CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Poverty Research in Uganda

The Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MOFPED), the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), and Cornell University announce a research competition for papers on poverty in Uganda. Proposals are due February 28, 2006. Interested researchers may consult the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU)/Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development – Room 1.5 (telephone 041 235 055) with questions after carefully reviewing this call for proposals and the documents referred to herein, or contact Mrs. Margaret Kakande at Margaret.Kakande@finance.go.ug.

Background

In November, 2004, MOFPED published a Research Guide: Supporting the Eradication of Poverty in Uganda. This Research Guide outlines a series of themes that MOFPED has identified as priority areas for poverty research in Uganda, and it outlines the characteristics of poverty research that will be most helpful to the Government of Uganda as it strives to eradicate poverty. The current call for proposals is meant to support the Research Guide, so interested researchers should consult it before proceeding with a proposal. The Research Guide is available at http://www.finance.go.ug or at http://www.eprc.or.ug or at http://www.saga.cornell.edu/images/resprog.pdf.

We expect to fund 4-6 research projects per year, with a maximum budget of US$4000 for each project. In addition to financial support, EPRC and Cornell University will provide technical assistance to authors. This may include advice about the data and methods best suited to the authors' chosen theme, and assistance in bringing the research to fruition.
Research Topics

Given the breadth of the Research Guide and the limited number of proposals to be funded, we have narrowed the acceptable themes in this first round of proposals to five for this year: fiscal efficiency for poverty reduction; labor market dynamics; land tenure and utilization; educational attainment; and socioeconomic aspects of HIV/AIDS.

Fiscal Efficiency

The Government of Uganda is committed to achieving the goals of the PEAP and the MDGs, but also to a disciplined fiscal policy. Given limitations on tax revenue and support from development partners, it is essential that government expenditure be as effective as possible, so that poverty is eradicated as quickly as possible while budget discipline is maintained. In light of these goals, we will accept proposals to address the issue of how best to achieve both PEAP and MDG targets while maintaining a macroeconomically balanced fiscal policy.

Labour market dynamics

The 2002/03 Labour Force Survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics provides government with fresh insights into the status of Uganda's labour market. The country's labour force is growing at a rate of 3.4% per annum adding approximately 380,000 new entrants to the working age bracket (15-64) annually. Only 14% of people in employment in Uganda are in wage employment, the rest (86%) being self-employed, primarily in agriculture. Underemployment is widespread with the labour force being characterized by a low educational profile. Clearly, rapid poverty reduction will require policies that promote the efficient absorption of Uganda workers. Thus, we will accept proposals that address the structure, functioning, and efficiency of Uganda's labour market, paying particular attention to the rural/urban dichotomy, changing employment opportunities, or assessing the role that a minimum wage policy could play in improving working conditions.

Land tenure and utilization

Although Uganda is considered to have abundant land and all citizens are said to have access land, it has been reported in the 2001/02 participatory assessment that shortage of land was among the most frequently cited causes of poverty. Many poor people are landless as land increasingly concentrates in the hands of the better off and large industrial complexes. Distress sales, large families, evictions, commercial farming and high rental value are other key explanatory factors for the widespread landlessness, particularly among the poor. The gravity of this problem is not yet known and it is not clear which categories of the poor are most affected. Thus, we will accept proposals that:

(i) assess and quantify the gravity of the problem of landlessness in Uganda;
(ii) examine which categories of the poor are most affected by land shortages;
(iii) explore the key determinants of landlessness; and
(iv) consider the most appropriate policy actions or institutional frameworks for targeting landless people.

In addition, further analytical work is needed to establish the links between the various land tenure systems in Uganda, investment in agriculture, and increased production and
productivity at farm level. This should entail studying the various forms of land utilization to look for scope to improve agricultural productivity and household incomes within the framework of the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture. Finally, in the context of land use, it is also important to analyze the interplay between security of tenure, greater control over cash proceeds, and gender relations.

*Educational Attainment*

The poor retention of children in Uganda's schools remains a major challenge that requires further investigation. Out of the 2,159,850 pupils enrolled in P.1 in 1997, only about 33% reached P6 by 2002 and 22% reached P7 in 2003. The underlying factors behind this poor performance need rigorous analysis from a gender and poverty perspective. In addition, transitions to secondary school are problematic, with too few primary students advancing to higher levels of education. Research on this topic should focus on the socioeconomic and institutional determinants of children's advancement in the Uganda education system.

*HIV/AIDS and Poverty*

AIDS is responsible for 12% of annual deaths and is the leading cause of death among those aged 15-49. According to the U.N. Population Division, AIDS has already increased the number of deaths in Uganda by 23%.

Poverty aggravates HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS aggravates poverty. An enormous resource is therefore needed to avert this potential crisis. The resources have to be managed carefully to fight the epidemic while at the same time promoting sustainable economic development for poverty eradication. Further research should attempt to use creative ways to quantify the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS on the Ugandan economy. Although Uganda’s life expectancy is projected to increase, HIV/AIDS will continue to jeopardize the government’s efforts to improve the quality of life for all Ugandans. Moreover, the Ugandan Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development notes that despite declining HIV prevalence, Uganda has lost and will continue to lose a substantial portion of the most productive segment of the labour force. These areas require further investigation.

*Who May Apply*

Applicants should be residents of Uganda. If employed, the terms of their employment should permit compensation for external research. We are especially interested in applicants who will benefit from the opportunity to interact with senior researchers at EPRC and Cornell University in the course of their project, e.g. graduate students or junior researchers at consultancies, government ministries, NGOs, etc.

*Proposal Contents*

*Motivation (<1 page)*

Explain as concisely and persuasively as possible what your proposed topic is and why it is important for the implementation of the *Research Guide* in particular, and applied poverty analysis in Uganda in general.
Literature review (<2 pages)

The literature review need not be exhaustive. It should include any research papers written on your topic (or closely related topics) in Uganda, and it should include any studies from other countries whose methods will be useful for your own work, or whose results suggest that a similar study in Uganda would be of interest.

Research Methods (<5 pages)

State precisely the hypotheses that you propose to test, and the data that you propose to use. Given the size of the awards (< US$4000), we expect that most projects will use existing data rather than collecting new data sets. Carefully review the methods that you propose to use, and explain how they will answer the question(s) that interest(s) you.

Timetable (< 1 page)

Provide a timetable for the key activities of the research project and when they will be completed. This must respect the dates outlined in the "Deadlines" section below.

Budget (< 1 page)

Provide a budget for the project. Salary support to researchers is acceptable. Indirect costs/overhead are not.

Curriculum Vitae

Provide CVs for all researchers associated with the proposed project.

Key Deadlines

Proposals must be submitted by February 28, 2006 to the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU)/Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development – Room 1.5, P.O. Box 8147, Kampala, Uganda. Decisions will be announced by March 24, 2006. A mid-term progress report will be due June 30, 2006. All research should be completed and final reports submitted to the PMAU by August 31, 2006.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be selected on the following criteria:

- Does the proposed research support the Research Guide, particularly the principles laid out in section 1?
- Does the proposed research fit within the acceptable themes outlined above?
- Does the proposal make a persuasive case that the proposed data and methods will answer the question(s) of interest?
- Is the proposed research feasible given the budget and timetable?
- Will the researcher(s) benefit from their interaction with senior staff at EPRC and Cornell University?
Further Information

There will be an informational meeting for interested researchers at 9:00 am on February 8, 2006 at EPRC, 51 Pool Road, Makerere University campus. In addition, questions may be directed to the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU)/Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development – Room 1.5 (telephone 041 235 055), or to Mrs. Margaret Kakande at Margaret.Kakande@finance.go.ug.