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Request for research proposals

Data for tax revenue mobilization

Background

Under its [Domestic Revenue Mobilization programme](#), the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics (UNU-WIDER), with the generous support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), is aiming to encourage further use and potential extensions of the [Government Revenue Dataset \(GRD\)](#) by researchers to enhance the quality and timeliness of analysis that informs policy-making in developing countries. UNU-WIDER encourages research using the GRD to provide novel insights on key questions related to the analysis of tax revenue performance in developing countries and beyond.

GRD provides the most complete, high quality, and transparent cross-country dataset on public revenues available. GRD is updated annually, collating data from major international databases, and draws on data compiled from the public archive of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Article IV Staff Reports. A [GRD update](#) was released on 18 August 2021.

UNU-WIDER is now seeking proposals for original research from researchers — working on tax revenue performance and related fields in developing countries and beyond — who would like to contribute to the objectives of the project. We are particularly interested in papers which enhance the quality and timeliness of analysis that informs policy-making in developing countries, but also welcome strong theoretical contributions with relevance to this area of research. As part of the project, researchers are asked to take part in a UNU-WIDER workshop to take place tentatively in April/May 2022.

This Request for Research Proposals aims to bring together research that employs the GRD in combination with other data sources, databases, or measurements to address, amongst others, the following policy topics:

- What explains the observed variation in revenue mobilization both within and across developing countries over the past four decades?
- How has government revenue been affected by and responded to country-specific, regional, or global shocks and crises? This can address more recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but also ongoing issues around climate change or fluctuations in commodity prices.
- The relationships between government revenues and other aspects of the economy more broadly (such as unemployment, poverty reduction, inequality, or trade etc.).
- How do political, legislative, or administrative factors affect tax revenue mobilization?

- What can we learn about tax revenue mobilisation in developing countries when combining the GRD with other novel data sources?

We welcome papers that fall into one of the following categories:

- theoretical models with empirical applications
- political economy models
- data-focused analysis
- studies that replicate or challenge existing results, using improved data, methods, or coverage.

Offer and expectations

UNU-WIDER invites proposals from qualified researchers for papers utilizing the GRD as outlined above. If set publishing criteria is met, the papers will be published in the WIDER Working Paper Series. The papers need to be written in English, and limited to 10,000 words maximum (inclusive of text, tables, figures, footnotes, references, etc.).

Proposals from individuals (or groups of individuals) as well as non-profit organizations are welcome. Applications from women and developing country researchers are particularly encouraged.

Individual researchers will be issued UNU Consultant Contracts (CTC), while non-profit organizations will be issued UNU Institutional Contractual Agreements (ICA). A total research honorarium up to US\$5,000 will be paid in two instalments. The first payment will be made following delivery of a satisfactory first draft paper, and the second payment will be made after submission and review of the revised full version of the working paper¹. The final delivery also includes a 1-page summary highlighting the paper's main findings. The deliverables must be deemed acceptable by UNU-WIDER's project focal point before payment is made. The honorarium is expected to cover all expenses associated with the conduct of the proposed research (including data collection, research assistance, etc.). It is not required to submit a budget.

After payment has been made, researchers may be asked to respond to reasonable requests by the project team and UNU-WIDER Publications Team with respect to finalization of the working papers. The WIDER Working Paper will be published with UNU-WIDER copyright; see more on copyright below.

One author of each successful proposal is expected to attend a 1-2 day workshop in April/May 2022 (exact date and modality TBC) where near-final papers will be presented and discussed. Costs of attending an in-person workshop will be borne by UNU-WIDER in accordance with the United Nations University travel policy.

The workshop is intended for established and mid-career researchers, as well as early career researchers and PhD students currently working on, or interested in, issues related to taxation and revenue mobilization in developing countries.

Dates (Eastern European (Summer) Time – EEST/EET)

31 August 2021	Launch of request of research proposals
30 September 2021	Final opportunity for questions on the request for research proposals.
17 October 2021	Proposal submission deadline

¹In cases of co-authorship the honorarium will be divided equally among the contributors.

30 November 2021	Target date for informing on decisions.
15 March 2022	Target date for for submission of revised first full drafts of papers and a one-page summary of key findings
April/May 2022	GRD project workshop (future steps regarding publications and research dissemination to be decided during workshop)

Evaluation process and criteria

Each proposal will be reviewed for scientific merit and feasibility. Proposals will be selected on the basis of three criteria: (i) relevance to the research project, (ii) strength of empirical and policy contributions, and (iii) quality and clarity of writing. Only the final decision on whether the proposal is accepted or not will be communicated to applying researchers. Applicants must not expect feedback on their proposals.

Other considerations

For successful proposals:

1. Researchers or their institutions (non-profit) will sign a consultant contract or an institutional contractual agreement with UNU-WIDER that follows the UNU conditions of service for Consultant Contracts (CTC), or Institutional Contractual Agreements (ICA).
2. Researchers/institutions will transfer copyright of research produced under the contract to UNU-WIDER. The purpose of this copyright transfer is to allow UNU-WIDER to effectively negotiate with any editors of journals in order to seek the most desirable possible publication outlet for a related set of papers/studies. If no (further) publication or collection managed by UNU-WIDER is to be expected the copyright can be transferred to the author(s). Any material published externally thereafter resulting from this body of work should carry due acknowledgement of UNU-WIDER as the original commissioning institute.

Proposal submission procedure

1. Proposals for papers authored by one or multiple scholars will be considered. The proposal shall include: (1) an up-to-date CV for each author; and (2) a research proposal. The proposal should be no more than five pages of A4 paper in length, excluding references, using 12-point font, 1.5 line spacing, and standard margins. The proposal should include the research question(s) and methods, a clear empirical strategy using the GRD dataset, the anticipated findings, and the larger policy implications of the research.
2. Submission of proposals is done electronically by using the online application form on the RFRP announcement page. There are three forms to select from: one for individuals, another for groups of individuals, and a third for non-profit organizations. Details (such as address, gender, nationality, date of birth) of all researchers involved are to be entered onto the form. Please familiarize yourself with the form in advance.
3. Submission of a budget is not required for the proposal.
4. Any questions on the proposal process should be sent to researchproposal3@wider.unu.edu by 30 September 2021. All queries and responses will be published on the [RFRP announcement page](#) and they will be updated on a rolling basis.