

Call for proposals for applied research:

Towards a  
sustainable and inclusive  
future of work in Asia:

**FutureWORKS** | **ASIA**  
COLLECTIVE

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COLLECTIVE

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**Canada**

<b>1</b>	<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	About FutureWORKS Asia	4
1.1.1	FutureWORKS Asia hub objectives	4
1.2	Call for proposals	5
<b>2</b>	<b><i>Background and context</i></b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Technological advancement	7
2.2	Climate change and the climate transition	8
2.3	Demographic changes	9
<b>3</b>	<b><i>Research priorities</i></b>	<b>11</b>
3.1.1	High-level research areas	12
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Expectations of projects</i></b>	<b>14</b>
4.1	High quality research	14
4.2	Ethical conduct	14
4.3	Commitment to policy-relevant research and influencing policy	14
4.4	Gender, equity and inclusion	15
4.5	Commitment to engagement with other grant recipients in the network	15
4.6	Open Access and data management plan	16
4.7	Knowledge sharing	16
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Technical and methodological support for network members</i></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Grant details</i></b>	<b>17</b>
6.1	Eligibility criteria	17
6.1.1	Legal identity	18
6.1.2	Eligible organisations	18
6.1.3	Country presence in an Asian L-LMIC	18
6.1.4	Expertise/experience requirement	19
6.2	Funding available and grant size	19
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Proposal guidelines</i></b>	<b>20</b>
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Proposal evaluation criteria</i></b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9</b>	<b><i>Budget guidelines</i></b>	<b>23</b>
<b>10</b>	<b><i>Submission process</i></b>	<b>24</b>
10.1	Components of proposals	24
10.2	Deadline for submission	24
10.3	Submission instructions	24

10.4	Clarifications, information session, and FAQs	25
<b>11</b>	<b>Selection process</b>	<b>25</b>
11.1	Post selection requirements	26
11.1.1	Proposal and budget finalization	26
11.1.2	Country clearance requirements	26
11.1.3	Institutional assessment	26
11.1.4	Final selection	26
11.1.5	Grant agreement	27
<b>12</b>	<b>Call timeline</b>	<b>27</b>

# 1 Introduction

LIRNEasia, invites proposals for gender-responsive, policy-relevant, applied research projects that contribute to a Sustainable and Inclusive Future of Work. This call is supported with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

## 1.1 About FutureWORKS Asia

The [International Development Research Centre](#) (IDRC) of Canada is a Crown Corporation that supports and strengthens the capacity of people and institutions in developing countries to undertake the research that they identify as most urgent. It works with researchers and research users as they confront contemporary challenges within their own countries and contributes to global advances in their fields. IDRC recently launched the FutureWORKS initiative.

Through the FutureWORKS initiative, a Southern-led multidisciplinary research network will be built, dedicated to researching and addressing the challenges posed by the changing landscape of work across the Global South. Through shared research, network consolidation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration in public policy processes, FutureWORKS seeks to foster innovation that advances skills for the future of work and promotes decent work globally.

LIRNEasia has been selected as the Asian hub (the Hub) for the FutureWORKS Asia research network, leading in the establishment of the network over a period of five years. Similar networks will be built in Africa by the *University of the Witwatersrand* and the *University of Ghana*; in the MENA region by the *American University of Beirut*; and in Latin America and the Caribbean by *Red Sudamericana de Economía Aplicada*. Together, these regional networks will form the FutureWORKS Collective.

[LIRNEasia](#) is a regional policy and regulation think tank, working primarily in the digital space, and on topics which intersect with the digital sector, including [future of work](#). Our mission is *Catalysing policy change and solutions through research to improve the lives of people in the Asia and Pacific using knowledge, information, and technology.*

### 1.1.1 FutureWORKS Asia hub objectives

The work of the FutureWORKS Asia hub centres around creating new, actionable knowledge that contributes to changing policies and practices around skills development that help the workforce in low and lower-middle income (L-LMIC) Asian countries transition towards just and equitable work in light of the changes and disruptions to work ecosystems posed by increasing digitization (especially the rapid advancement of AI), climate change and climate transition to low-carbon economies, and demographic changes (declining birth rates, aging, and migration), through the lens of gender, equity and inclusion. An important dimension of this work will be that it does not seek to address each of these challenges in isolation, but it will explore their implications where the forces intersect. For example, how the adoption of AI-based green technologies might affect job displacement, job augmentation, skills requirements, etc., particularly among marginalised groups.

As the Asia Hub, LIRNEasia aims to achieve the following in order to achieve the global network objectives:

1. Build and nurture an Asian research network focused on the future of work, which will together with similar networks in the other regions form a global research network.
2. Facilitate high-quality, policy relevant, and gender-responsive research from the region, by establishing a regional research agenda and implementing it through the award and management of over 12 research grants through two or more competitive selection cycles.
3. Build and enhance research and policy engagement capacity of research grant recipients (i.e., the network members), through:

- a. Group capacity building/enhancing activities within the research network to enhance their work, share expertise and develop synergies between network members and their research.
  - b. Provide tailored support to network members<sup>1</sup> based on capacity assessments conducted at early stages of the grant.
4. Facilitate inter- as well as intra-network knowledge-sharing and peer learning opportunities among network members.
  5. Disseminate research to identified stakeholders to facilitate the translation of research to policy impact.

## 1.2 Call for proposals

**LIRNEasia, invites proposals for gender-responsive, policy-relevant applied research projects that contribute to a sustainable and inclusive future of work in the Asian region.**

The objectives of this call are to:

- 1.1. Design and produce high quality, innovative, gender responsive and policy relevant research to address future work and skill challenges and opportunities to advance skills, strengthen social protection and promote decent work in light of the combined forces of mega changes that are disrupting work ecosystems across the globe, specifically: digital technology adoption, climate change and climate transition to low-carbon economies (including its intersection with digital technology changes), and demographic changes.
- 1.2. Contribute to the on-going policy dialogues, within the above-identified domain at national, regional and international level, with relevant stakeholders inside national innovation systems, education systems (state run and other), government policy makers, technology platforms, multi/bi-lateral agencies and funders.
- 1.3. Enable LIRNEasia (through 1.1 and 1.2) to establish and develop a network of research partners that work collaboratively on policies and skills required for a future of work in light of the above-identified challenges facing low- and lower middle income (L-LMIC) Asian nations

**The deadline for submission of proposals is 19 July 2024**

## 2 Background and context

The Asia Pacific region is home to 60% of the world's population and an estimated 57% of the world's labour force. However there is great heterogeneity across the region between the countries and their labour market contexts, differing in their stages of structural and demographic transformation, as well as their socio-economic compositions. As such, they differ vastly in the challenges they face. For instance, Nepal, with a GDP per capita of USD 4,727 (PPP) in 2022 has a high labour force participation rate but is faced with challenges of a predominantly informal labour market where many workers engage in non-waged, low productivity, agriculture work. Like many of its South Asian neighbours, high quality, formal sector jobs with benefits and protections are hard to come by, especially for women, the rural, the less educated, and so on. Singapore on the other hand has a GDP per capita of approximately USD 93,000 in 2020, with almost 85% of its workforce employed in the

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<sup>1</sup> Grant recipients are expected to participate in the activities of the FutureWORKS Asia network activities organized by the Asia hub (i.e., LIRNEasia), as well as some of the Global Hub activities, as advised by the Asia hub. Thus 'network members' refers to all grant recipients under FutureWORKS Asia; the two terms ('grant recipients' and 'network members') are used interchangeably in this document.

service sector, and is grappling with the challenges of keeping the workforce up to date with the skills of the future, to maintain its competitiveness. Maldives, a small island nation, with its per capita income of USD 25,124 in 2022 relies on the tourist industry as a major contributor to employment; it has to contend with issues of informality and vulnerability of its workers, which is compounded by natural disasters, global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change; the limited opportunities as a result of its tiny size creates problems of high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and brain drain.

Notwithstanding the vast sub-regional differences, on average the region's largest employers are the agriculture sector (30% of the workforce in 2021), manufacturing (16%), and wholesale/retail trade (15%). The agriculture sector is often characterised by high levels of informality; low, if not zero wage levels; low productivity; poor working conditions; but it is a significant employer of women across the region. The manufacturing sector grapples with the dual challenge of ensuring decent work conditions and mitigating the risks posed by automation; gender disparities in the higher growth sectors (which tend to employ more men than women) are a concern. The service sector, also a significant employer across the region, is dominated by the wholesale/retail trade and construction sectors. Heavily hit by the COVID 19 pandemic, the sector has seen varying levels of recovery; high-skilled occupations have recovered much faster than low-skilled occupations. Altogether these sectors which account for over 60% of the region's employment are characterised by low productivity, low wages, poor working conditions, a lack of job and income security, and little access to social protection. The lack of decent work therefore is a major challenge across the region. Despite substantial economic growth before the COVID-19 crisis, there were shrinking labour income shares and only limited improvements in decent work outcomes. Economic growth in the region has led to the creation of formal jobs and wage employment, but it has not effectively transformed informal employment into formal employment or significantly improved decent work conditions for the majority of workers.<sup>2</sup> As such, informality pervades labour markets across the region, encompassing 68% of workers as of 2018, with particularly acute instances in South and Southeast Asia. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed many workers into informal and more vulnerable jobs, leading to the deepening of existing divides.<sup>3</sup> Ensuring greater public investment in labour market institutions is a challenge for countries.

Gender disparities in the workforce also prevail, with female labour force participation considerably low in certain countries, compounded by limited access to STEM fields and digital skills training, perpetuating socio-economic disparities. Sectors which are seeing stronger growth in jobs post-COVID are those where men dominate (also high-skilled, high paid), which limits opportunities for women's participation and economic gain. Women tend to remain in low skill, low pay sectors which are also characterised by high levels of informality; women therefore tend to lack access to social protection. Women also tend to be found in sectors which are more vulnerable to job loss/displacement due to technological change and climate change and transition. These inequities have huge implications for labour market policies, as well as skills policies and systems. These systems need to be responsive to the needs of women, but also able to adapt to the rapidly changing ecosystem.

The region also faces divergent demographic trends, with some areas experiencing rapid aging populations (e.g., China, Sri Lanka, Thailand) juxtaposed with youthful demographics in others (e.g., Pakistan, Philippines). While youthful populations may be more adept to quickly learn and meet the

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<sup>2</sup> ILO. (2022). Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022: Rethinking sectoral strategies for a human-centred future of work International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> ILO. (2022). Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2022: Rethinking sectoral strategies for a human-centred future of work International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/emerging-labor-market-trends-post-covid-south-asia>

rapidly changing skills requirements, whether skills and education systems can adapt quickly enough to provide those skills is an important question. The global pandemic led to an overall decline in working conditions for many young people, forcing them into agricultural and other precarious jobs. The post-COVID recovery of jobs and decent work among youth segments has been slower in low income countries compared to high income countries, deepening global inequalities. These inequalities will have possible implications for labour migration and social cohesion.<sup>4</sup>

Amidst these dynamics, megatrends such as technological advancements, climate change and the climate transition, demographic shifts, and globalization are reshaping job markets, ushering in new paradigms while displacing traditional employment patterns, and creating new forms of inequality while exacerbating existing ones. The combined impacts of these disruptions is yet to be understood, and there is a real danger of these disruptions leading to worsening labour market outcomes, especially for the vulnerable segments of global south countries which may be ill-prepared to deal with the challenges and make use of the opportunities that simultaneously emerge – in terms of skills and policy ecosystems. It is clear that already- vulnerable groups may be more likely to suffer disproportionate effects of these changes, widening existing disparities.

Beyond pandemic recovery, to facilitate inclusive growth in the Asia Pacific, there is a need to strengthen labour market institutions and empower workers’ and employers’ groups, especially in key sectors. The region is held back by a lack of decent work, gender disparities, high levels of informality and weak labour relations. Strengthening labour market institutions can have wide-reaching impacts on living standards for the region.

## 2.1 Technological advancement

Technological changes that are affecting work ecosystems include automation, artificial intelligence (AI), the platformisation of work, inter alia. These changes are leading to both job displacement and creation, as well as the augmentation of jobs while altering and shifting skills demands.<sup>5</sup> These changes are also leading to a change in the mix of formal versus informal jobs, having a knock-on effect on the level of coverage of social protection as well as labour rights and protections, working conditions, wage inequality, potential for career progression, etc. Evidence suggests that the impacts of these changes are uneven, with women, low-skilled workers, young workers, informal workers and other marginalised groups set to face disproportionate negative effects of these changes (although some high-skilled occupations are seen to face negative impacts).<sup>6</sup> Platformisation of work has been seen to

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<sup>4</sup> ILO. (2023). Has youth employment recovered? ILO Brief. [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_885192.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_885192.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ILO. (2019) Preparing for the future of work: National policy responses in ASEAN +6 [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_717736.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_717736.pdf); AfDB, ADB, EBRD, IDB (African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank). 2018. The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives. Washington, DC; ADB. (2019). The Digital Revolution in Asia and Its Macroeconomic Effects - <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/535846/adbi-wp1029.pdf> -

<sup>3</sup> AfDB, ADB, EBRD, IDB (African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank). 2018. The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives. Washington, DC; JIN. (2022). Technology and the Future of Work: Artificial Intelligence. [https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/technology-and-the-future-of-work\\_oct\\_2022.pdf](https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/technology-and-the-future-of-work_oct_2022.pdf); Hegewisch, Ariane & Bendick, Marc & Gault, Barbara & Hartmann, Heidi. (2016). Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women’s Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs. ; Hegewisch, Ariane & Childers, Chandra & Hartmann, Heidi. (2019). Women, Automation, and the Future of Work; ) Brussevich, M., Dabla-Norris,

reinforce existing ('offline') gender norms that limit women's participation in the labour market, reinforce the precarity that women and other informal sector workers already face, and lead to women being stuck in low-paying roles, overall leading to poorer labour market outcomes for women.<sup>7</sup> Technological advancements leading to the comparative costs of labour versus robots changing, also brings about concerns of reshoring/near-shoring of certain industries such as manufacturing and business process outsourcing; some of these segments are more or less feminized than others, and involve lower levels of skill, therefore potentially leading to uneven effects. While a little more is known about the deployment of AI tools for routine task (including robotics), little is known about the deployment of AI tools such as generative AI in less routine tasks, especially in creative occupations. The ILO's recent estimation of the impact of generative AI on jobs in high-income countries, suggests that the technology will overall have an augmenting effect, at least in the short run, particularly for knowledge workers.<sup>8</sup> Little is understood about how these impacts are manifesting in lower income countries, where labour markets already face high levels of inequality, costly infrastructure, relatively lower skill and wage levels to adapt, low levels of digital skills, inter alia. If the augmenting effects are similarly applicable to lower income countries, this could potentially exacerbate inequalities between higher socio-economic groups (i.e., knowledge workers), versus lower groups. The rapid digitization of economies over the past decade -- especially during the Covid-19 pandemic— has also created opportunities for using big data to better understand the labour market in near-real time for labour market policy, though data limitations must be well understood and taken into consideration before conclusions are drawn based on this data.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 Climate change and the climate transition

Climate change impacts labour markets across a majority of economic sectors, both in quantity *and* quality of jobs.<sup>10</sup> Some sectors such as agriculture may be more vulnerable, and therefore, the impact on L-LMIC countries could be more because more people work in agriculture in L-LMIC Asia; these jobs are already more likely to lack decent conditions. On the one hand, the direct impact of climate change which manifests as global warming, ecological disasters and extinction of species will have consequences on job markets, such as deteriorating working conditions, reduced working hours, reduced labour productivity, displacement of jobs, etc. On the other hand, the solution to climate change and progress towards sustainability by transitioning to a low carbon economy (or the greening of economies) will have an impact on the job market through the structural changes it entails,

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E., and Khalid, S. (2019). Is Technology Widening the Gender Gap? Automation and the Future of Female Employment. IMF Working Paper; Gmyrek, P., Berg, J., Bescond, D. Generative AI and jobs: A global analysis of potential effects on job quantity and quality. ILO Working Paper 96. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2023

<sup>7</sup> JustJobs Network. (2023). Empowerment or Exploitation: Global Perspectives on Women's Work in the Platform Economy; Ecosystems of Engagement: Digital Platforms and Women's Work in Sri Lanka and India [https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/empowerment-or-exploitation-global-perspectives-on-womens-work-in-the-platform-economy\\_may-2023.pdf](https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/empowerment-or-exploitation-global-perspectives-on-womens-work-in-the-platform-economy_may-2023.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Gmyrek, P., Berg, J., Bescond, D. Generative AI and jobs: A global analysis of potential effects on job quantity and quality. ILO Working Paper 96. Geneva: International Labour Office, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> <https://lirneasia.net/2022/02/exploring-the-use-of-online-job-portals-for-labour-market-analysis/>

<sup>10</sup> Harris, J. M., & Roach, B. (2017). Environmental and natural resource economics: A contemporary approach. Routledge. [http://students.aiu.edu/submissions/profiles/resources/onlineBook/H9K3x5\\_Environmental%20and%20Natural%20Resource%20Economics%202017.pdf](http://students.aiu.edu/submissions/profiles/resources/onlineBook/H9K3x5_Environmental%20and%20Natural%20Resource%20Economics%202017.pdf)



with job creation, new skills coming into demand, changes in work practice, and so on.<sup>11</sup> The effects of these changes will in conjunction with those happening in other realms are yet unknown; for example AI/technology revolutions could mean not just new jobs and skills but also a change in the number of jobs that can be created. Which sectors will be the net gainers vs the net losers is yet to be understood. Difficulties are more pronounced for developing countries which may be majorly driven by carbon intensive sectors which employ large numbers of low skilled workers.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the effects within Global South job markets may be divergent. For example, workers in certain sectors such as agriculture and construction are more exposed to heat stress; workers in these sectors are low skilled, and often not formal and thus outside of the ambit of social protection; given the high level of women employed in agriculture, they are thus also more likely to be impacted by effects of heat stress than men. Evidence suggests that women have a harder time reskilling to fit into these new roles than men. Therefore there are clear equity challenges to be understood and addressed in this area., With these kinds of inequalities arising, it is critical that policies and institution prepared and able to adapt in a way that ensures marginalised groups are not disproportionately affected, and that not excluded from the new opportunities arising through these structural changes. It is crucial to ensure that everyone – women, youth, rural populations, low-skilled workers, persons with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, inter alia -- has the ability to adapt and reskill as easily as each other to fit into these new roles.

### 2.3 Demographic changes

The three key demographic trends that are affecting various labour markets in the region are ageing populations in some countries (e.g., Sri Lanka, Thailand), more youthful populations in others (e.g., Pakistan, Philippines), and high levels of migration in others (e.g., Afghanistan, India).

Increasing aging populations combined with lower fertility rates place a strain on the ability of middle-income countries to provide old-age pension and provide universal healthcare. This is exacerbated by the size of informal economies as informal workers make minimal contributions to social security provisions.<sup>13</sup> The impacts of increased (unpaid) care burden falls disproportionately on women, and puts women more at risk of falling into poverty in old age.<sup>14</sup> Further, it limits their ability to work and earn in their working years (providing for their retirement/future needs), given the pressure of both childcare and elder care, plus other household duties. The estimated lifetime employment-related costs to women of providing unpaid care have been estimated in the US, taking into account not just the loss of lifetime earnings (due to curtailment of employment, reduced working hours, etc.), but also their subsequent retirement income, amounting to the equivalent of 15% of what women

<sup>11</sup> Bowen, A., & Kuralbayeva, K. (2015). Looking for green jobs: the impact of green growth on employment. Grantham Research Institute Working Policy Report. London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1-28.

<http://portal.gms->

[eoc.org/uploads/resources/3382/attachment/Looking\\_for\\_green\\_jobs\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_green\\_growth\\_on\\_employment\\_GGI\\_Grantham\\_Research\\_Institute\\_on\\_Climate\\_Change\\_on\\_the\\_Environment\\_0.pdf](http://portal.gms-eoc.org/uploads/resources/3382/attachment/Looking_for_green_jobs_the_impact_of_green_growth_on_employment_GGI_Grantham_Research_Institute_on_Climate_Change_on_the_Environment_0.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Van der Ree, K. (2019). Promoting green jobs: Decent work in the transition to low-carbon, green economies. In *The ILO@ 100* (pp. 248-272). Brill Nijhoff.

[https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/37968/9789004399013\\_webready\\_content\\_text.pdf#page=269](https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/37968/9789004399013_webready_content_text.pdf#page=269)

<sup>13</sup> ILO. (2019) Preparing for the future of work: National policy responses in ASEAN +6

[https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_717736.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_717736.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> ILO. (2018). *Game Changers: Women and the Future of Work in Asia and the Pacific*

could earn over a lifetime.<sup>15</sup> Similar estimates for the Asia Pacific could help to better prepare countries to prepare for these shifts.

There are therefore significant opportunities in the care economy in these countries, in terms of job creation; however many of these jobs remain unpaid and informal, with poor working conditions. Technological solutions to assist in care work are technically feasible,<sup>16</sup> but economic feasibility in L-LMIC settings is a question.

Many nations across Asia are experiencing a demographic dividend where the working age population is greater than dependent population (elderly and child populations). This youth bulge represents an opportunity for economic growth through an increased labour force participation rate but simultaneously creates economic and social challenges related to unemployment if they are not absorbed by the labour force. A key driver of unemployment is the gap between skills and education and the demands of the labour market,<sup>17</sup> pointing towards the need for education and skills policies to be rethought. The Covid-19 pandemic worsened youth unemployment in the Asia Pacific as nearly half of all youth workers in the region (47%) are employed in the four sectors that were hit hardest by the crisis (wholesale/retail trade, manufacturing, business services, and accommodation/food services).<sup>18</sup> It also worsened working conditions for young workers, as they shifted to agriculture in large numbers.<sup>19</sup> This makes them more vulnerable to job losses than older workers. The impact of generative AI on sectors such as the business process outsourcing sector, and other sectors which have previously provided relatively decent work opportunities for young workers, is also an area that requires exploration; on the one hand, such developments could lead to job displacement among some kinds of workers, while on the other hand, certain kinds of jobs could be augmented. How this manifests among vulnerable workers versus less vulnerable workers' is yet to be seen.

It is expected that low-skilled labour migration will prevail in Asia in the coming decade. Major source countries include Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam. These countries have relatively lower per capita incomes, abundant labour supply, and lower human development indicators. Major destinations include Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong. These countries have higher per capita incomes, face labour shortages, and have higher human development.<sup>20</sup> Migration is driven by income considerations, but also the lack of quality jobs and high unemployment, and increasingly climate-induced migration from origin countries. Increasing demands for care workers due to aging populations in the destination countries, as well as economic

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, R.W., Smith, K.E., and Butrica, B.A. (2023). Lifetime Employment-Related Costs to Women of Providing Family Care. [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/Mothers-Families-Work/Lifetime-caregiving-costs\\_508.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/Mothers-Families-Work/Lifetime-caregiving-costs_508.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> ILO. (2019) Preparing for the future of work: National policy responses in ASEAN +6 [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_717736.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_717736.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> JustJobs Network. (2022). Reimagining Employability for the 21st-century: 10 Million Apprentices in 10 Years. [https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/reimagining-employability-for-the-21st-century-10-million-apprentices-in-10-years\\_aug\\_2022.pdf](https://justjobsnetwork.org/files/reimagining-employability-for-the-21st-century-10-million-apprentices-in-10-years_aug_2022.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> International Labour Organization, Bangkok (Thailand), and Asian Development Bank, Manila (Philippines). (2020). [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_753369.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_753369.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> ILO. (2023). ILO Brief: Has youth employment recovered? [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_885192.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_885192.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> ILO. (2023). Labour Migration in Asia: What Does the Future Hold? [https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2023-07/iom\\_labour-migration-in-asia\\_what-does-the-future-hold.pdf](https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2023-07/iom_labour-migration-in-asia_what-does-the-future-hold.pdf)

transformation of middle-income countries creating infrastructure jobs relying on migrants.<sup>21</sup> While automation is unlikely to change migration trends of low-skilled workers within the region, they are at the risk of job loss unless provided access to skills development opportunities.<sup>22</sup> Intra-country migration --driven by economic needs as well as increasing frequency and intensity of climate shocks-- also presents major challenges. Often this migration is from rural to urban causing cities to expand (Asian cities are growing at alarming rates), and impacts the demographic mix of labour in both the origin and destination.

Women being employed more often in vulnerable sectors (e.g., those where they face disproportionate risk of automation, or climate-induced job loss) and informal jobs lacking labour rights and protections, as well as income disparities within origin countries pushes women to migrate in search of higher pay. The rising care sector in ageing economies presents opportunities for employment for women migrant workers. However, as this sector mostly falls under the informal economy, women migrant workers lack protection from existing labour laws and protections.

Nations able to wither these challenges by reskilling and transitioning their workforce will be better able to wither climate shocks, have inclusive growth and cohesive societies. However, the ability of countries to manage this transition is highly uneven. Research is sparse on what skills are needed for L-LMICs to withstand the challenges of climate change and the climate transition. How prepared workers are to use and interact with AI tools in their respective sector of work is also relatively unknown. Should skills development strategies be undertaken at sectoral or national level, or should they also account for global labour supply trends and how could be this be fine-tuned? Plenty of case studies, and a few attempts at quantifying the impacts of technology and climate change on jobs do exist. But few consider all three challenges and how they manifest-- especially from the lens of gender equity and inclusion. There is a need for high quality South-centric knowledge that takes a holistic view of these challenges (as opposed to a siloed approach), and is able to provide solutions to ensure a sustainable and inclusive future of work for the Global South.

### 3 Research priorities

The research gap is not case studies on the impact of technology or climate or demographic changes on jobs – many have been written on Uber drivers, care workers, and waste disposal workers, inter alia. The need is to understand how these three mega trends (technology change, climate change and the climate transition, and demographic changes) are, in combination, manifesting in labour markets, how these changes are impacting (positively or negatively) job creation and displacement, wage, and other labour outcomes. It is necessary to understand how these impacts are taking place either on the whole, or sector-wise or on a particular group of people. There is a need to document the inequalities of these impacts, on different sectors, job categories, population groups, etc.

There is also a need to examine the implications of these mega changes (verticals) from the angle multiple perspectives/entry points (horizontal):

- Education and skills gaps, needs, and policy

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

- Inclusive access to labour protections and rights (including access to social insurance for those in non-standard forms of employment/ those informally employed)
- Data challenges in understanding how these megatrends manifest in labour markets (including identification, acquisition, and utilisation of novel data sources to this end)
- Care economy challenges and opportunities

Successful proposals will address these issues and challenges through the lens of gender, equity and inclusion.

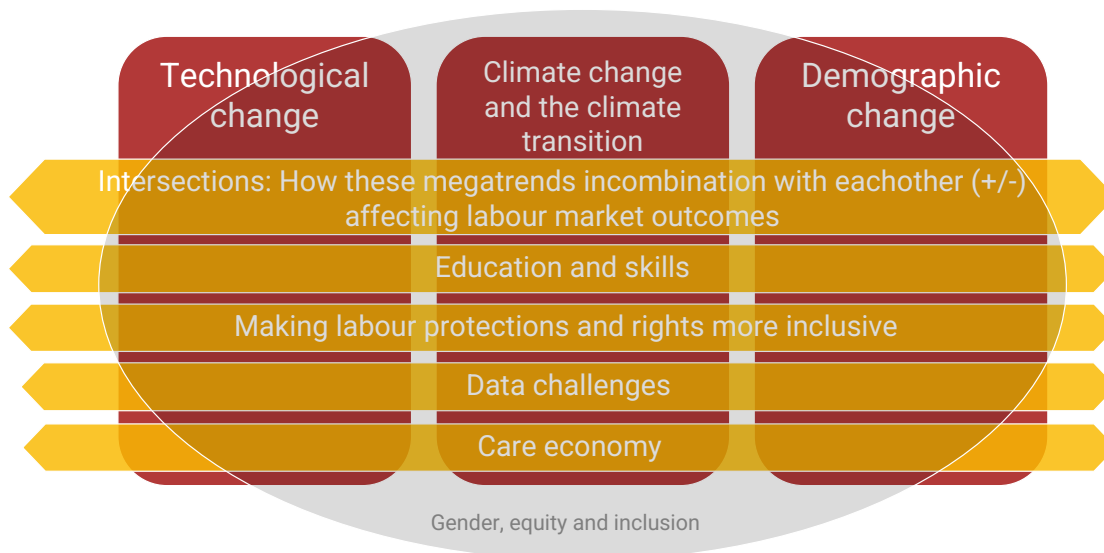


FIGURE 1: PRIORITY AREAS FOR RESEARCH

Proposed research **must**:

- Be relevant to an **L-LMIC country in Asia** as defined by the World Bank
- Address **at least two of the three mega changes** (verticals; see Figure 1) that are the focus of the research network; preferably all three key challenges should be addressed
- Have **gender, equity and inclusion** considerations as the central priority of the research.
- Broadly address one or more of the following high-level research questions (Section 3.1.1) and any sub-questions relevant under each.
  - Applicants are free to broaden narrow down the scope as appropriate (e.g. take a regional view or a national view; to explore the gig economy only instead of all jobs, focus on one sector of the economy etc.), add or modify the research questions within the broad thematic, to add sub-questions under each, and to add new questions that are relevant to the thematic focus of this call for proposals. Proponents should identify context-relevant priorities in their proposal.

### 3.1.1 High-level research areas

1. What are the expected changes in the quantity and quality of jobs in light of digital technology and AI, climate change and demographic changes (due to aging populations, lowering birth rates and migration) that are ongoing? How are these changes likely to be distributed across countries, sectors of the economy and job categories? How are these changes likely to be distributed among people at the intersections of various forms of marginalization (including but not limited to gender)?
2. How can social protection systems be designed to ensure that those that are negatively impacted due technology, climate change, and demographic change are not further marginalized? What is

the social compact that is required in the future to enable positive change and what is the role of the state, employers, labour unions and civil society?

3. How can countries build a workforce that is adaptable and positioned for lifelong learning, as countries at to transition into just, gender responsive, sustainable fair work that meets the challenges of (and makes use of) technology adoption, the transition to low-carbon economies in the context of ongoing demographic challenges? How can skills ecosystems be made responsive and ready to adapt the fast-changing skilling needs?
4. What are the models of stimulating the delivery of priority skills to meet the future needs for just, gender responsive, sustainable fair work in the context of technology adoption, transition to low-carbon economies, and demographic change? What is the role of the state, and within the state, of national innovation systems, the education systems (including vocational training institutions) and regulatory institutions in facilitating this transition? What role is there for non-state actors including private sector and civil society?

### **3.1.1.1 Example research questions**

The following are examples of potential research questions which could be addressed, though applicants should propose questions which are of relevance and priority in the policy contexts that their proposed research will cover; however this list is *not* exhaustive and is for illustrative purposes only:

- How does platformisation impact structural barriers for gender equality such as the care economy, and how it can be leveraged to accelerate change towards the 5Rs?
- What role does AI have in reshaping the future of work in highly informal economies, and in environments where the majority of SMEs operate in analogue?
- How are advanced digital technologies, like generative AI, and the transition to low-carbon economies impacting employment?
- To what extent are countries ready to transition and develop skills development systems that are prepared for technological and/or climate transformation?
- What are the skills gaps that are emerging as a result of job displacement due to automation, reshoring, climate change/transition, particularly for women, youth, and vulnerable populations who may be disproportionately affected? How do these manifest in different social/economic/policy contexts? What kinds of policies are needed? How can we tell if they are working?
- What are the policy changes required to ensure secondary and tertiary education graduates have the education and skills for the jobs of the future? How do the requirements change depending on which stage of the demographic transition the country is in?
- What new skill sets, policy frameworks, and regulations are needed to promote quality and secure jobs and enhance economic mobility in the face of climate and technological transformations. How are they gendered in their acquisition?
- How can social protection systems be adapted and leveraged to respond to changing forms of work and ensure effective protections, preventing further marginalization of those impacted by technology, climate change, and demographic shifts? How can they be made more inclusive toward informal workers, ageing and migrant populations?
- As an enabler of women's labour force participation, can and should the care sector be formalised? How can working conditions in this segment be improved? Is there a role that technology can play (e.g., via digital work platforms, digital finance tools, etc.)?
- How is technology displacing/creating/augmenting jobs in the care economy in the context of Asia's ageing populations? How is climate change and the climate transition compounding or impacting the care needs of a society, and what are the solutions to ensure the gap is filled?

- Are there sectors that are most at threat due to the identified transitions in technology, demographics, and climate? Are these the same sectors that should be targeted as a priority for future-proofing the workforce for sustainable economic growth at national level? What differentiated strategies are needed in the response, and how should it be funded?
- What are possible policy level solutions that might help mitigate the worst of these threats? Under what contexts would some of these policies work?
- What are novel data sources and methods that can help to understand how these megatrends manifest in labour markets? What is required to enable researchers to access this kind of data?
- How do different manifestations of climate change affect job categories, and how can people in these vulnerable job categories be identified using novel data sources to answer policy problems (e.g., climate-induced migrants, low skilled workers displaced by reshoring)
- In light of the mega changes taking place, what would the net-system changes would look like? What sectors would be the gainers/losers and how can they absorb the displaced workforce? In such contexts, what can policy systems do (and how) to re-establish the workforce with new skillsets?

## 4 Expectations of projects

### 4.1 High quality research

The Asia Hub expects network research partners to uphold rigorous and high-quality standards in their work, ensuring that the policy insights they generate are based on sound evidence. We strongly encourage the adoption of **multi-method and multi-disciplinary** approaches whenever possible, enabling a comprehensive and diverse understanding of the issues under study. Research methods can include *but are not limited to*:

- Surveys, qualitative research, case studies, data analytics, policy analyses, literature reviews, systematic reviews, impact assessments.

Furthermore, we encourage partners to make meaningful contributions to the advancement of knowledge in the field. This can involve employing novel methods, exploring innovative approaches, or adapting and testing existing frameworks in different contexts. Projects which are policy-relevant and solution-oriented, rather than simply descriptive, will be prioritised in the selection of projects.

### 4.2 Ethical conduct

Ethical conduct in research is also paramount, and we expect network research partners to surpass regulatory requirements, upholding the highest ethical standards throughout their activities. Projects must adhere to high ethical standards in line with [IDRC's Principles of Institutional Research Ethics](#). The [IDRC standard grant agreement](#) further outlines applicable ethics standards. Ideally, projects should include an institutional review board before data collection begins; details of such should be provided in proposals.

### 4.3 Commitment to policy-relevant research and influencing policy

The objective of the network is to bring about changes in policy and practice based on rigorous evidence. As such, all applicants must have a genuine commitment to going beyond production of research outputs. Applicants should have a **demonstrated ability (capabilities and networks) to effectively translate research to policy**. Proposals that demonstrate an understanding of policy priorities and a plan for engaging with national, sub-regional and regional decision makers and stakeholders will be favoured over those that do not.

Network research partners are encouraged to use opportunities that arise as they carry out work in other capacities (e.g., advisory boards, curriculum design consultants) disseminate this work. The Hub will also facilitate policy engagement at regional and international level where necessary.

#### 4.4 Gender, equity and inclusion

A key requirement of the funding is that projects incorporate gender, equity and inclusion considerations into their research questions, study design and intended outcomes, to ensure positive outcomes for excluded or marginalised groups. Inequalities exist across multiple and intersecting categories of identity, including, but not limited to, the following: gender, sexuality, age, class, race, caste, ethnicity, citizenship status, religion, and ability. Taking an intersectional approach to gender equality recognizes these differences and understands diversity as central to advancing equality. Given that gender inequality is a significant barrier across all dimensions of diversity, successful projects should place gender, equity and inclusion considerations at the centre of all activities and approaches. This includes, but is not limited to, the research questions prioritized, all aspects of research design, evaluation and roll out, team composition, and activities related to positioning for uptake, including strategic engagement and synthesis work. Having a gender/equity/inclusion expert as an integral part of the team is mandatory (rather than simple gender representation in team composition).

For additional background, please see [IDRC's Equality Statement](#). Additional resources are available in Annex 1.

Accordingly, proposals should demonstrate how gender, equity and inclusion will be promoted and adopted using an intersectional approach, both with respect to the following: (i) team composition and organizations comprising the research team; and (ii) the design and implementation of the proposed project (not limited to the research questions, methodology, dissemination strategies, etc.).

#### 4.5 Commitment to engagement with other grant recipients in the network

A research network is being set up instead of individual/standalone research projects being funded because the sum is expected to be bigger than the parts. The network design includes ample opportunity for peer learning through exchange of learnings, challenges, expertise, etc. In the early stages, the hub will facilitate connections between research teams engaged in similar research. But over time, it is expected that organic relationships will form. Long term success could include research partners joining together to apply for further funding from other funders, or engaging in policy engagement using learnings from each other's research and so on. The Hub will again facilitate policy engagement at regional and international level where necessary. The Hub will also facilitate periodic feedback from an Advisory Board, comprising of experts in fields relevant to the network, for the larger project, as needed.

On a practical level, the Hub will organize regular convenings (including a monthly convening for all network members (i.e., grant recipients)), a hub launch event, capacity building workshops, dissemination events inter alia. The network members are expected to attend these. While many of these convenings will be online, it is expected that the Hub (LIRNEasia) will organize two in-person meetings and one to two representatives from each network member (grant recipient) will be expected to attend. Furthermore, members of the grant recipient teams may be called upon to provide an expert talk or lead a capacity building session based on their comparative advantages, on occasion.



#### 4.6 Open Access and data management plan

Applicants funded through this program will be expected to comply with IDRCs [Open Access Policy](#) and IDRC Open Data Statement of Principles. Applicants are to submit a Stage 1 Data Management Plan, and to apply ensure network members have data management plans in place. The DMP templates can be found at: <http://www.idrc.ca/en/developing-data-management-plan-guidance-applicants-and-grantees>.

Applicants must publish research findings in the public domain in accordance with IDRC's Open Access Policy, available at <https://idrc-crdi.ca/en/open-access-policy-idrc-funded-project-outputs>. Any associated costs of ensuring open access may be included in the budget.

Any computer programs or software developed using grant funds shall be made available to the public in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution License (described at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> as updated from time to time).

#### 4.7 Knowledge sharing

A key objective of IDRC's Strategy 2030 is to share knowledge for greater uptake and use – increasing the reach and impact that IDRC-supported research has in driving solutions, and in influencing national, regional, and global development agendas, including through synthesizing, and communicating results.

Applicants must explain how their proposal responds to an emerging need, knowledge gap or demand, and they must demonstrate intentionality and identify opportunities to move knowledge (research evidence) into action (policy, social and behavioural change, etc.). As such successful applicants will be expected to develop policy uptake plans with support from the Hub.

Applications must include a knowledge sharing strategy that identifies key knowledge users (audiences), and that describes the anticipated approach to engage these strategic stakeholders (ideally throughout the research process) to support research uptake and use and/or to scale impact (by optimizing beyond original project boundaries). Knowledge sharing plans should be integrated into project proposals – provided the resources required are clearly described, appropriate, and incorporated as part of the overall project budget.

## 5 Technical and methodological support for network members

Successful applicants will receive support in the following areas both in the form of in-person and virtual workshops as well as on on-going basis. The Hub will also organize fire-side chats with policy makers and practitioners to give the research partners greater insights on the use of evidence in the policy process. The hub will also organize opportunities for interacting with scale up partners such as multi-lateral organizations that will provide the research partners the opportunity to take their research findings into the policy process. Academics/researchers partners will support the research partners and the Hub by providing input on research design and reviewing research outputs. A capacity assessment will be performed at the time of contracting to identify the on-going support needs for the grant recipients.



- a. **Research design and methods:** Quantitative methods including representative sample design, survey instrument design and execution; qualitative research design and implementation; data analytics using large sets of secondary data. In particular, if researchers wish to obtain larger data sets (i.e. big data) from sources (e.g. large job platforms), LIRNEasia data scientists can train the research team, or work with the research team to analyse data.
- b. **Research ethics:** Research project risk assessment, measures to mitigate risks associated with data collection and storing, enumerator/moderator training on risk mitigation.
- c. **Intersectional analysis:** To ensure research design, research tools and analysis plans of projects incorporate an intersectional approach to inclusion. Projects will be reviewed with grant recipients at an early stage to identify potential vulnerable groups which need to be accounted for in project design and execution.
- d. **Research synthesis:** Where multiple research methods have been used, how best to combine the results to bring about greater generalizability and applicability.
- e. **Technological transformation and climate change:** Projects will be reviewed through the lens of climate change and related transitions, to identify or adapt research questions and other activities as appropriate to foster work-related outcomes that enable rather than hinder transitions to a low carbon/sustainable economies.
- f. **Communicating research to policy:** Help position results for local and regional uptake by policy makers and practitioners: identifying and engaging with stakeholders; data visualization, story telling, understanding the audience and preparing policy outputs; identifying and preparing for policy windows; rapid response interventions; providing comments during public consultancy process etc
- g. **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning:** defining monitoring and evaluation objectives of the research project, developing customized monitoring and evaluation plan, building internal capacity, facilitating data collection and analysis, research communication, fostering culture of learning
- h. **Technical and financial reporting:** introducing the technical and financial reporting parameters specified by principal funder, IDRC.
- i. **Data acquisition and wrangling:** Private sector companies often possess large amounts of transactional generated data which, if analysed can bring about insights relevant to public policy and social good. However, obtaining this data can be a challenge. If the applicant has a data provider that is willing to discuss the use of its data, then LIRNEasia can provide support during the negotiation stage.

## 6 Grant details

### 6.1 Eligibility criteria

Only full proposals that meet the eligibility criteria will be considered.

### 6.1.1 Legal identity

Applicants must have independent legal identity (or “legal personality”), be able to enter into a contract in their own right and name, have a bank account in their own name where they can receive funds from the Asia Hub (LIRNEasia), and administer funds from, and have the authority and ability to carry out the proposed project activities. If selected after the technical review process, applicants must be able to demonstrate their legal status through written documentation. In the case of consortia, the organization leading the application must have a legal identity as described above, with consortium member organizations also having a legal personality in any of the eligible countries of focus ( See 6.1.4).

### 6.1.2 Eligible organisations

Eligible applicants may include, research institutions, universities, think tanks, associations, civil society organizations, and non-profit organisations. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Eligible applicants may have partners who fit into the above categories, but in addition may bring in partners that include private and public sector partners as implementing organisations. However, funds from successful projects may not flow to the following categories of organisations:

1. Private organisations
2. Government organisations and institutions (with the exception of public research and educational institutions)
3. UN agencies

In addition, funds may not flow to individuals who are part- or full-time employees of the public sector/government, with the exception of state-owned universities or public research institutions. All project CVS should include a signed declaration that the individual is not employed (on any basis, part- or full-time) by government (with the exception of state-owned universities or public research institutions), and is legally and contractually allowed to receive payments for work on research or other work outside of their current employment.

### 6.1.3 Country presence in an Asian L-LMIC

The applicant (organisation that will enter into a contract with the Asia Hub, i.e., LIRNEasia as per 6.1.1.) must be an organization headquartered in an Asian L-LMIC. The proposed work must be conducted in one or more of the countries listed below (i.e., these countries/their populations should be the subject of the proposed research). The applicant may have partners and/or experts based in countries outside of the eligible country list, however, majority of the funding must be spent in the eligible country/countries.

Eligible countries include:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam.<sup>23</sup>

Notes:

- i. **Afghanistan:** Applicants based in Afghanistan or proposing research on Afghanistan may apply for funds from *either* the Asia hub (i.e., through this call) *or* from *South West Asian*

<sup>23</sup> i.e., Low or lower middle-income country in Asia as per the latest World Bank classification

(<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/new-world-bank-group-country-classifications-income-level-fy24>); Democratic People’s Republic of Korea excluded.

and Northern African (i.e., MENA) hub based in the American University of Beirut which will issue a similar call in 2024. Applicants may not apply to both calls.

- ii. **India and Myanmar:** Given current challenges that restrict the ability of research institutions based in these two countries to receive foreign funds, the Asia hub is only able to support India-focused or Myanmar-focused research through:
  - a. Institutions based outside of the country (who are based in another Asian L-LMIC); or
  - b. Multi-country projects run by institutions based in another Asian L-LMIC, with a local country expert (i.e., for India or Myanmar) on the project team.
- iii. **Iran:** Applicants based in/proposing research in Iran should apply to the FutureWORKS regional hub for the *South West and Northern Africa* (i.e., MENA) region, led by the American University of Beirut.
- iv. Proposals where funds are to be spent in countries classified as ‘high risk’ in IDRC’s categorisation at the time application will be subject to additional levels of screening. Regional balance will be considered in the selection of proposals, to enable the development of a regional narrative at the end of the five year period of the Hub’s activities.

#### 6.1.4 Expertise/experience requirement

Proposals must be submitted by an eligible organization, that has a demonstrated track record of producing rigorous research related to at least at least two of the following:

- **Labour force skills, technology adoption in labour, climate change and climate transition, gender responsive climate policies, technology policy, skills development, and innovation systems.**
- A demonstrated ability (capabilities and networks) to effectively translate research to policy.

## 6.2 Funding available and grant size

We hope to fund a minimum of 6 grants for this first round.<sup>24</sup> The following kinds of grants will be funded:

### 1. Single or multi-country research grants (USD50,000-100,000)

Applicants can either apply for single country projects or multi-country projects.. The grant period will be for 18 months. It is expected that grants over USD40,000 should have a multi-country or multi-sectoral dimension. Grants below USD40,000 may be used for research projects with a smaller scope (e.g., single country, single sector, etc).

### 2. Large dataset acquisition/data wrangling grants (USD10,000 (part 1) + up to USD 40,000 (part 2, conditional on successful outcome of part 1)

Applicants can apply for two-part grants to enable them to negotiate and access large datasets which can help them to answer a research question which addresses a research priority detailed in this call for proposals. Subject to the data being successfully obtained, *and* the data being useable to answer the proposed research question within the project timeframe, a second part of the grant may be obtained to fulfil the proposed research.

- a. The total grant size (i.e., including both parts) is a maximum of USD50,000, which will be issued in two stages: (1) USD 10,000 to negotiate and verify dataset(s); (2), subject to data being successfully

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<sup>24</sup> It is envisaged that a similarly structured call for proposals for a second round of grants will be issued 2025/26.

obtained and the proposed research question being approved, a second stage of up to USD50,000. The grant period is 6 months for the first stage and a further 12 months for the second stage. Applicants should submit grants for the full proposal (two-parts) in response to this call. The kinds of datasets are eligible for this kind of grant are those that have previously not been in the public domain (from the public or private sector), and will ideally be the type of data that has to be analysed through machine learning techniques and can be combined with other datasets to yield new insights.

All grants are subject to sufficient funds being made available to LIRNEasia via IDRC by the Parliament of Canada.

## 7 Proposal guidelines

All proposals must be in English and submitted via an online application. The online application form will request the applicants to provide the following information. Categories identified below are compulsory unless it states, “if applicable”.

### MAIN PROPOSAL

#### Section A: Project details

- *Lead organisation details:*
  - *Legal name of organization*
  - *Principle investigator (PI; PI must be from the lead organisation)*
  - *Country in which the organisation is physically present/operational*
  - *Legally registered address of the organisation*
  - *Mailing address (if different from above)*
  - *Type of organisation (e.g., think tank; research centre; NGO, etc.; include details such as whether the organisation is located within a university, part of another organisation, etc.).*
  - *Contact information of the project leader (email, phone number)*
  - *Website*
- *Details of other organisations that are part of the proposal (in case of consortium)*
  - *Legal name of organization*
  - *Country in which the organisation is physically present/operational*
  - *Legally registered address of the organisation*
  - *Type of organisation (e.g., think tank; research centre; NGO, etc.; include details such as whether the organisation is located within a university, part of another organisation, etc.).*
  - *Website*
- *Title of project*
- *Countries of focus*
- *Project duration (in months)*

#### Section B: Abstract (300 words)

*Please provide a short abstract of the project, encompassing the vision and objectives of the proposed research and activities. It should be written clearly for a non-technical audience. Avoid acronyms and technical jargon. Describe the development problem, the*

*purpose/objective of the project and expected results in the form of project outputs and outcomes.*

**Section C: Problem identification and rationale (max 1,500 words)**

- *Describe the problem/s you would like to address through the proposed project*
- *Provide the context and background to the problem/s you have identified*
- *Describe how the identified problem/s are aligned with the objectives noted in the Call for Proposals*
- *Provide a brief review of relevant literature in relation to the proposed project*

**Section D: Research questions (max 250 words)**

- *Clearly state the identified research questions*

**Section E: Research methodology (max 2,000 words)**

- *Outline the study design, conceptual framework, research methods, and type of analysis.*
- *Describe why the selected study design, conceptual framework, research methods are best suited to answer the research question/s you identified.*
- *Briefly describe your expected outputs*

**Section F: Gender, equity, and inclusion (max 750 words)**

- *Describe how gender, equity and inclusion considerations have been incorporated in the proposed research; this may be for example through research questions which examine disparities/ gaps, or targets marginalised groups, research designs and methodologies which incorporate gender equity and inclusion as well as dissemination strategies which target and include diverse sets of stakeholders, inter alia.*
- *Describe how will gender, equity, and inclusion will be incorporated into the MEL mechanism?*

**Section G: Risks and mitigation strategies (max 500 words)**

- *Identify any potential political, economic, social, technological, environmental or legal risks that may impede the execution of the proposed project.*
- *Describe the project's adaptive management approach, and how it will manage and address the identified risks.*

**Section H: Research ethics and safety protocols (max 300 words)**

- *Provide details of the potential ethical issues in relation to the proposed research, the steps that will be taken to ensure the highest ethical standards are maintained while ensuring the greatest protection of research participants.*

**Section I: Monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan (max 500 words)**

- *Provide an outline of the theory of change and how the proposed project will be monitored and evaluated*
- *Describe the intended beneficiaries and the expected outcomes of the proposed project*
- *Briefly describe how you plan to use the learnings*

**Section J: Research dissemination/knowledge sharing plan (max 500 words)**

- *Describe the identified policy impact pathways to ensure the uptake of the findings of your proposed research*
- *Identify specific stakeholders and audiences you want to reach and describe how you will do so*

- Outline how relevant stakeholders will be involved during the proposed project and how the proposed activities will ensure their engagement with the findings.
- A theory of change may be provided to support this, however it is not essential.

### Section K: Organization Capabilities (max 1,000 words)

- Provide a description of your organization including its research capacity and its capacity (including access to relevant stakeholders) for policy influence
- Provide details (Project title, funder, grant amount, project description, project duration) of a minimum of two past/on-going projects that best describe your ability to carry out the proposed research
- Provide examples of taking research to policymakers, describing the strategy(ies) employed and the outcome.

### Section L: Team structure

- List key personnel and their roles in the project including the specific tasks that they will be assigned.

## ANNEXURES TO THE PROPOSAL

### Annex 1: CVs of key personnel

- Add CVs of the key project personnel (including PI), highlighting relevant expertise and experience
  - Up to five (5) CVs may be included, each no more than five (5) pages
  - CVs to include declaration that the individual is not employed (on any basis, part- or full-time) by government (with the exception of state-owned universities or public research institutions), and is legally and contractually allowed to receive payments for work on research or other work outside of their current employment.

### Annex 2: Budget

- Include completed budget as a PDF, include notes and assumptions in IDRC's budget format available at: <https://idrc-crds.ca/en/proposal-budget>
- See [Section 9](#) for detailed instructions on preparing the budget.

### Annex 3: Workplan

- Include completed workplan along with Gantt Chart

### Annex 4: Data Management Plan

Include Stage 1 Data Management Plan, as per IDRC's guidelines available at: <http://www.idrc.ca/en/developing-data-management-plan-guidance-applicants-and-grantees>.

## 8 Proposal evaluation criteria

Evaluation of proposals and final selection proposals will be based on the Hub's assessment of the submitted proposal and budget. LIRNEasia will also consider regional (geographical) as well as thematic balance of the proposals, as well as focus on gender in the selection of proposals. The following table provides an *indicative* marking scheme for the evaluation of proposals.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria	% allocated
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<p><b>Alignment with objectives and likelihood of/potential for policy impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal has clearly demonstrated that the applicant has understood the objectives specified in the call for proposals.</li> <li>• The proposal clearly identifies the relevance of the proposed research to the current policy debates.</li> <li>• The proposal demonstrates an understanding of the policy context and shows capability, as well as a clear strategy to take research to policy, access to key stakeholders including policymakers, to enable policy impact.</li> </ul>	30%
<p><b>Project design and research methodology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal presents an appropriate project design to best achieve the intended results within the funding period.</li> <li>• The proposal has an appropriate methodology to address research question/s and clearly states why the study design, conceptual framework, research methods are best suited to answer the research question/s identified</li> <li>• The proposal includes clear strategies for adaptive management and mitigation of risks.</li> <li>• The proposal identifies key ethical issues with regards to the research and ways of addressing them.</li> </ul>	40%
<p><b>Gender, Equity, and Inclusion and MEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal clearly states how Gender, Equity, and Inclusion will be incorporated into the project during the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, capacity building, MEL, and research communication processes.</li> <li>• The proposal has a theory of change and has clearly identified the means for monitoring the progress, evaluating the outputs and outcomes, learning from the results and adapting accordingly</li> </ul>	15%
<p><b>Organizational experience and key personnel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has demonstrated that it has a strong track record in undertaking projects similar to the activities proposed.</li> <li>• The proposed team has the relevant expertise and capacity to carry out the activities outlined in the proposal, including a gender expert</li> </ul>	15%
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and coherent plans for the use of available funding, appropriate for the proposed activities</li> </ul>	5%

## 9 Budget guidelines

- Applicants must complete and submit an estimated budget in USD using the budget template provided. Complete all tabs in the budget template except the summary tab which will be generated automatically.
- Applicants must allocate funds for airfare to attend in-person Hub convenings (2 meetings over 2 years) conducted by LIRNEasia in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Accommodation, meals and airport transfers *in Sri Lanka* will be provided by LIRNEasia.
- Please add any in-kind contributions or matching funds in the appropriate tabs. Once completed, please sign where appropriate, save as a PDF and submit the file along with your application. All budgets must be in USD.



- As principal funding for this Call for Proposals comes from IDRC, Canada, please refer to the IDRC [Guidelines for Acceptable Project Expenditures](#) for a list of eligible expenses, as well as the [guidelines for specific to FutureWORKS Asia](#) (Annex 2) For general information on budgeting please refer to [the General IDRC Funding Guidelines](#).

## 10 Submission process

### 10.1 Components of proposals

Proposals shall include the following components:

1. Main proposal:
  - Single document containing Sections A through L as specified in Section 7 of this document.
2. Annexures:
  - Annex 1: CVs (up to 5, maximum of 5 pages each)
  - Annex 2: Budget
  - Annex 3: Workplan
  - Annex 4: Data Management Plan
  - As additional annexures,
    - Any letters of commitment/agreement from the leading and collaborating institutions, and a description on how the different partners, key stakeholders and institutions will collaborate in the initiative.
    - Any letters of other institutions willing to collaborate or support the study in various ways should be attached. Letters should indicate the organization's interest in the hub's creation and proposed research theme. It should indicate the potential ways the organization might assist or cooperate with the hub's management or research teams. It should identify relationships, past and current, with individuals involved in submitting the proposals.

### 10.2 Deadline for submission

Proposals must be *received* by LIRNEasia by **1800 hrs** Indian Standard Time (IST) on 19 July 2024.

### 10.3 Submission instructions

Applicants should submit complete proposals to [futureworks@lirneasia.net](mailto:futureworks@lirneasia.net) with the subject header "**<APPLICANT NAME> PROPOSAL FOR FUTUREWORKS ASIA ROUND 1**" in PDF **and** an edit-enabled version (e.g., in Microsoft Word) version. In the event of any discrepancy between the PDFs and the editable version, the PDFs shall govern.

Proposals should be submitted in **English**

The applicant shall bear all costs associated with preparation and submission of the application as specified in this call for proposals, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the proposal evaluation. LIRNEasia shall have no obligation to any applicant to reimburse any costs incurred in preparing the proposals, whatever the result. Submission of a proposal in response to this call by an applicant will be interpreted by as the applicant's acceptance of this condition.



## 10.4 Clarifications, information session, and FAQs

Inquiries related to the call and application process should be sent by e-mail to [futureworks@lirneasia.net](mailto:futureworks@lirneasia.net) with the subject header “<ORGANISATION NAME> CLARIFICATION FUTUREWORKS ASIA” before 21 June 2024.

LIRNEasia will respond to all such clarifications through an **information session** to be held in the week of 24 June 2024. Exact date and time of the information session will be published on [www.lirneasia.net/futureworks-asia](http://www.lirneasia.net/futureworks-asia). **Only registered participants will be allowed to join therefore applicants are encouraged to register through the following form:**  
<https://forms.office.com/r/HK9kZ7vAnw?origin=lprLink>

LIRNEasia will respond to all such clarifications through an **information session** to be held in the week of 24 June 2024. Exact date and time of the information session will be published on [www.lirneasia.net/futureworks-asia](http://www.lirneasia.net/futureworks-asia). **Only registered participants will be allowed to join therefore applicants are encouraged to register through the following form:**  
<https://forms.office.com/r/HK9kZ7vAnw?origin=lprLink>

## 11 Selection process

Responding to this call is the first step in the application process for potentially securing funding for your proposal.

Applications will first be screened for eligibility using the eligibility criteria outlined above (pre-selection).

The screened proposals are then assessed by the internal review committee. This committee is comprised of LIRNEasia staff from different related disciplines, including those with expertise in gender/diversity/inclusion, and knowledge translation, who will assess the applications according to the evaluation criteria outlined above.

LIRNEasia’s evaluation of the proposals, and the resulting decision shall be final and will not be subject to appeal.

Successfully pre-selected proposals will receive specific comments from the reviewers to be addressed, including suggested changes to the budget. The applicant will have a period of two weeks to resubmit the proposal with the required changes addressed. Subject to satisfactorily addressing of reviewer concerns on the proposal and budget, the proposal will be recommended for funding and therefore pass to the next stage.

Upon notification of pre-selection, applicants will also be asked to submit documents pertaining to the institutional assessment (see Section 11. 1.3). Given the time it might take to prepare some of the documents (e.g., funder reference letters), applicants are advised to ensure these documents are ready, should they be pre-selected.

LIRNEasia will have no obligation to issue any funds prior to the applicant returning an executed Grant Agreement issued to them by LIRNEasia.

## 11.1 Post selection requirements

### 11.1.1 Proposal and budget finalization

As noted, prior to finalizing a Grant Agreement, LIRNEasia reserves the right to request any revisions to the submitted proposal and budget. A revised proposal with the necessary revisions must be returned in a timely manner to LIRNEasia.

### 11.1.2 Country clearance requirements

In some cases, LIRNEasia's funder, IDRC may require additional or alternative country approval processes to be followed (e.g., if the country is considered high risk, or where IDRC has existing scientific and technical cooperation agreements, or other practical or legal restrictions). LIRNEasia will advise the applicants of such instances if their proposal is selected on the technical basis.

A grant agreement will only be issued if and once country clearance(s) is/are obtained according to the IDRC guidelines, to be provided on a case-by-case basis. LIRNEasia reserves the right to not pursue the funding of a selected project if the country approval is not secured within a reasonable amount of time, as delays would jeopardize the timely start and completion of the research hub activities.

### 11.1.3 Institutional assessment

Any pre-selected applicants must undergo an institutional assessment prior to final selection. This will include the review of documents including but not limited to the below-listed items, which the applicant will be advised on at an appropriate point in the process:

- i) Most recent audited financial statements<sup>25</sup> (including but not limited to: Balance Sheet, Statement of Income and Expenses or Profit and Loss, and Statement of Cash Flow; Notes to the Financial Statements; Audit Report; Any Management or Internal Control Letters, and related follow-up response)
- ii) Current organizational chart
- iii) Operational and human resources manuals
- iv) Finance and administration manuals
- v) Policy/procedure for procurement
- vi) List of active external donors and their current contributions
- vii) Latest annual report
- viii) Reference letters (minimum two) from previous funders

After an institutional assessment of an applicant's organization is performed, LIRNEasia may identify operational or financial weaknesses that could pose some administrative risks to the proposed project. In such cases, LIRNEasia reserves the right to request the applicant's organization to partner with another institution as a condition of receiving the grant. If the applicant's organisation does not meet the criteria required to pass the institutional assessment satisfactorily, it will not be possible to sign the Grant Agreement.

### 11.1.4 Final selection

Subject to the required amendments to the proposal and budget, LIRNEasia will make the final decision based on recommendations of the review committee, the evaluation criteria, and consideration of the institutional assessment.

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<sup>25</sup> The latest financial statements duly authorized by a financial officer if audited statements are not available. On a case-by-case basis, LIRNEasia may request to see up to the last three audited financial statements for the purpose of institutional assessment.

### 11.1.5 Grant agreement

Any selected proponents must sign LIRNEasia's Grant Agreement to receive funds. The grant agreement will provide a schedule for submitting interim and final technical and financial reports. Although there is no limit on the number of co-applicants in one application, LIRNEasia will only negotiate grant agreements with the organization of the lead applicant.

## 12 Call timeline

- Launch of call: 7 June 2024
- Online meeting for clarifications: Week of 26 June 2024
- Deadline for submitting proposals: 19 July 2024
- Proposal review period: 1 month from proposal submission deadline
- Institutional assessment and contracting: 2 months from proposal submission deadline
- Sign of grant agreements and Announcement of selected projects: 3 months from proposal submission deadline
- Grant commencement: 3 months from proposal submission deadline