Terms of Reference (ToR)

Research Associates (RAs)

I.   Introduction

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan pan-African, not-for-profit organization established in 2011 and located in Nairobi, Kenya. Currently engaged in more than 26 African countries, PASGR works to enhance research excellence in governance and public policy that contributes to the overall wellbeing of women and men.

PASGR is implementing a multinational policy and practice-oriented research programme named, "African Youth pathways to Resilience and Systems change (AYPReS)," in ten (10) African countries namely; Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Benin, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. This research will build up on a recently concluded the African Youth and Resilience (AYAR)[1] project, which was implemented across seven African countries. The main objective of the programme is to explore factors that drive youth resilience and how their lived experiences, voice and agency, and perceptions on sustainability and system change can be effectual in creating responsive programs, policies and practices, and unravelling credible insights to promote effective and sustainable youth access to dignified and fulfilling work.

Youth unemployment across Africa is a huge problem with far-reaching societal and global ramifications. Despite significant research on youth unemployment in Africa, few studies have explored the challenges of accessing dignified and fulfilling work. There is also limited research on systemic barriers, youth voices, agency, and resilience—particularly among young women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds, including refugees and displaced persons (RDPs), people with disabilities (PWDs), and youth in informality (both in the informal economy and informal settlements)—to address critical equity and social justice gaps and inspire hope for better youth employment opportunities in Africa.

To address the existing research gaps, PASGR is looking for country-based RAs in each of the programme's countries.

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[1] The African Youth and Resilience (AYAR) project, implemented across seven countries between 2021 and 2024, explored Africa's young women and men's aspirations, their perspectives on D&F work, and the journey towards success and achieving future lives including how they utilize resilience and adaptability. Findings are documented in publications accessible from
https://www.utafitisera.pasgr.org/publications/

II.   Research objective and methodology

The programme will be anchored on the *Utafiti Sera* approach[2]– PASGRs' innovative research-to-policy framework that supports meaningful engagement of multiple stakeholders in the research process and provide safe spaces for stakeholder engagements and knowledge exchange on the national policy issue of interest. The Utafiti Sera framework provides platforms for networking among stakeholders thereby removing traditional barriers between researchers, policy makers, communities, and beneficiaries. Through establishment of Country Utafiti Sera Houses[3], young people, particularly women, RDPs and PWDs will be accorded the opportunity to contribute to shaping the research direction and amplify their voices.

a) Research objectives

The overall aim of this research is to contribute to improved macro-level employment and sustainable entrepreneurships, leading to accelerated growth and improved livelihoods for young women and men especially the marginalized groups comprising PWDs, RDPs and youth in informality, as a means of relieving poverty. The research programme will be guided by the following objectives;

i.   To understand how youth voice and agency can either impede or accelerate their journey to dignified and fulfilling work across sectors.

ii.   To analyze how perceptions of risk by individual and group (including RDPs and PWDs, youth in informality) across different age brackets (15-24, 25-35 years old) and contexts determine the level of preparedness to survive, cope and thrive against myriad socio-economic, religious, political and environmental threats.

iii.   To understand the obstacles faced by secondary youth in work (youth working in Mastercard Foundation-supported enterprises) and how they can be supported to thrive.

iv.   To explore young people's perception and other system stakeholders on what sustainability and systems change, and their vision of a system that has transformed, including the type of system changes needed to achieve dignified and fulfilling work.

v.   To foster a community of practice of young researchers on youth employment through tailored mentorship programs and advanced training to hone their research skills and technical capacities for sustained knowledge generation to tackle emerging policy and practice related challenges of youth employment in Africa.

b) Research methodology

The research study will employ an interdisciplinary, mixed-methods research strategy, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A key aspect of this strategy

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[2] Read more about Utafiti Sera and its achievements https://www.utafitisera.pasgr.org/

[3] The AYAR project supported the establishment of Utafiti Sera Houses at country levels with 7 vibrant and active platforms in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. These platforms will be utilised for convening stakeholders, including young women, RDPs and PWDs to deliberate on the proposed research process.

will be the **youth-led participatory approach** (that includes youth categories of interest i.e. RDPs, PWDs, youth in formalities and young women and men), which is centred on listening to the voices and narratives of different categories of youth. However, in recognising the importance of capturing subjective insights and elevating youth voices, as well as lived experiences of the youth, more qualitative data shall be used, focusing more on young women, whose unique experiences and insights will significantly contribute to the research. The qualitative methodology will utilize a **grounded theory**[4] and **phenomenological**[5]approach to study and unravel meanings of young people's perceptions, lived experiences, interactions and then interpret them to draw generalizable insights and patterns. Key informants' interviews (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) will be applied for generation of qualitative data while cross-sectional surveys will be employed in the quantitative data collection.

The RAs in collaboration with country PI and Programme Implementation Team (PIT) will develop the research instruments (data collection tools and sampling techniques) that will be employed by the research study.

The RAs in collaboration with the PI and PIT will adopt a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) lens in reviewing existing policies on youth employment in the target countries with a focus on identifying the gaps and proposing suggestions for improvement. It will also be instrumental in mapping of stakeholders with a specific focus on youth employment in Africa especially young women, PWDs, RDPs and youth in informality in the target countries. The PEA approach is much preferred for its utility in conducting an in-depth analysis of the social, political, economic, and cultural underpinnings and principles that govern youth employment in Africa, especially in the target countries.

The approach is recognised since it enables the identification of opportunities and barriers, as well as strategies for overcoming those barriers. PEA provides knowledge that may be used to mobilise social groups, including active groups, to demand improved services from their government and how informal local institutions influence development. The PEA will allow the mapping of the key stakeholders that will be incorporated in the entire research process in line with the Utafiti Sera approach. The approach will allow PASGR to establish the Community of Practice (CoP) based on the identified key stakeholders as well as walk with them in the entire period of the research including the uptake phase.

Findings and recommendations from the PEA and synthesis of existing evidence from the review of policies will serve as a foundation to develop evidence-based strategies aimed at enabling employment creation and sustainable entrepreneurships. This will lead to accelerated growth and improved livelihoods for young women and men especially the marginalized groups comprising PWDs, RDPs and youth in informality, as a means of relieving poverty. Additionally, the findings from these studies will be

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[4] Oktay, J. S. (2012). Grounded theory. Oxford University Press.
[5] *Peggy M. Delmas, Rachel L. Giles (2023), Qualitative, Multimethod, and Mixed Methods Research in International Encyclopedia of Education(Fourth Edition), 2023*

clearly documented, and their implications will be utilized to engage policymakers and practitioners in the youth ecosystem.

III. Scope of work

The RA's will work under the direct supervision of the PI and support other research team members including (PIT).

The RA's roles include the following;

1. Supporting the country PI in conducting a comprehensive review of the existing policies and regulations on youth employment in the target countries with a focus on identifying the gaps and proposing suggestions for improvement and prepare a comprehensive PEA report.
2. Conducting extensive stakeholder Mapping and Analysis.

   - Support the designing and implementing of a stakeholder engagement plan.
   - Identification of policy windows and opportunities for transforming youth employment in the country and in Africa.
   - Contribute to the identification of evidence-based interventions and strategies that can be utilized to significantly enhance youth employment in Africa and outcomes, promoting improved macro-level employment and sustainable entrepreneurships, leading to accelerated growth and improved livelihoods for young women and men especially the marginalized groups comprising PWDs, RDPs and youth in informality, as a means of relieving poverty.

3. Supporting the country PI in conducting literature review to assess existing knowledge on youth employment, systems change, and resilience frameworks.
4. Collaborating with PIT to develop research design (both qualitative and quantitative research methodology).

5. Working closely with the PI and other teams within the country and across the program implementation team (PIT) to provide methodological, research and evidence-based support, as and when required.

6. Supporting the country PI in organizing all the project convenings in the county (inception, training research team, validation of research methodology, validation of findings and dissemination).
7. Conducting in-depth qualitative research and quantitative data collection.
8. Working closely with the country PI in drafting reports and all knowledge sharing products-policy briefs, blogs, journal articles and infographics: Synthesizing findings into a final research report, including evidence-based recommendations to inform policy discussions and actions to addressing youth employment in Africa.

9. Performing any other duties as directed by the PI.

IV. Timeline

The RAs will work remotely from their home countries with periodic travel for stakeholder consultations and dissemination events. The RAs will be engaged throughout the program lifecycle i.e. April 2025 to December 2027. The detailed timeline for the various tasks will be mutually agreed upon between the selected research team and the program implementation team. Flexibility in setting the timeline will ensure that the assessment process is well-paced and efficient, accommodating any unforeseen challenges or adjustments required during the project implementation phase. Moreover, regular communication and progress update reports between the RAs and the project team will be essential to ensure smooth coordination and adherence to the agreed timeline.

V. Qualifications and expertise for country Research Associate (RA)

1) A master's degree in social sciences, economics, development studies, or a related field.
2) Should be 35years old and below with more preference on women, PWD and RDPs and Youth in informality.
3) Strong qualitative and quantitative research skills, including experience with participatory youth-led methods.
4) Fluent in English and/or French. For Senegal, Togo, Benin and Cote d'Ivore, the candidate should be fluent in both English and French, written and spoken.
5) Ability to deliver high-quality outputs within the specified timeframe will be crucial for the successful candidate.
6) Ability to propose evidence-based interventions and strategies that can contribute to improving employment among young women and men, especially RDPs, PWDs and youth in informality.
7) Familiarity with the African context and youth unemployment issues.
8) Experience in working with RDPs, PWDs and young women and men in informality will be added advantage.

Application process

Interested candidates for the role of Research Assistants (RAs) are required to submit an application or expression of interest for this position. Applications should include:

- A CV/resume, including contact information.
- A cover letter explaining their interest in the position, and relevant experience.
- Include the financial proposal/budget.
- A description of any affiliated institution that can host the Utafiti Sera house.

Interested and eligible candidates are requested to submit their application with the subject clearly indicating "Research Assistant" no later than 5.00pm EAT 21st March 2025 to recruitment@pasgr.org .

For any inquiries and questions related to the call, kindly write to research@pasgr.org .

Note: Any form of canvassing will lead to automatic disqualification.