

Request for research proposals

Inequality over the life course

Background

UNU-WIDER requests research proposals for its *Inequality over the life course* project. We invite original research which speaks to this project's core themes of intergenerational mobility and labour market inequality and which offer strong empirical or theoretical contributions.

A deeper understanding of dynamics driving inequalities within countries is crucial. Despite the increasing importance of top incomes or capital incomes in recent academic and public debates on inequality, most people make their living through work, whether in a subsistence economy or by participating in formal or informal labour markets. Thus, understanding what drives earnings inequality, particularly in the context of Global South countries, is essential.

Other inequalities which later manifest as unequal labour market outcomes (in terms of earnings or income inequality) may have roots in unequal access to education, or several other factors during one's lifetime—such as the neighborhoods people grow up in or even their mother's relative access to prenatal healthcare. The root causes of a persistence in inequalities across generations in Global South countries remain poorly understood, and there is limited knowledge of which policies are most effective in breaking intergenerational poverty and inequality traps.

Therefore, this project aims to understand the drivers of inequality in different moments of life and the policies that can be implemented to reduce their influence. In particular, we are interested in proposals that advance theoretical and empirical knowledge on the following questions:

- 1 How do pre-market factors—such as early childhood environments, exposure to economic or climate shocks, a parent's job loss, a change in a household's geographic location, etc.—explain a society's levels of intergenerational mobility and labour market inequality?
- 2 How do the characteristics of the place of birth (or childhood)—such as public goods provision, peer effects, social networks, etc.—affect inequality?
- 3 What are the effects of specific policies on overall levels of social and economic intergenerational mobility or labour market inequalities? Which interventions have successfully redressed disadvantages created by pre-market inequalities and which interventions have successfully reduced inequalities of labour market outcomes?

In addition to these guiding questions, we would like to highlight the importance of advancing the understanding of inequality in some specific contexts:

- African countries with limited data access or data quality
- The subgroup lens of inequality and discrimination: race, gender, occupational choice, etc.
- Intersections between inequality and climate change

Offer and expectations

We seek proposals from researchers working on intergenerational mobility, labour market inequality, climate change and inequality, evaluation of the impacts of public policies on inequality, education and inequality, and perceptions of redistribution. We are particularly interested in proposals that make a strong empirical contribution or use innovative datasets for lower income countries, particularly in Africa. Proposals that conduct systematic reviews and meta-analysis, and descriptive analysis that push the research frontier on inequality in lower income and data-limited contexts are also welcomed.

UNU-WIDER invites proposals from qualified researchers for papers examining the determinants of intergenerational mobility and labour market inequality in Global South countries. The aim is that these papers will be published in high-quality journals in economics, political science, development studies, or related fields after publication in the WIDER Working Paper Series. The papers must be written in English and should be limited to 10,000 words maximum (not including appendixes).

Proposals from individuals, groups of individuals, as well as non-profit organizations, are welcome. Applications from women and Global South country researchers are particularly encouraged. We highly encourage junior and early-career scholars to submit a research proposal either as individuals or with a senior collaborator as a research group. A webinar will be held by UNU-WIDER on 11 June 2024, to provide additional guidance on the submission of proposals.

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 of USD 6,000-10,000 will be paid in two installments: 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 paper. 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.). A budget is not required to be submitted.

In addition to the above, UNU-WIDER invites exceptional proposals for papers that create and use new and innovative data sets in low-income contexts. Researchers who are interested in submitting a proposal for creating a new and innovative data set in a low-income context may apply for a research honorarium between USD 10,000 and USD 20,000. To do so, they must submit a budget proposal and a detailed data collection plan with their submission. . UNU-WIDER will select a maximum of two proposals which demonstrate the ability to create innovative data sets in a low-income context. The maximum research honorarium for this activity is USD 20,000.

Authors must select which maximum stipend they are applying for in the submission portal. Proposals submitted in both options will be automatically excluded, though candidates may submit different proposals to each category.

Authors of selected proposals are expected to attend an online work-in-progress workshop organized by UNU-WIDER in 2025 (date to be announced later).

After payments have been made, researchers are asked to respond to reasonable requests by the project coordinators and the UNU-WIDER Publication Team with respect to the finalization of the working papers. While payments are thus made prior to journal publication, we ask that contributors make a professional commitment to submitting the paper to a peer-reviewed journal publication.

Dates (EET – Eastern Europe Time)

2 May 2024	Launch of request for research proposals
11 June 2024	Webinar: How to write a successful research proposal
15 June 2024	Final opportunity for questions on the request for research proposals
30 June 2024	Proposal submission deadline
1 September 2024	Target date for informing on decisions
30 April 2025	Target date for submission of first drafts of papers
31 August 2025	Target date for submission of final papers

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 theoretical or empirical contribution, and (iii) clarity of writing.

Preference will be given to applications from early career and female scholars, as well as researchers from developing countries. Ideal applicants should hold a recent PhD in economics, political science, or a related field (or be near PhD completion).

Only the final decision on whether to fund the proposal or not will be communicated to applying researchers. Applicants must not expect feedback on their proposals.

Other considerations

For successful proposals:

- Researchers or their institutions (non-profit) will sign a consultancy 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).
- 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 editors of journals to cover the costs of open access option. Authors are able to submit their finalized research papers to journals of their choosing. If the study produced from the request for research proposals is included in a PhD thesis, the copyright of the study will exceptionally be retained with the author.

Proposal submission procedure

- 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) an extended abstract of 1500-2000 words that summarizes the research question, data, proposed methods for the analysis, and preliminary results (optional) in sufficient detail to warrant an evaluation.

- 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 [universities or 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.
- Each individual can submit only one proposal.
- Submission of a budget is not required for proposals below USD 10,000.
- Any questions on the proposal process should be sent to researchproposal2@wider.unu.edu by 15 June 2024. All queries and responses will be published on the RFRP announcement page. Selected answers will be updated on a rolling basis.