africa with particular interests in the gender-differentiated processes, dynamics, and outcomes. It aims to shed light on the nature of men’s and women’s enterprises in Africa, to assess the extent to which the constraints and obstacles faced by women and men entrepreneurs may differ, and to address whether the constraints and obstacles entrepreneurs face affect the productivity and performance of men’s and women’s businesses differently both within and across countries. A better understanding
of these issues will shed light on the kinds of policy interventions that are needed to more fully utilize the resources – including women’s and men’s labour, skills, and energy – that are essential for economic development in African countries.

More specifically, the project aims to:

(a) provide systematic understanding of the factors that facilitate productivity and growth of micro and small enterprises and the pathways to becoming vibrant mid-sized entities in different country contexts;
(b) generate new knowledge on the differences, constraints and performance gaps between male and female-owned/managed MSMEs, the factors that contribute to these, and those that have the potential to reduce gender based barriers, including the role of ICTs; and
(c) offer key insights on the role of policies and institutional arrangements in shaping innovation – including the adoption and use of different technologies, productivity increases and market performance of MSMEs, and whether and how these may impact male and female entrepreneurs differently.

The GENDA project was conceptualized as a single country study of Ghana but evolved as a comparative study involving two other countries in the region to be selected from among the following: Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, and Zambia. Applications from research teams from these countries are thus invited to be part of the multi-country comparative study. We want to make a comparison to see how experiences differ across countries and where commonalities can be identified. We plan to select two country proposals that will make us to make a reasonable and interesting comparison with Ghana. There will be three workshops during the life of the project that will bring all the country teams together (inception/methodology, mid-term and final workshops) in order to facilitate synergies between the country studies and draw out lessons and comparisons. Successful candidates will be expected to participate in all three project workshops including the methodology workshop envisaged to take place in Accra, Ghana, during the week of 27th-31st May, 2013.

Research Questions

The country studies should seek to address the following research questions:

(a) What are the factors that determine selection into self-employment in micro, small and medium sized enterprises and how do these factors differ between women and men? Why are the majority of African women entrepreneurs engaged in and confined to micro and informal enterprises, which are vulnerable, and what can facilitate mobility into higher earning and more sustainable entities?
(b) Do women and men entrepreneurs face different constraints in managing their businesses? When these constraints are relaxed, are the benefits to women and men different? (e.g. do women and men have different returns to skills or experience in various forms of self-employment?) Do some constraints affect the performance of female-owned enterprises more than they affect the performance of male-owned enterprises?
(c) What do women business owners perceive to be the most significant obstacles to their success? To what extent are such obstacles related to gendered work and family issues?
How does the gendered nature of technology use and adoption affect earnings and performance of MSMEs for women and men?

i. Are women entrepreneurs as likely as men to use ICT?

ii. What are the most important factors influencing ICT use in MSMEs in different country contexts?

iii. Does ICT provide the same benefits to men and women?

What accounts for differences in the nature and dynamics of enterprises between female- and male-owned firms?

The proposed project should make use of quantitative as well as qualitative data sources and methods to address the above questions and to provide solid and credible evidence base that can inform the design of policies that maximize the contribution of MSMEs, particularly female-owned enterprises, to inclusive growth. As such, the project places emphasis not only on the generation of knowledge but also on strengthening research-to-policy linkages.

**Funding and project duration**

As a result of this call for proposals, two projects up to US$150,000 each will be awarded. The research should be scheduled to be completed within 18 months from the start of the project (envisaged in May 2013).

**Eligibility Requirements**

Researchers/research teams based in the focus countries (Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique or Zambia) are eligible to apply. The composition of the team must demonstrate that it has the mix of expertise required to successfully carry out the proposed project. We encourage and recommend that research teams include qualified women researchers and young researchers. Proposed projects need to be housed within a research-oriented institution with legal corporate registration. Partnerships with other researchers and institutions, including those located in developed countries, may be proposed. However, in such cases, the lead research team must be located in the home country (Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, or Zambia).

Eligible proposals will be evaluated by a review committee using an agreed upon criteria.

**Proposal Requirements**

Each proposal, not to exceed 15 pages excluding Annexes, should include the following:

1. **Cover page**: Project title, project duration, country of study, total budget, name and institutional affiliation of principal investigator and other members of the research team.

2. **Executive summary**: A concise statement about the scope and focus of the proposed study, how this relates to the objectives and research questions of the Call for Proposals, its policy relevance in the country of study, and the amount of the funding requested.

3. **Background and justification**: Provide a brief description of the importance and relevance of the proposed research. Provide a brief overview of the body of research related to the research problem and indicate the gaps that the proposed research will
fill. Clearly demonstrate how the research will add value to existing knowledge and theoretical debates, citing past work done on the theme and in the region - both by the applicant institution(s) and other researchers. Ensure the research responds to the thematic focus and priority research questions of the Call for Proposals and discuss why the research is important and its policy relevance (be specific). A gender analysis is central to the research project and should be reflected in the proposals.

4. **Objective(s):** A brief statement of the specific objectives of the proposed research and how these relate to the objectives of the overall project stated above.

5. **Methodology and Data:** Clearly articulate whether and how the proposed project will address the overarching research questions outlined above and any additional ones proposed that can provide additional valuable policy insights in the country context. Proposals must indicate the nature of the data available to them as well as other data sets required in order to sufficiently respond to the research questions. Outline methods and data analysis plans. The proposal must demonstrate availability and access to the requisite data required for the study.

6. **Expected Outputs and Results:** Proposals should indicate the anticipated outputs and results, as well as the potential contribution to knowledge and to policy and/or practice. List expected output from the study (e.g. paper(s), article(s), policy briefs, issue papers, etc.).

7. **Dissemination:** Proposals should clearly indicate plans for disseminating research results and for engaging key stakeholders.

8. **Composition of the research team:** A short description of all members of the research team, briefly indicating their roles and responsibilities in the proposed research and their capacity to successfully carry out the research (Attach full CVs of the principal investigator and proposed team members, including a list of relevant publications, as an Annex to the proposal).

9. **Work Program and Timeline:** A brief description of the activities and timeline needed for each activity, including key milestones. Total duration of the study should not exceed 18 months.

10. **Budget:** Detailed estimated expenditure by major line item, e.g. research expenses; personnel; publication, local dissemination workshops, etc. Total budget should not exceed US$150,000, excluding allowable indirect costs. Costs for attendance of the multi-country project methodology, mid-term and final workshops will be covered separately through a common pool of funds managed by ISSER.

**Submission Guidelines:**

Proposals must be submitted by email only to the Project Leader, **Dr. Charles Ackah**, at akaobo@yahoo.com or cackah@ug.edu.gh on or before **April 14, 2013 (17:00 GMT)**. Incomplete or late submissions will not be considered.