

IDRC RAPID RESPONSE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Evidence to mitigate socio-economic impacts and promote recovery from COVID-19

Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

Section 1: Project Information

1.1. Project Title

Enter a project title (max. 250 characters).

Simulations and field experiments of policy responses and interventions to promote inclusive adaptation to and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries.

1.7 Project Summary (max. 500 words)

Provide a plain language summary of your proposed project, including the problem or opportunity to be addressed, research objectives and questions, countries and regions targeted, expected outcomes and impact, as well as project methodology and strategy for knowledge mobilization. Note: if your proposal is selected for funding, this summary would be used publicly to communicate the results of the competition.

As rapid-response policies are implemented to mitigate the immediate health, economic and social effects of the COVID-19 crisis, developing country populations – and especially those most vulnerable within them – are at risk of being left behind. Time and resources are limited and must be put to work efficiently to address the short, medium and long-term challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this project, PEP will work with local researchers and government institutions to assess COVID-19 impacts and the effectiveness of current and potential policies in 11 developing countries across the globe, to identify a more effective and inclusive policy response to, and recovery from, the pandemic.

Using partial and general equilibrium microsimulation modelling, as well as experimental research techniques, the analysis will produce evidence to inform inclusive policy adjustments and the project process will equip local decision-makers with the tools and capacity to implement evidence-informed policymaking procedures. The project incorporates detailed gender and diversity analysis throughout.

Seven African countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe), two Asian countries representing South and South-East Asia (Pakistan and Vietnam, respectively) and two South American countries (Argentina and Ecuador) are targeted for this project.

Mobilising its global network of trained and experienced local researchers, and bringing in its rich experience in informing policy in developing countries, PEP is poised to provide context-specific perspectives and guidance on the various impacts of and policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis.

The simulation approach will guide decision-makers in nine countries to explore the likely impacts of various policy responses at different stages of the crisis: epidemic and lockdown, gradual re-opening and full recovery. The experimental approach will respond to the specific requirements of policy officials in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin in assessing two specific interventions. Going beyond the targeted countries, cross-country analysis of the results will identify general lessons that can guide inclusive response and recovery policies in other developing countries. Inspired by global collaborations to quickly find COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, PEP will make a special effort to support and encourage research teams in sharing information and collaborating across countries and continents to rapidly find solutions to protect the most vulnerable during this crisis.

All projects will be led in collaboration, and continual consultation, with the government institution(s) identified as priority target stakeholders. These institutions will contribute to defining, and officially approve, the objectives in terms of evidence base and, following initial consultations, will appoint a representative to join the PEP project team. Additionally, all project team members will be trained in effective research-to-policy knowledge translation. Consultations between the teams and target government institutions/knowledge users will be calendarized from the onset of projects, and the teams will provide frequent updates to PEP (and PEP to IDRC) on the (co-)evolution of the research and policy agendas going forward. This system will give the project teams the flexibility to adapt their research objectives to the priorities of their targeted knowledge users as the crisis and recovery unfolds. A longer-term impact of this project will be capacitating the embedded government officials to use the tools and techniques developed to address new policy challenges as they emerge, beyond the project.

Section 3.7.: Consortium Rationale

Consortium Rationale (max. 500 words)

Provide a rationale of why this consortium has come together to implement the project, describing the role and added value provided by each organization. In addition, describe project governance arrangements.

PEP is a network organization that operates in partnership with research centres from different regions of the world. Collaborating partner institutions provide scientific leadership in the design and implementation of PEP's research activities and also support the dissemination of research findings. The three partners in the consortium for this project already work with PEP on its ongoing research support program under formal partnership/collaboration agreements with PEP. Each will lead one of the three groups of project teams that will be implementing their respective area of expertise.

Since 2016, the Center for Distributive, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS), Argentina, has provided the scientific leadership for PEP's experimental research program, as well as contributing to the scientific support/mentorship for its microeconomic analysis, macro-micro policy modeling and online training programs. Created in 2002, CEDLAS brings together some of the best development economists on

distributive, labor and social issues in Latin America. CEDLAS staff will lead the experimental research component of this project and participate in the microsimulation component.

The School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA) of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, has been providing the scientific leadership for PEP's macro-micro policy modeling research program since 2018. The SPMA is a leader in the training of public administration and management practitioners and scholars. SPMA will lead the computable general equilibrium (CGE) microsimulation component of this project.

The Department of Economics of Université Laval (DEUL), is a founding partner of PEP and has provided the scientific leadership for PEP's microeconomic analysis program since 2002. Since 2017, it has also been hosting and coordinating PEP's online training graduate courses on economic development policy analysis. Over the last four decades, DEUL has been a world leader in economic research and capacity building in developing countries. DEUL will lead the partial equilibrium (PE) microsimulation component of this project.

Project Governance

PEP Inc., through its global secretariat under the leadership of its Executive Director, will have the responsibility for the overall direction, coordination, monitoring and reporting on the project, including ensuring the timely delivery of the project outputs and outcomes. It will be responsible for the management and contractual oversight of the grant from IDRC. PEP has considerable experience in managing, monitoring and reporting on research grants from different international funders and has been successfully funded by IDRC since its inception in 2002.

This initiative will be managed through PEP's governance structure and systems. The Program Committee (PC), in line with its mandate in PEP's governance operations, will be responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring the delivery of project objectives and ensuring adherence to the IDRC grant agreement under the authority of PEP's Board of Directors. Key leaders of the proposed program are all members of the PC: the Executive Director, Director of Communications and PEP Research Directors, the latter in their roles as the leaders of the three methodologies used in this project and representatives of the three consortium partners. Selected members of the PEP Policy Outreach Committee will supervise the linkage of the research work with policy needs/processes, while consultation activities and overall project progress will be monitored through PEP's monitoring and evaluation system.

Project management plan

PEP will use its core governance/management structures to manage this project. These structures have proven their efficiency and performance in the management of hundreds of research projects. Note, in particular, that PEP's program committee, which would be responsible for the planning/coordinating/monitoring of the project, includes senior researchers from all consortium members:

- Margaret Chitiga: Research Director of PEP's macro-micro policy modeling (MPIA) group; director and head of SPMA at University of Pretoria.

- Maria-Laura Alzua: Research Director of PEP's experimental research (PIERI) group; Deputy Director of Center for Distributional, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS) at Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina.
- Luca Tiberti: Research Director of PEP's micro policy analysis (PMMA) group; Assistant professor at Laval University, Quebec. Director of the graduate PEP-Laval University microprogram on Applied Development Economics.

The synthesis and comparative analysis will be led by a small team drawn from the most senior members of the research team, ensuring that all participating organizations and methodologies are represented, as well as one or both gender experts. The PEP secretariat will be responsible for the policy engagement, communication, and dissemination aspects of all projects.

Section 4: Proposal

4.1. Problem Identification and Background (max. 1,500 words)

Clearly state how the proposed research will generate evidence for the policies and actions needed to address the social, political and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, in line with priorities identified for this call (see Call for Proposals)

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global catastrophe with radical impacts triggering policy responses around the world. Emerging literature on the topic is unanimous on the deleterious effects that this crisis is likely to have on the global and national economies, and on poverty, particularly in low-income countries. With varying degrees in terms of the size and nature of packages, countries are putting in place measures to mitigate some of the likely devastating impacts of the pandemic. In order to avoid critical waste of time and resources, it is imperative that simultaneous efforts be invested in assessing the impacts and effectiveness of these interventions, including through the development of country-adapted analytical tools that can produce periodic updates for policy adjustments.

PEP's global scope and network of trained and experienced local researchers, combined with its outstanding track record in terms of informing policy in developing countries, ideally positions it to provide a unique and context-specific perspective on the range of impacts and policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis. In the context of this project, PEP is proposing two main analytical approaches to produce evidence that will contribute to guiding the design, or adjustment, of effective policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis. The first is through the development of country-level tools to simulate, on an ongoing basis, the economy-wide and household impacts of the crisis as well as existing and alternative policy responses, to identify the most effective interventions. The second is through experimental impact evaluation of specific programs. The rationale behind each of these approaches, including in terms of problem identification and policy linkages, is described separately below.

Crisis impact and policy response simulations

The COVID-19 crisis challenges governments through the widespread nature of its impacts and the uncertainty concerning their magnitude and duration. By analysing the likely impacts of various policy responses, simulation models provide policymakers with valuable evidence to comprehend and respond to these challenges effectively. These simulations can be regularly updated as new data become available and

the country progresses through the different stages of the crisis: epidemic and lockdown, gradual re-opening and full recovery.

There are at least three key considerations when designing policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis and evaluating the impact of the interventions. First is the importance of identifying the sectors (industries, firms) and households/individuals that will be hardest hit by the current and future economic and social disruption, and to estimate the nature and magnitude of their losses. These impact pathways are complex and heterogeneous across the population. With population confinement measures and the total or partial cessation of many, formal and informal, economic sectors, many workers and family enterprises have lost their sources of income. Furthermore, remittances are declining significantly as the pandemic is heavily impacting host countries (Europe, North America and Persian Gulf countries). Finally, as a result of the decline in domestic and global production, and the disruption of global value-added chains, production costs and consumer prices are rising at the same time as global petroleum prices have fallen.

Second is the need to look at a wide range of impacts and policy responses. For example, while social safety nets enable access to cash that speeds up recovery, liquidity alone is not enough when supply chains get severely disrupted. Measures beyond liquidity, including in-kind transfers, education, health support etc., particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children, become extremely important. This analysis is relevant to the 'leave no one behind' agenda under the SDGs. Furthermore, support to businesses, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) - e.g. direct support to firms, tax reductions/postponement, wage subsidies - are imperative and need to include informal sectors and the self-employed, which constitute a significant, often predominant, part of most developing economies.

Third, policies on recovery from the COVID-19 crisis present opportunities to change the structure of economic incentives in favour of: 1) more sustainable production, and 2) value chain integration with the region and beyond through possible changes in tariff structure and other international trade interventions. Furthermore, some sectors might gain importance (e.g.: the digital space, including e-commerce, and the health sector where increased development expenditure is now directed). Simulations will seek to determine how 1) different sectors will contribute to growth and jobs during and after the COVID-19 crisis, and 2) how restructuring the economies can be facilitated by changes in policy (e.g. changes to foreign exchange rules allowing a liberal flow of receipts and payments).

The analysis will focus on realistic and implementable policy alternatives, building on existing programs and considering the limitations of current targeting and delivery systems, and political and budgetary restrictions. These restrictions indicate that a viable and sustainable response must be based on interventions that involve some degree of targeted spending. These interventions can build on the recent success of conditional cash transfer programs and non-contributory pensions in Latin America and the rapid expansion of social safety nets in most of the developing world. A few countries have already designed new social protection programs to protect their populations against the impacts of COVID-19 and economic lockdown, which could provide inspiration. **This is the case of Novissi, a cash transfer program just introduced by the Togolese government and which is targeted to those most at risk of losing their income due to the crisis, particularly women.**

Simulation analysis also provides critical information on the costs, viability and poverty/inequality impacts of response policies, such as a considerable expansion of existing cash transfer programs, to protect the most vulnerable people. Teams will also explore alternative/complementary schemes, such as direct wage support to independent and informal workers, business rescue packages, among others, tailored to specific country contexts. The simulation framework will identify a) how different socio-economic population groups are affected and b) the underlying mechanisms (employment, remittances, prices).

Simulation analysis will include five African countries of varying sizes (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe), two Asian countries representing South and South-East Asia (Pakistan, and Vietnam, respectively) and two South American countries (Argentina and Ecuador). These countries reflect a wide range of geographic, health and economic contexts to allow important comparisons and lessons in terms of responses to the pandemic. Some are large economies that are highly dependent on primary exports, such as Nigeria; others are small impoverished countries, such as Zimbabwe. They also contrast in terms of the extent of COVID-19 impacts and nature of policy responses. In addition, these countries feature the presence of researchers experienced in the techniques to be used and the availability of suitable data. Cross-country analysis will allow us to compare and contrast the experiences in these different contexts with a view to distinguishing general and context-specific lessons.

Experimental impact evaluations

Through its experimental research group, PEP has worked with local governments and researchers for over 15 years in generating sound data and evidence on the impacts of public policies using randomized controlled trials or field experiments. PEP research has already generated knowledge in several areas related to social protection, education, agriculture, youth employment, financial inclusion and female labor supply in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The experimental impact evaluation component of this project will focus on food security and urban youth vulnerability in two African countries: Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. Food security will be impacted and may have more lasting effects than the health crisis caused by COVID-19. In particular, the government of Benin is worried about the barriers rural farmers may face when making planting, harvesting, and selling decisions. Similarly, for Côte d'Ivoire, youth vulnerability in urban areas in the midst of a health crisis is a challenge, as has been documented for Ebola. In both contexts, documenting the actual policy response in face of the crisis is also of great interest.

While there are many COVID-19 policy responses in these two areas, there is scarcity of data and urgent need for evidence from developing countries. There are several studies based on existing data, but generating new data and evidence on specific COVID-19 response policies can shed light on current and future policy design. There is a lot of original research on policy actions and interventions in these areas in OECD countries, but most is not applicable in developing countries.

The decision to focus on Benin and Côte d'Ivoire is motivated by a number of considerations:

1. Government counterparts: This proposal has been developed as a response to specific requirements from policy officials at the Ministry of Labor in the Côte d'Ivoire and the Ministry of Agriculture in Benin. Trust has been built between PEP and officials of these two ministries.
2. Integration in ongoing research activities: PEP is currently working on related experimental impact evaluations in both countries which, given time and budget constraints, greatly facilitates the proposed analysis.
3. Feasibility to collect data: Modern data collection instruments (i.e. phone surveys) required to quickly gather data are already being used with these government officials in the context of the ongoing PEP projects.
4. Local researchers: both countries have local researchers who are deeply committed to working with PEP.

4.2. Research Purpose and Anticipated Results of the Research (max. 1,000 words)

Clearly state the proposed project objective(s), research question(s) and intended outcome(s). The general objective should state the development goal being pursued. The specific objectives should indicate the specific types of knowledge to be produced, the audiences to be reached, and forms of capacity to be reinforced. Use only active verbs (no passive). Describe what the proposed project will produce in terms of outputs, and the outcomes and intended impact to which it will contribute. Please describe these as far as you can reasonably plan at this stage and indicate how you will plan to amend the project as the context evolves; and how you plan to report on this to the IDRC Project Officer that will be assigned to successful applications.

General objectives

The overall project goal is to support inclusive growth in developing countries in the face of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. This is pursued through two general objectives. First is to support the design of effective policy responses by conducting assessments of alternative measures for inclusive recovery. This will be done through policy simulations and experimental impact evaluations, conducted in a way that will ensure continual adaptation and responsiveness to specific and evolving policy needs. In addition to country-specific findings, cross-country analysis will identify general lessons to guide policies in other developing countries.

More broadly, the project will develop and familiarize local researchers/government officials with country-relevant tools to guide policy design and reform. The ongoing collaboration with/between local researchers and relevant government officials will strengthen research-policy linkages and build awareness and capacity within government in the use of advanced techniques of policy analysis. Local government officials will learn to use the tools developed in this project for continued analysis following project completion. All project team members will also be trained in a new analytical framework for more effective research-to-policy knowledge translation (see section 4.3).

The specific objectives, research questions and intended outcomes of each component are described separately below. As described in section 4.3, all project teams will be required to develop and continually update a brief describing the evolution and evaluation of the relevant policy scenarios, and how research activities are being designed/conducted to inform them. PEP will synthesize and share this information with IDRC for biannual review.

Policy simulations

Specific objectives

The policy simulation component of this project aims to develop and use a robust and tailored simulation model to inform and influence the design of policies to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. This analysis will be done nationwide (in target countries) and across diverse socioeconomic categories - in particular gender, rural/urban, age groups, regions, etc. - with a view to identifying the most affected and vulnerable populations. In particular, for each country, the specific objectives are:

1. To analyse the complex impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis and resulting economic lockdown on national economies (sectoral/total production, employment, trade, etc.) and, in particular on, household poverty/inequality.
2. To simulate the impacts of socio-economic policy responses during the lockdown, reopening and recovery phases, in mitigating the adverse effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy and

population. This analysis will explore existing policies and alternative/complementary policy responses (i.e. scaling up the existing measures or proposing new context-specific interventions) that could lead to more sustainable and inclusive economies. As the crisis unfolds, new simulations will be conducted in close consultation with local policymakers to update earlier findings and address the new policy challenges resulting from each stage: lockdown, re-opening and recovery.

3. The development of a policy simulation model and familiarization of local researchers and government officials in its use to address other policy challenges during and after the current project. Local researchers/government officials will be mentored and encouraged to interact across countries to create a self-sustaining network of mutual assistance and evidence sharing.

Research questions

The simulation analysis will address the following questions:

- How does the COVID-19 crisis and resulting lockdown affect national economies and populations?
- How do existing policies help cushion these shocks?
- What alternative policies could contribute to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes?

Intended outcomes

Specific objective 1 will identify the most affected and vulnerable populations/producers and provide crucial information on the channels of impacts affecting them. This will contribute to the design of effective and targeted, evidence-based policy responses under objective 2.

Specific objective 2 will assess how current policy responses are addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, and how alternative/complementary measures could improve the situation. This will provide evidence to guide policymakers and other stakeholders in designing and implementing an effective policy response to limit the negative impacts on the economy and poverty/inequality.

Cross-country comparisons of the above will provide general and context-specific lessons on the impacts and policy responses to the Covid-19 crisis for countries outside the project countries. Academic publications will also share findings with the broader academic circles.

Through specific objective 3, the project will make a lasting contribution to local capacity in developing countries to simulate and analyse the impacts of a wide variety of policies and shocks.

Experimental impact evaluations

Specific objectives

This component will focus on two West African countries: Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. However, many countries in the region face similar challenges, so results from this study will also contribute to informing policy in other, analogous contexts. We will build on interventions that are already in place but able to accommodate the addition of a COVID-19 impact component. In particular, we will conduct two information experiments about issues related to mitigating policies.

Research questions

Each study will explore/address a different/specific area and set of questions:

1. Food security in Benin: To what extent the decision to plant crops in rural Benin is affected by COVID-19 concerns, including but not limited to:

- a. Perceptions about the risks associated to the disease, availability of seasonal labor, both limited by restriction to internal and external migration
 - b. Access to markets that could be affected by social distancing measures in place and also by the existence of “cordon sanitaire” in different urban areas.
2. Vulnerable urban youth in the Côte d’Ivoire: Most policies enacted in urban centers are aimed at people who have access to dwelling facilities. However, homelessness puts people at higher risk. Which information policies are better to target these vulnerable groups in terms of providing food, shelter and access to clean water and safe sanitation?

Intended outcomes:

- 1) Evidence on the impacts of two very specific COVID-19 crisis response interventions that are particularly relevant in LIC countries.
- 2) Better policy uptake of research results, as the research questions come from direct consultation and interaction with national governments and concern programs that they are already running.
- 3) New data to fill the gap on the impact of measures aiming to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries.
- 4) Increased local research capacity, which is aligned with PEP’s general objectives.

4.3. Research Design and Methodology (max. 1,500 words)

Describe research design, methods, and type of analysis to be applied. Explain how the expected results will be achieved within chosen countries during the funding period. Describe how relevant stakeholders, whether local, national, or international, will be involved. Provide an overview of how the activities and outputs of the project will engage potential knowledge users on the ongoing basis, the strategies to ensure that research results are used by relevant stakeholders, and what the outcomes of the project might be for policy making and capacity building. IDRC will set up a mechanism for knowledge translation and sharing across projects; kindly indicate how you may be interested in contributing to this. Identify risks to achieving the research objectives and strategies for mitigation.

Policy simulations

As outlined in 4.1, PEP has identified nine developing countries - representing a broad range of geographic, health and economic situations and impacts/responses to the COVID-19 crisis - for the policy simulations. This will be conducted using microsimulation models, which are a series of calibrated/estimated equations that link shocks to household real income to estimate their poverty and inequality effects. These effects will be distinguished by gender and other socio-economic characteristics as outlined in section 4.4. The key channels of impact are through income and consumer price variations which, in the absence of significant savings or credit access, impact household expenditure. In the COVID-19 crisis context, key shocks come from job loss or wage/profit reductions (due to lockdown, recession and border closures), declines in international remittances, and higher consumer prices. The study will analyze three phases of the crisis: initial impact/containment, partial re-opening, and full reopening/recovery. Microsimulation techniques allow policy diagnoses and recommendations, as well as cross-country comparisons.

All simulation scenarios will be defined in consultation with local counterparts to account for country-specific epidemiological features and local policies (see engagement strategy, below). Additionally, they will be calibrated, validated and informed (to identify the populations and dimensions most affected) by data from the World Bank's High-Frequency Phone Surveys on COVID-19. These nationally representative data, available for most of the countries analyzed, will be collected every month or two over the next 12 months and track various household and individual socio-economic responses and impacts.

In a subset of four countries (, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Zimbabwe) where suitable data and local expertise are present, microsimulations will be coupled with **general equilibrium (GE) analysis** to account for the interdependency between industries, factors of production, government, households, and the rest of the world. In addition, GE analysis allows for a broader analysis to examine the impacts of the crisis and policy responses on economic sectors, factor markets, government finances, international trade and a variety of other economic dimensions. Specifically, GE analysis will capture:

- Unprecedented temporary closures of major sectors and reduction in the international mobility of people, goods, and services, leading to a breakdown in international production chains.
- The economic interdependence between the sectors deemed to be essential and the sectors that have been "shut down" in the short term.
- Medium-term national recovery policies
- International repercussions of COVID-19 through import/export markets and economic recovery in partner countries (e.g., recent oil price reductions or food price rises).

Experimental impact evaluations

This component builds on two ongoing PEP-supported projects using field experiments to evaluate the impact of specific policy interventions in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. The first is led by the Ministry of Labor, to assess the impact of a program to promote the socioeconomic integration of vulnerable youth, and the second by the Ministry of Agriculture, to assess the impact of a pilot project for improving soy productivity. In both cases, the intervention under study could quickly be adapted to include a COVID-19 impact component, as well as an extra survey and an information experiment.

Both will use the original sample of respondents surveyed for the baseline (in December 2019 for Benin and in March 2020 for Côte d'Ivoire). The surveys will be conducted via phone – a method used in the past by both governments and also currently being implemented by international agencies (e.g. World Bank) – in response to social distancing recommendations and restrictions.

Methodology for Benin:

1. Conduct an additional survey to assess: smallholder farmers' perception of the COVID-19 pandemic, possible potential impacts of the pandemic on their work and life, adaptation strategies or coping mechanisms developed by farmers, and farmers' risk attitude/behavior towards the COVID-19 pandemic. The structure of our sample will also allow us to compare male and female farmers' attitudes and see if intra-households gender dynamics play any role in the adaptation mechanisms.
2. Conduct an orthogonal treatment to facilitate farmers' access to market: the implementing agency has a database of partners (buyers) and will share supply-related information with them to identify matches between supply and demand. Then, the agency will support farmers and buyers in collecting the produce at the village-level and proceed with the sales. This additional intervention will complement the training component to be implemented in the initial project.

Methodology for Côte d'Ivoire

1. Conduct an additional survey to evaluate the perception and behavior of the youth during the pandemic, assess the impact of the communication strategy on youth social distancing behavior, and measure the impact of the safety net policy on vulnerable youth.
2. Conduct a treatment that will provide homeless youth with information on services specifically targeting this vulnerable group.

This ongoing project will add an extra survey component as soon as it can be implemented and provide intermediate results on all COVID-19 related issues. All the information for the ongoing PEP projects and added information on this component will be gathered at the time of the endline surveys, planned in the original project's formulation for early 2021, and the results will be presented mid-2021. Surveys and treatment can be scaled up in the future, based on the evolution of the pandemic and availability of outside funding.

Engagement, knowledge translation and evidence use

PEP has a strong record of generating policy-engaged research: findings from half of its projects are assimilated by stakeholders to inform policy debates and decision-making.

The strategy to ensure uptake in the context of this particular initiative is as follows:

- **PEP will select senior, experienced local researchers** (from its alumni, research fellows, etc.) in the target countries/regions, who have the experience and relevant network/contacts to engage rapidly and effectively with national policymakers – see [4.7](#)
- For each country/project, a **stakeholder matrix will be designed in consultation with** a regional member of the PEP Policy Outreach Committee, to identify the most relevant/target stakeholders and knowledge users of the evidence they seek to produce – with particular emphasis on government institutions.
- All project teams will be required to **organize inception (consultation) meetings with high-level representatives from the government institutions** (minimum two) identified as target or first-hand users.
- Following, and as a result of, these meetings, the teams will be required to:
 - o Provide a detailed **report on the key discussion** points and conclusions from these consultations – including a **description of the policy scenarios/options** currently envisaged/weighed by the institutions to address the issues
 - o **Demonstrate how the research** is designed (or will be adapted) to contribute to informing the decision-making process by providing specific evidence related to the evaluation of the scenarios envisaged
(For simulation projects*)
 - o Provide evidence (in the form of an official written statement) that the **head of the institutions** consulted have approved/validated the research objectives and committed to take part in follow-up consultation meetings (next point)
 - o Decide upon (with the consulted parties) and submit (to PEP) a **calendar for periodic meetings to discuss/report progress and updates** that will ensure continual exchange/communication with the target users

- Identify **representative(s) from at least one of the institutions who will join the project as team member** and take lead, particularly, of the development of the policy paper (see below).

*Impact evaluation projects will be led by government units, in collaboration with PEP experts.

- All teams will be required to **organize, and report on, a series of follow up/progress update meetings** with the institutions identified as relevant stakeholders (as per their stakeholder matrix). This is expected to guarantee not only the influence of research on policy, but also the (timely) adaptation of the research to evolving policy needs.
 - In addition to key discussion points, the teams will be asked to describe whether/**how the users' feedback may affect the scenarios (policy paper analysis – see below) and, potentially, the research strategy.**
 - PEP will monitor these activities based on the calendar provided following the inception meetings – see 4.6. The reports will be discussed with the assigned PEP Policy Outreach Committee member/mentor, and any adaptation of the research strategy will be reported to PEP's management
 - The government-affiliated team member(s) will be required to validate the change of research strategy/objectives with the head of his/her institution
- All teams will be required (and received guidance/training) to **develop a policy paper analysis**, assessing the identified **policy scenarios** from a “policymaker's perspective” - including effectiveness, feasibility, acceptability, and wherever possible, a cost-benefit analysis.
 - Continually updated through consultations with the target users, this analysis will contribute to supporting the process described above – for the policy agenda to inform the research agenda, and vice-versa. Indeed, the purpose of the policy paper is to position research findings into the broader set of inputs used to inform decision-making, while identifying the specific areas of knowledge gaps for the decision-makers.
 - This process will be supported by the relevant members of the Policy Outreach Committee (including the regional member and a gender policy expert – see 4.4), and contribute to building capacity for research-to-policy knowledge translation amongst all team members (both government and researchers)
- The teams will be required to synthesize and present their policy paper analysis **in the form of a “table” that visually emphasizes the pros and cons of each scenario¹**. These tables will be the **main visual support to all communications** (meetings, progress updates, briefings, etc.) between the project teams and engaged government institutions.
 - Providing a quick overview of the relevant policy debate, the table also serves as a **direct and two-way translation tool between policy and research** – not only to identify the specific needs in terms of evidence gaps, but also allowing the users to provide continual feedback on the evolution of the policy debate/scenarios and challenges.
 - This process will be supported by the PEP communication team

In terms of dissemination, PEP projects' funding always includes a grant to support the organization of national policy conferences – this will be applied as much as possible in the context of COVID restrictions.

¹ See examples of such tables : https://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/Training_Material/PEP-EIPM_workshop2019_PolicyPaper_table_examples.pdf

Furthermore, for this particular initiative, PEP will **create a new webspace (or mini website)** to gather all information and knowledge products related to these projects, and other relevant initiatives related to COVID-19 policy responses in developing countries. Information will be presented both by country and by “topic”, and also include synthesis products drawing key lessons from cross-cutting analysis of projects’ outcomes/findings. Finally, at the end of each project/research cycle, PEP will use the resulting policy brief (summarizing the key points and conclusions of the policy paper analysis) to produce a **short, animated clip** to illustrate the findings and their contribution to inform policy responses.

Risks and mitigation strategies

Research results may not be understood or considered relevant, and thus not used, by policymakers. This risk is almost non-existent for PEP as it has perfected the art and science of policy engagement as outlined in the preceding paragraphs. The PEP method includes systematic and monitored engagement with the intended research users at all stages of the research project, from design to dissemination. A relevant government official is also embedded directly in the research team to provide specific policy outputs and contributions.

Another risk pertains to the availability of credible and recent data, notably a comprehensive, nationally-representative household survey and, for the general equilibrium simulations, a social accounting matrix. We have minimised this risk as data availability was a selection criteria for the countries included. Also, methodologies can be adapted to data constraints, to some degree.

A final risk concerns the quality and timeliness of the research process and outputs. This risk is allayed by the choice of countries in which PEP has experienced and reliable local researchers, and by the participation of senior resource persons, predominantly from the South, to work directly with these researchers in a collaborative framework.

4.4. Gender and Diversity Considerations (max. 700 words)

Discuss how the project addresses gender and diversity considerations and how they are integrated in the study design, methods, and analysis, outputs, outcomes and potential impacts.

As seen in the case of Ebola, in times of a health crisis, women are exposed occupationally and domestically due to their caregiving roles. Beyond this risk of exposure, women are also at the forefront of crisis-management efforts. At the same time, in countries where they have generally lower levels of education, more limited marketable skills, and potentially lower bargaining power, within the household and outside, women can be disproportionately affected by the social and economic consequences of a pandemic. The same is true for marginalized groups. Not only are their income-generating activities more vulnerable to economic shocks, but by increasing competition for resources, the effects of such a crisis could further entrench the sociocultural norms that contribute to their marginalization and vulnerability.

All research to be conducted as part of this initiative will follow the premise that, to be effective, legislation and strategies aimed at tackling the effects of the COVID-19 crisis must be inclusive, and aim to empower the most vulnerable groups, with a particular emphasis on women, girls and the

youth. These policies should not only protect and promote the rights and economic conditions/opportunities of these groups, but also leverage their potential as drivers of change and innovation for increasing resilience and adaptation amidst vulnerable populations. Therefore, **each output of this project will comprise evidence to demonstrate how such (inclusive/empowering) policies can contribute to achieving the target users' desired outcomes.**

The array of policy analysis methodologies applied in PEP research are designed to assess how policy interventions and economic shocks affect different groups, especially the most vulnerable populations. PEP has supported 90 completed projects that focus primarily on gender issues - including 14 new IDRC-funded projects through its most recent call for Gender-sensitive Analysis on Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion, and Rural Employment – and is currently developing a graduate, online course on gender analysis in economic policy analysis. These rich tools are resources will be employed to address gender and diversity considerations as follows:

Policy simulation analysis differentiates economic actors by gender and diverse socio-economic groups (age, region, urban/rural, sector of activity, race, poor/non-poor, etc) and thus can be examined under various gender and diversity lenses. It uses standard microeconomic data on income, expenditure and various socio-economic characteristics at the household or, in many cases (e.g. employment, health and education) at the individual or intra-household level. Also, the (pre-crisis) micro datasets will be complemented, where available, with data from the World Bank's High-Frequency Phone Surveys to be collected over the next 12 months. These detailed individual and household data on the impacts and household responses to the COVID-19 crisis will help identify gender and diversity-based aspects of the crisis in terms of wellbeing, impact channels and coping mechanisms.

Distributional analysis based on macro-model simulations can be effectively designed to capture gender differences in the impact of alternative policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be achieved by disaggregating production activities, labor factors and representative households to ensure that the construction of the model and underlying datasets (in the form of a Social Accounting Matrix) reflects the gendered structure of a particular economy. It is also important to disaggregate by stage in the life cycle, rural-urban residence, immigration status and other relevant categories when appropriate, to capture intersectionality. This would be exposed in model design whenever the data allows. Household survey data, labor force surveys and other data will be used for these disaggregations.

Both **impact evaluation projects** were designed to account for a thorough gender analysis, which will be continued throughout this initiative. The project in Benin was originally designed to test whether female-only households would benefit more from the program than households where the couple cohabitates. The new component will allow us to track gender dynamics of the pandemic. The project in Côte d'Ivoire also has a gender component, as it targets both female and male at-risk youth. The new component will also assess the different challenges each gender may face in light of the crisis. Vulnerable youth living on the street may face different challenges according to gender. The reduced urban movement due to lockdown measures, is likely to affect both men and women, and potentially exacerbate gender differences.

PEP will ensure gender diversity in teams and interaction with policy makers, including close interaction with gender-related policy agencies of governments. In addition to the gender online course as capacity building, teams will be mentoring by gender experts – both for the scientific and policy aspects of their analysis (from the PEP scientific and policy outreach committees). The projects will integrate gender disaggregation and household decision making as components of the gender analysis methodology, and outputs of the project will include formulating gender-specific research outcomes as gender-focused messages for policy use and dissemination. All research outputs from this project will include substantive gender components, which can contribute to gender data repositories. In addition to the research outputs, expected outcomes include knowledge, skills, training, and attitudes relating to gender analysis in a cohort of researchers in the specified countries.

4.5. Research Ethics (max. 500 words)

Provide details of the potential ethical issues in relation to the proposed research and what steps will be taken to ensure the highest ethical standards and the greatest protection of research participants. Refer to the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans. Note that prior to commencing research applicants will need to obtain approval form from an official institutional or national research ethics body and will need to comply with the terms and conditions of the Grant agreement.

PEP takes research ethics very seriously and ensures that all grantees adhere to ethical guidelines, which are provided in the PEP Grants Manual (see details on PEP ethical guidelines in section 1.6 and Annex A https://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/PEP_official_documents/Grants_Manual.pdf).

Ethical issues in this project could arise in the selection and assignment of the treatment in the impact evaluation research, as well as the roll-out of the treatment. Roll out of any intervention should be done by randomly selecting the eligible participants and also the order in which eligible participants receive the treatment.

PEP has a Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC), composed of three members (external to PEP) who are responsible for reviewing PEP-supported experimental research projects to ensure they follow the highest ethical standards. The committee ensures that there are no risks in the experiment design, i.e., the intervention does no harm, there is informed consent, data is anonymized and protected and that the researchers comply with the Belmont principles. The RERC follows and applies accepted ethical standards and guidelines in conducting all the reviews and communicating its findings and recommendations to the Executive Director of PEP.

PEP projects that involve randomized experiments with human participants are reviewed by the RERC and registered with the American Economic Association Social Science Registry. In addition, all project teams supported by PEP since 2016 have to obtain research clearance from relevant

institutions in their countries. In the projects to be supported through this extension, the same process will be used in all applicable contexts. PEP will take the utmost care to:

- protect interests and identity of respondents (confidentiality), especially when sharing data;
- obtain consent of participants - including parental consent in the case of youth respondents;
- ensure all eligible respondents have an equal chance of being interviewed (or treated, in case of an RCT).

Specific measures to protect the research participants in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and this proposal include suspending or modifying any activities of the ongoing interventions that would go against established nonpharmaceutical interventions (community mitigation strategies) for the crisis, to ensure the safety of research participants. For example, measures could include the cancellation of the activity or changing the delivery mechanism (in-person meetings replaced by online or telephone interaction, use of telephone surveys for data collection, so as not to expose the enumerators).

4.6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (max. 700 words)

Describe mechanisms, methods and evidence to be used to assess project progress so the project can learn and adapt in order to achieve its results and to report.

PEP is well-known for its expertise and world-leading practices in project monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). PEP's MEL strategy relies mainly on a sophisticated, web-based system that collects and organizes large amounts of information related to the management, progress, evaluation and outputs/outcomes of the research projects.

PEP grants are allocated in tranches, over the course of a project. The release of each payment is conditional on the submission and approval of a set of deliverables. These deliverables include periodic reports on the progress of the research work, the policy paper analysis, and stakeholder engagement activities.

For stakeholder engagement in particular, the information is collected via a set of detailed questionnaires that are periodically updated by the grantees and provide detailed information related to capacity building, policy engagement/consultation and dissemination activities, and their outcomes and impact.

The MEL system is known for its capacity to generate data that demonstrate the manifold impacts of PEP research activities in beneficiary countries, including in terms of how the evidence is used to inform policy debates and decision-making. PEP publishes highlights of these many impact stories on its website (www.pep-net.org/pep-impact-stories).

The information from these periodic reports and reviews is then processed using an elaborate evaluation framework, following the IDRC's RQ+ model and principles. This process allows PEP to

assess the teams' performance in achieving specific objectives at various stages of the project cycle and identify areas where additional support or efforts might be required.

New component

In the context of this initiative, PEP will add an additional component to the MEL strategy - mentioned in section 4.3 - whereby all project teams will be required to:

- Obtain evidence that the target (country-based) stakeholders/knowledge users have validated their objectives.
- Submit periodic reports describing how the evolution of the policy agenda contributes to informing the research agenda, and vice-versa.
- Validate changes in the research agenda with PEP Policy Outreach Committee members, target stakeholders, and PEP management.

A synthesis of these reports, and of their implications for the policy and research agendas, will be submitted to IDRC biannually.

These new components will ensure that the project's objectives are continually adapted to respond to the evolving policy needs and priorities as the crisis and recovery unfolds.

Collaborating with other organizations

PEP will look for opportunities to collaborate with other IDRC grantees (such as AERC and CAPEC) participating in this program. This will include attending and inviting partners to knowledge sharing workshops, such national policy conferences, and other learning events. PEP will also welcome researchers from these organizations to undertake its [online courses](#) and EIPM course. Capsules from the online courses are already available, free of charge, on [YouTube](#), whereas the fee-based courses (currently \$US 600 per course) offers a number of advantages².

4.7. Research Team Capacities (max. 1,000 words)

Describe the project team including the position and qualifications of the project leader and other team members. If more than one organization is part of the proposal, provide a brief overview of the track record of each organization relative to its proposed role in the project.

² By registering for PEP's online training courses, offered in collaboration with Université Laval (Canada), participants formalise their learning experience. PEP and Université Laval provide official transcripts to those who complete a course and award a graduate microprogram certificate to those who pass all three courses. These credits are recognised by Université Laval – should participants choose to pursue graduate studies there – and may be recognised by other academic institutions. During the course period, registered participants also benefit from interaction with teachers and other participants (via the course forum), guided practical exercises using real data, personalised evaluations, access to GAMS or Stata software (depending on the course), and the Université Laval virtual library.

Provide examples of relevant research experience, if possible to electronic links for rapid review by reviewers of your proposal.

PEP has developed a unique and unrivalled research support and capacity building model that is establishing a new generation of policy-aware scientific knowledge producers and thought leaders in developing countries. The PEP program is highly effective, with nearly half of supported projects informing national policy processes (www.pep-net.org/pep-impact-stories) and the same share published in international peer-reviewed journals (www.pep-net.org/external-publications).

With over 1100 local researchers trained via 334 projects supported in 64 developing countries, over the past two decades, PEP offers a unique expertise in supporting high-quality, policy-engaged research, in a coordinated manner, throughout the Global South. The proposed initiative will build on the significant outcomes and lessons drawn through the 124 country studies supported under the Policy Analysis on Growth and Employment (PAGE) program (www.pep-net.org/page) - including 14 ongoing projects of gender-sensitive, policy-oriented analysis, led by mixed government-research teams in the current funding round, supported by the IDRC. As explained above, one component of this initiative will stem directly from another ongoing, innovative program in which PEP provides mentorship for government units to conduct rigorous experimental impact evaluations (www.pep-net.org/ie-mentoring-govt-east-west-africa).

In addition to IDRC funding, PEP is currently supported by UK Aid (DFID), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and Global Affairs Canada. PEP has recently signed a long-term agreement with UNICEF to be the sole provider of their Global Research Quality Assurance Services for Evidence Generation.

PEP operates as a network, bringing together international partner organizations (see 3.7) and dozens of international scientific, policy experts and researchers, contributing to develop and apply a broad set of locally-relevant approaches and methodologies. As outlined in section 3.7, PEP will draw in particular on three of its core partner/collaborating institutions in implementing this project: CEDLAS, the School of Public Management and Administration of the University of Pretoria and the Department of Economics of Université Laval.

The experts who will be directly involved in the proposed project are listed below, with short descriptions of their relevant experience. Beyond this team, PEP's pool of thematic experts/resource persons and other network members will be available to support as needed. PEP's finance, grants and other administrative staff will also be involved.

Jane Kabubo-Mariara, PhD. (Team Leader), PEP Executive Director.

- Role: Overall management and contractual oversight of the project.
- Professor of Economics, Director of the School of Economics (2010-2016), University of Nairobi.
- Research specializations: impact of climate change, environmental and natural resource economics, multidimensional poverty, child poverty and youth employment, gender and labor markets.

- Bio: <https://www.pep-net.org/executive-director>

John Cockburn, PhD., PEP Scientific Advisor

- Role: Overall scientific coordination of the project under the supervision of the ED.
- Professor of Economics at Laval University, Québec.
- Research specializations: child poverty, CGE microsimulation behavior and trade policy analysis.
- Bio: <https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/5132>
- Currently responsible for the overall coordination of PEP's Policy Analysis on Growth and Employment (PAGE) program (2012-2020)

Marjorie Alain, MSc, PEP Director of Communications, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Role: Advise and supervise policy engagement and knowledge translation activities.
- Bio: <https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/8004>

Luca Tiberti PhD., Research Director of PEP's micro policy analysis (PMMA) group.

- Role: Leader of the research group conducting partial equilibrium microsimulations. Supervising project teams in Argentina, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Vietnam
- Assistant professor at Laval University, Quebec. Director of the graduate PEP-Laval University microprogram on Applied Development Economics.
- Research specializations: applied microeconomics, poverty and socio-economic impact of climate shocks.
- Bio: <http://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/6244>

Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, PhD., Research Director of PEP's macro-micro policy modeling (MPIA) group

- Role: Leader of the research group conducting general equilibrium microsimulations. Supervising research teams in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Zimbabwe
- Director and Head of the School of Public Management and Administration of the University of Pretoria.
- Research specializations: tracing and analyzing the effects of government policies on households and the broader economy.
- Bio: <http://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/3076>

Maria Laura Alzua, PhD., Research Director of PEP's experimental research (PIERI) group

- Role: Leader of the research group conducting experimental impact evaluations. Supervising research teams in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire
- Deputy Director of Center for Distributional, Labor and Social Studies (CEDLAS) at Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina. Researcher of the National Science Council (CONICET).
- Research specializations: development economics, labor economics, program evaluation.

- Bio: <http://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/4617>

Research project teams

PEP will be using select senior, experienced local researchers (from PEP alumni, research fellows, etc.) in the target countries/regions. These researchers already have considerable experience and relevant network/contacts to engage rapidly and effectively with national policymakers.

Each researcher has a PhD in economics, over 10 years of research experience in the specific analytical methods and thematic issues relevant to this initiative, and been published widely in peer-reviewed journals. The majority have been selected for their experience in advising policy.

All project team members will complete the EIPB training, and take part in developing the policy paper analysis (and related comparative table) that will allow them to understand, and explain, the issues from a policy perspective, and thus to better adapt their research work to actual, and contextual, policy needs. This will **generate new capacity**, even amongst the most senior, experienced researchers, as well as amongst government officers – who (based on the experience of ongoing PEP initiatives³) often lack the capacity to conduct such analysis and to translate research evidence into useful policy advice.

*Partial equilibrium (PE) microsimulation

- Guillermo Cruces (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/325>) – Argentina and Ecuador
- Kibrom Abaay (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/14727>) - Ethiopia
- Edgar F.A. Cooke (<https://www.ashesi.edu.gh/academics/faculty/2722-cooke-edgar.html>) - Ghana
- Trung Xuan Hoang (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/2989>) - Vietnam

* Computable general equilibrium (CGE) microsimulation

- Ismael Fofana (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/5148>); Miriam Omolo (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/miriam-w-oiro-omolo-ph-d-6592814/?originalSubdomain=ke>) – Kenya
- Vaqar Ahmed (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/5784>); Saira Ahmed (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/1164>) – Pakistan
- Lulit Mitik Beyene (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/7742>) Bernard Decaluwé (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/5134>) PhD - Nigeria
- Ramos Emmanuel Mabugu (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/3835>) - Zimbabwe

* Experimental research

³ 20 ongoing projects led by or in collaboration with government officers.

- Habiba Djebbari (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/3204>)
- Rosaine N. Yegbemey (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rosaine_Yegbemey) Esther Ogouniyi Adimi (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/17063>); Kassim Issaka (Ministry of Agriculture, <https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/17187>) and Fortuné Amonsou Biaou (Ministry of Agriculture, <https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/17175>) - Benin
- Assi Kimou (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/16528>); Mamadou Toure, PhD (Ministry of Labor) - Côte d'Ivoire

***Gender experts**

- Dileni Gunewardena (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/3576>)
- Marzia Fontana (<https://portal.pep-net.org/public/researcher/5375>)