



Request for research proposals

Addressing ethnic inequality – experiences of reform

Background

United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) is now requesting research proposals on a core theme of the [Addressing group-based inequalities project](#): ‘Experiences of Reform’. Proposals for research that speak to the core questions of this research stream and draw on focused analysis of one or more government policies, programmes, or other reform efforts to address ethnic inequality will be considered.

Inequality and exclusion — which have persisted and deepened even amid economic growth in many contexts — are major global challenges. This is underscored in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the core principle of ‘leave no one behind’, and in SDG 10: Reducing Inequality.

Research proposals accepted under the ‘Addressing ethnic inequality – experiences of reform’ request should speak to the challenges of inequality and exclusion and focus on efforts to address socioeconomic inequalities between groups in society defined in ‘ethnic’ terms broadly conceived. ‘Ethnic’ is used here to refer to categories based on ascriptive attributes that are generally inherited at birth, including skin colour, language, tribe, caste, religion, region, kinship, and other communal identity markers (see, e.g., [Chandra 2006](#); [Hale 2004](#); [Horowitz 1985](#)). A growing literature explores the significance of such ethnic (or ‘group-based’ or ‘horizontal’) inequalities across diverse dimensions of ascriptive cleavage — for instance, race in South Africa, indigeneity in Mexico, or caste in India (see, e.g., [Alesina, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou 2016](#); [Brown and Langer 2010](#); [Canelas and Gisselquist 2018](#); [Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011](#); [Østby 2008](#); [Stewart 2002](#)).

A rich body of related research speaks to the impact of various policies to address inequality, offering lessons on which policies may be worth expanding or adopting elsewhere (see, e.g., [Abdullah, Doucouliagos and Manning 2015](#); [Gulzar, Haas, and Pasquale 2020](#); [Jorda and Alonso 2020](#); [Owusu-Addo, Renzaho, and Smith 2018](#); [Ravallion 2020](#)). In comparison to the large literature focused on evaluating policy impact, considerably less attention has been paid to how such policies come about (rather than others) and are sustained (or not). For one exception, see [Arauco et al. \(2014\)](#).

This research stream will speak to this latter area and suitable proposals will pay attention to politics, policy-making, and policy implementation. This stream will produce in-depth studies of a diverse range of efforts to address ethnic inequality that speak to the following key questions:

- Why was a particular policy, programme, or reform initiative pursued, rather than alternatives?
- Why was it pursued in one period, rather than another?
- Who were the key champions and opponents?
- How did the political will for addressing ethnic inequalities — and doing so in this way, rather than another — come about?
- What other institutions, individuals, and factors played a key role in shaping implementation?
- What were the major obstacles and how were efforts sustained (or not)?

UNU-WIDER invites proposals that include focused analysis of one or more government policies, programmes, or other reform efforts to address ethnic inequality. Interested applicants should note that proposals on other related topics — including impact evaluations and other analyses whose primary focus is to assess the impact of a given policy — are outside the scope of this request.

We welcome proposals on policies undertaken by national as well as sub-national governments, particularly in developing countries. Proposals drawing on a study of high-income countries must make a case for their relevance to developing countries.

Policies to address ethnic inequality are understood here, broadly, to include preferential policies and other policies, programmes, or reform efforts explicitly targeted to ethnic groups (such as affirmative action), as well as efforts framed in non-ethnic terms that nevertheless may help to address ethnic inequality (such as a programme to improve coverage of a universal social programme, or a means-tested income support payment which may especially benefit members of disadvantaged ethnic groups).

Proposals which deal with lesser-known policies or reform efforts — including ‘unsuccessful’ or ‘failed’ initiatives — are very welcome. All proposals should explain their contribution to the existing literature. Proposals on well-studied cases, in particular, should take extra care to make clear their new contribution to the literature.

Proposed papers should advance, propose, and/or ‘test’ a clear argument about the politics of addressing ethnic inequality. They should be of the type submitted to peer-reviewed journals in political science, development economics, development studies, public administration, sociology, or related fields. Policy reports and purely descriptive or journalistic case studies are outside the scope of this request for proposals. We are open to diverse theoretical frameworks, approaches, and methods, whether quantitative or qualitative.

Offer and expectations

UNU-WIDER invites proposals from qualified researchers for papers examining the politics and experiences of reform to address ethnic inequality. The aim is that papers invited under this request will contribute to a body of work providing in-depth examination of experiences of reform in addressing ethnic inequalities, contributing to our work under this research stream. Papers of sufficient quality will be published in the [WIDER Working Paper Series](#), and some may be invited to participate in an edited book volume and/or a journal special issue.

A core aim of this request for research proposals is to support researchers in and from the countries of study. As such, submissions from these groups or individuals are particularly encouraged. Proposals from individuals (or groups of individuals) as well as non-profit organizations are welcome. Applications from developing country researchers, as well as early-career and female scholars, are especially encouraged.

Individual researchers will be issued UNU Consultant Contracts (CTC), while non-profit organizations will be issued a UNU Institutional Contractual Agreements (ICA). A total research honorarium in of US\$6,000 will be paid in two equal installments: the first upon receipt of a satisfactory first draft, and the second upon receipt of a satisfactory revised draft (approximately 8,000 words inclusive of references, footnotes, tables and figures). Papers must be submitted in English. The honorarium is expected to cover all expenses associated with the conduct of the proposed research (including data collection, research assistance, etc.). No reimbursements or additional requests for research expenses will be considered.

Successful applicants are expected to present their paper and participate in a contributors' workshop which we expect to be held online in late 2021. The workshop will discuss all papers prepared under this research stream and consider collective findings. After the submission of revised drafts, accepted papers of sufficient quality will be released in the [WIDER Working Paper Series](#). UNU-WIDER working papers are professionally copy edited, and some extra editorial attention can usually be provided if needed at this stage.

Authors commissioned under this request will also be encouraged, after the initial working paper publication, to subsequently submit their papers for journal publication; the project focal point(s) will be in touch with individual authors on this second stage of publication. Some further selected papers may be invited to participate in the planned edited collection resulting from the project; selected papers should not be submitted individually by authors to journals for publication; the project focal point(s) will be in touch with individual authors on this second stage of publication.

UNU-WIDER aims through its research projects to support and contribute to better policy-making and research on development, and thus will undertake various activities in support of the dissemination and uptake of the findings from this research initiative with relevant policy and scholarly communities. Contributors may be invited to participate in some of these activities, and we hope they will engage.

Important dates

31 May 2021	Proposal submission deadline
Mid-June 2021	Target for notification of acceptance/rejection
31 October 2021	Target for submission of first drafts
November/December 2021 (tbc)	Project workshop (virtual)
1 April 2022	Target for submission of revised drafts

Proposal submission details

Submission of proposals is done electronically by using a form on [the RFRP announcement page](#). There are three forms to select from: one for individuals; another for groups of individuals; and a third one for non-profit organizations. Details (such as address, gender, nationality, date of birth) of all researchers involved will need to be entered to the form and the cover page, the proposal, and short CVs (five pages or less) of researcher/s uploaded. Please familiarize yourself with the form in advance.

Submissions must include:

- 1 An up-to-date CV.
- 2 A brief abstract (200 words) that summarizes the research question, working argument, main methods and data, and the research plan.
- 3 An extended abstract (approximately 800 words). Extended abstracts should demonstrate that the proposed study can be completed within the project timeframe, including sufficient detail on the research plan or data to be used in the analysis. They should demonstrate familiarity with relevant literature and, within that context, explain clearly the contribution of the proposed study. Alternatively,

applicants may submit an unpublished draft paper, along with a brief covering note describing the research plan to improve and finalize it.

- 4 One writing sample such as a published article, working paper, dissertation chapter, or conference paper. An unpublished paper is fine.

Any queries on the call for proposals should be sent to researchproposals4@wider.unu.edu by 16 May, 2021.

Evaluation process and criteria

Proposals will be scored based on the following criteria:

- i. the proposal speaks to the core themes and questions of this research initiative;
- ii. the proposal demonstrates research merit, outlines a feasible research plan, and is likely to produce a paper publishable in a peer-reviewed journal or book in political science, development economics, development studies, public administration, or related fields;
- iii. the proposal supports researchers and research capacity in the global South, especially in the countries of study (e.g., authors are based at institutions in the countries of study, author teams include early-career researchers from the countries of study or other global South countries, etc.).

In general, we expect successful applicants will hold a PhD in political science, economics, or a related field, or be near PhD completion.

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 editors of journals/books in order to seek the most desirable possible publication outlet for a related set of papers. If no (further) publication is to be expected by UNU-WIDER, the copyright can be returned to the author(s).