

Expression of Interest

Principal Investigators

1. Introduction

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan pan-African not-for-profit organisation established in 2011 and registered in the United States under the 501(c) status with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It has a footprint in over 26 African countries. In partnership with individual academics and researchers, higher education institutions, research think tanks, civil society organisations, business, and policy communities both in the region and internationally, PASGR supports the production and dissemination of policy-relevant research; designs and delivers suites of short professional development courses for researchers and policy actors; and facilitates the development of collaborative higher education programmes.

2. PhD Models Project

PhD Models project is a three-year project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York focusing on research and transformation of doctoral practices and procedures in African universities. The main aim is to develop a conceptual and delivery framework that will enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of doctoral training in Africa by identifying innovative processes and best practices. This will be achieved through a comprehensive scoping and review of doctoral models and initiatives existing on the continent. The focus will be on doctoral training models in social sciences, humanities, and education disciplines in seven countries- Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda- that are major PhD producers on the continent.

3. Project objectives

Two specific objectives will guide the project:

- i. To assess the current state of doctoral training in social sciences, humanities and education in Africa
- ii. To scale effective doctoral training models and practices

4. Research methodology

The project will employ a mixed methods approach to assess the current state of doctoral training in social sciences, humanities, and education in Africa. A comprehensive desk review of existing doctoral training models and practices will be conducted to explore the differences and similarities in (a) institutional policies, processes and procedures applied in doctoral training, (b) programme duration (c) governance structures (d) funding mechanisms, (e) resource allocation (f) curriculum and pedagogical approaches (g) supervision models, (h) faculty capacity-building initiatives (i)

research output (j) sustainability plans. This will be followed by a systematic identification of key gaps in doctoral training with a particular focus on (a) supervision and mentorship (b) student progression rates and completion time (c) funding (d) retention of trained African doctoral students. The findings will be complemented with in-depth and key informant interviews of doctoral candidates, supervisors, faculty, university administrators and higher education stakeholders within the seven countries.

To facilitate the adoption and scaling of best practices in doctoral training in the selected disciplines in Africa, the project will leverage PASGR's [Utafiti Sera model](#). The Utafiti Sera model, a PASGR's innovation refers to 'research-policy communities'; a platform that facilitates the convening of stakeholders working together to ensure that appropriate and negotiated actions and research uptake occur around a particular problem for which there is research evidence. The research-policy engagement platform will bring together stakeholders to co-create evidence-informed solutions based on findings from the assessment of doctoral training in Africa. This will entail establishing communities of practice comprising university leaders, academics, higher education regulatory agencies, doctoral academy networks and other key stakeholders in higher education to co-create solutions; convening a series of local and regional dialogues to adapt best practice models to specific institutional and national contexts; and developing strategies for scalability, ensuring that effective models are institutionalized and replicated across the seven focus countries.

PASGR invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for country-based **Principal Investigators (PI)** to lead project activities for each of the research countries. The PI will deliver the project outputs, working collaboratively with a Research Associate (RA) and in liaison with the Project Principal Investigator (PPI) and PASGR's Programme Implementing Team (PIT), comprising Programme Officers, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, and the Programme Manager.

5. Responsibilities:

In collaboration with the PASGR project team, PPI and the RA, the Principal Investigator will carry out the following tasks:

- Lead the country research team in conducting a country-specific political economy analysis of policies, regulations, and networks. Additionally, conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise, with emphasis on university leaders, academics, higher education regulatory agencies, doctoral academy networks, to build a constituency of policy actors and a community of practice.
- With the support of the Research Associate, prepare a synthesis report on existing related studies to identify knowledge gaps, and inform research design and evidence uptake strategy.
- Carry out a scoping of existing doctoral models within the country.
- Work with project research team to develop a harmonized research methodology framework for the project and contextualize it for the research country.

- Lead in planning and execution of country-level field work, including ethics approval, data collection, analysis, and report writing, ensuring high-quality reports with clear messaging and evidence-informed policy recommendations.
- Develop knowledge products i.e. policy briefs, blogs, journal articles and infographics in collaboration RAs ensuring that they are ready for publication in a reputable journal (for journal articles).
- Participate in the design and facilitation of the project meetings – project inception workshops, seminars, writing workshops, validation & dissemination workshops and regional convenings for uptake (planning, developing relevant technical materials, facilitation, reporting).
- Support the project team in assessment of potential risks and ethical challenges of the research in respective countries, including monitoring, documenting, and reporting to the PIT of any related issues that may affect the research and outcomes.

6. Timeline

The PIs will work remotely from their home countries with periodic travel for stakeholder consultations and dissemination events. The PIs will be engaged throughout the project lifecycle i.e. December 2025 to May 2028. The detailed timeline for the various tasks will be mutually agreed upon between the selected country research team and the project 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 consultant and the project team will be essential to ensure smooth coordination and adherence to the agreed timeline.

7. Qualifications and expertise for the Principal Investigator

- A PhD degree in Education, Social Sciences, Humanities or a related field.
- At least 10 years of proven experience in supporting doctoral programmes, as a researcher, a faculty or postgraduate supervisor in an African university.
- At least five years of proven experience in political economy analysis, policy analysis and high-level policy advice relating to Higher Education in Africa.
- Strong qualitative and quantitative research skills.
- Demonstrated experience in working effectively with diverse stakeholders, including Higher Education, government agencies, policy makers, CSOs, development partners and community organizations.
- Excellent report writing and communication skills.

- Fluent in English and/or French. For Senegal, the applicant should be fluent in both English and French, written and spoken.
- Ability to deliver high-quality outputs within the specified timeframe will be crucial for the successful candidate.
- Ability to propose evidence-based policy and programmes interventions that can contribute to improving postdoctoral education in Africa.

8. Application process

Interested applicants for the role of Principal Investigator (PI) are required to submit an Expression of Interest for this position. The following should be included:

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

Interested and eligible applicants are requested to submit their EOI with the subject clearly indicating **“Principal Investigator”** no later than **5.00 pm EAT, Monday, December 15, 2025** to recruitment@pasgr.org

For any inquiries or questions related to the call, kindly write to pdtdt@pasgr.org

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