

## Considering Intersectionality in Research: Perspectives of Public Funding Agencies

### Terms of Reference for Authors

#### Background

There exists extensive research on the importance of considering, promoting and implementing actions that support equality and equity across the global research landscape. Equal opportunities and diversity in research and research teams allows for the full exploitation of available human potential. Diverse working groups have a positive impact on the quality of research as they result in a variety of perspectives, experiences and skills contributed in the conduct of research. Although the advantages of equality and equity in research are widely known, participation of diverse groups of people in the research landscape continues to be a challenge. For example, accordingly to UNESCO, only 30% of the total global research workforce is comprised of women. Additionally, black, minority and ethnic groups are often underrepresented in the research workforce. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on intersectionality not only in social science and qualitative research but also in how the conduct of research can better advance its consideration, leading to more robust research and outcomes. Intersectionality is the understanding that social inequalities are mutually constituting: 'race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructive phenomena' (Collins, 2015). In other words, advancing equality and equity has to take into consideration the ways in which multiple elements of identity can lead to different experiences of those that conduct research and in research outcomes. Although this phenomenon and its effects on research funding are increasingly known, data (and research) on intersectionality in the research context and in research teams is scant in Africa. In Germany, for example, intersectionality, diversity, and related challenges in the research system and research funding sector have gained traction for focus. Data and experiences on these topics are rare and difficult to determine due to the sensitivity of the data and data protection. Public funding agencies have a catalytic role to play as coordinators of national systems of innovation through their core functions of inter alia supporting, promoting and funding research and innovation. In some cases, these public funding agencies also disburse funds for human capital development, through bursaries and scholarships. In these two roles, they can play a role in advocating for and implementing policies and strategies that support diversity in human capital development, and the research they fund.

The Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI), the Organization of Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) South African National Chapter, and the German Research Foundation (DFG) are partnering to contribute to greater understanding of this topic in the context of research funding. Launched in 2015, the SGCI targets public funders of science and research (SGCs). Fifteen (15) councils in Eastern, Southern, Central and West African participate in the Initiative, representing Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The SGCI, implemented in two phases: SGCI-1 (2015-2020) and SGCI-2 (2018-2023) and guided by four (4) key specific objectives (see Box 1), aims to strengthen the capacities of SGCs in order to support

research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. The Initiative's core funding partners are the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). SGCI-2, in

addition to seeking to deepen the implementation of the four (4) themes, is underlined by the notions of research excellence and gender equality and inclusivity. It is in this context that the SGCI is pursuing this topic on intersectionality in research funding with a focus on the 15 SGCs.

**Box 1: SGCI Themes**

**Theme 1** – Strengthen the ability to manage research

**Theme 2** – Strengthen the ability to design and monitor research programs and to formulate and implement policies based on the use of robust STI indicators

**Theme 3** – Strengthen the ability to support knowledge transfer to the private sector/ support partnerships between SGCs and with other science system actors

**Theme 4** – Build networks among SGCs and with other science system actors

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) is the central, independent research funding organisation in Germany. It serves all branches of science and the humanities by funding research projects at universities and other research institutions. The DFG promotes excellence by selecting the best research projects on a competitive basis and facilitating national and international collaboration among researchers. Its mandate also includes encouraging the advancement and training of early career researchers, promoting gender equality in the German scientific and academic communities, providing scientific policy advice, and fostering relations between the research community and society and the private sector. The DFG is a strong partner of the SGCI, seeking to support and engage in peer-learning experiences regarding the mandates of science granting councils, globally.

The Organisation for Women in Science in the Developing World (OWSD) South African National Chapter is hosted by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). It was inaugurated in 2009 and comprise of OWSD members in and from South Africa who aim to increase and promote women's participation in Science and Technology (S&T) professions, in scientific leadership, and in decision-making processes at the national level. It advances six (6) strategic objectives of OWSD, namely: (1) increase the participation of women in developing countries in scientific and technological research, teaching and leadership; (2) promote the recognition of the scientific and technological achievements of women scientists and technologists in developing countries; (3) promote collaboration and communication among women scientists and technologists in developing countries and with the international scientific community; (4) increase access of women in developing countries to the socio-economic benefits of science and technology; (5) promote participation of women scientists and technologists in the development of their country; and (6) increase understanding of the role of science and technology in supporting women's development activities. OWSD SA is increasingly networked with sister national chapters on the African Continent. It will play a key role as a platform for dissemination and enabling linkages with national chapters and OWSD members in the countries under study.

In partnership, OWSD, DFG and SGCI seeks to deepen knowledge on intersectionality in research funding through mutual exchange of knowledge, and documenting experiences and actions in the global and African

contexts, with a focus on the role of national public funding agencies. This document provides the terms of reference for authors of a research paper to be commissioned on this topic.

## Objectives

Discrimination and inequality can be experienced by individuals due to particular combinations of their different elements of identities, and not just one singular identity they possess (Christoffersen, 2019). Based on funding experiences, monitoring, and emerging dialogue on the ways in which elements of identity intersect with multiple outcomes on those that conduct research and in the research itself, it is indicative that non-scientific criteria affect or even hinder career development (implicit biases). In the South African context, gender and race are well documented as intertwined elements of identity, for example. There is a dearth of women of color (black women) across the human capital development pipeline as compared to white men and white women. This example demonstrates the importance of considering intersectionality in the context of gender and inclusivity. The commissioned paper aims to contribute to current understanding of intersectionality in research with a focus on public science funders.

## Contextualising Diversity and Intersectionality in Research

The term 'intersectionality' was first constructed by black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality suggests that people have different economic, cultural and social-political identities through which they can simultaneously experience oppression and/or privilege. A person's experiences and perspectives may be influenced by their age, race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic background, sexual orientation, disability, amongst others. In her work, Crenshaw demonstrated the concept of intersectionality by making reference to the discrimination experienced by black American women. The discrimination faced by black women was not just because they were black or women but because they were black women. Race and gender discrimination were impacting their lives in intersecting ways which were not fully understood. Intersectionality was developed out of the need to understand how social identities interact with systems of oppressions and discrimination.

Intersectional perspectives recognize that understanding the experiences and perspectives of human beings requires understanding how the combination of elements of identity creates certain circumstances that can produce oppression and discrimination. The concept should be regarded as an integral part in research work as it provides an understanding of how diverse members of a specific society might experience life differently depending on their gender, race, class and other social locations. For the research process, this implies careful consideration of how research questions are formulated, data collection instruments are developed, research participants selected, and findings interpreted. In the African context, Nchanji, Nkengla and Ajambo (2018) provide some examples of research - on indigenous people, agriculture and sex work - that have been undertaken taking intersectionality into consideration and argue that the outcomes present a richer understanding of experiences and perspectives. Here, funding agencies have a key role to play in providing leadership and guidelines prior to and following the awarding of funding. The UK's Equality Challenge Unit (2017) published a guide for the research community on intersectional approaches to equality research and data. The guide provides examples linked to considering equality in research design, qualitative and quantitative research methods. Such a guide, for funding agencies would provide a useful mechanism that

could be domesticated accordingly. Considering intersectionality across the human capital development pipeline means understanding that black, minority and ethnic groups, are often confronted with issues of being omitted from many places, structures and institutions of society. This implies that their experiences in the context of the research and higher education landscape have to be taken into consideration when developing funding programmes, and when allocating resources for human capital development.

The DFG, OWSD SA, SGCI and the NRF South Africa are interested in contextualising this topic of intersectionality to research funding with a focus on deepening its understanding, documenting examples of intersectional research being undertaken in SGCI participating countries and beyond, sharing practices by public funding agencies on considering intersectionality in executing their mandate of funding research, and providing recommendations as guidelines to funding agencies.

### Terms of Reference

The commissioned paper should synthesise current research and understanding of intersectionality in research; using desktop approaches, document experiences of national public funding agencies, globally; document the experiences and practices of African research funding agencies that participate in the SGCI and counterparts in especially, but not limited to, South Africa, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Canada; and present practical recommendations on the role of funding agencies. Using desktop approaches, the commissioned paper should also provide select examples of research undertaken in Africa and beyond to further the notion of intersectionality. On the latter, these could be examples of research that used intersectional approaches and that have led to clear research or training results or where the absence of an intersectional approach meant research or human capital programming was less effective than if an intersectional approach had been taken.

In examining the various dimensions, the paper should seek to respond to, amongst other these questions:

1. What are the key concepts that underpin work on intersectionality in the context of the diversity and inclusivity discourse? How is intersectionality understood in the context of research? How has this understanding been given effect, conceptually, analytically and methodologically?
2. In the global context, what select examples of research on intersectionality and its interpretation exist? What key elements of identity have been the focus of this research?
3. What examples of research on intersectionality exist in the African context, with a focus on the 15 SGCI participating countries (not limited to their funded projects)? What examples of this type of research are funded by SGCs in Africa?
4. What practices, perspectives and experiences exist to consider intersectionality by research funding agencies, beyond the SGCI participating countries, especially, but not limited to South Africa, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Canada? In which areas, linked to the research and grants management process, do intersectionality considerations feature?
5. Focusing on the 15 SGCI participating countries, what elements of identity have African public funding agencies been considering, in addition to sex and gender?

6. What key recommendations should public funding agencies (SGCs) consider in mainstreaming intersectional approaches in (1) research funding and (2) disbursement of funds for human capital development?

### Research Methodology and Approach

Interested authors will be requested to propose a methodological approach to respond to amongst others, the questions abovementioned. Desktop literature reviews, primary data collection and interviews with practitioners, experts and key staff at SGCs and beyond are potential approaches to be considered. It is expected that a preliminary paper will be presented at the Gender Summit Africa in March 2020 with a final paper completed and to be presented at the SGCI Annual Regional Meeting in June/July 2020. The lead author is required to participate in these meetings. Authors are also expected to produce a policy brief to funding agencies on intersectionality in research, and strive to produce a high quality article for publication in an open access internationally peer reviewed journal.

### Deliverables, Budget and Timeline

The following **deliverables** are expected as part of the process of developing the paper:

- An expression of interest submission comprising: (1) a 2-page proposal, (2) detailed CV(s) of potential author(s), (3) an annotated outline of the paper, and (4) a proposed work plan.
- Draft paper submissions at various stages for reviews by the DFG/SGCI/OWSD partners following the selection of authors.
- Final paper completion following the Gender Summit in March 2020.
- Submission of draft scholarly article for publication in an international peer-reviewed journal.
- Submission of draft policy brief emanating from the paper.
- The final policy brief will be published and disseminated in partnership with the DFG/SGCI/OWSD partners.

The maximum **budget** for the proposed work is **ZAR 450 000** or **USD29 000**. Team proposals showcasing an international collaboration are highly encouraged. The DFG/SGCI/OWSD partners will only enter into an agreement with the lead author of team proposals. Travel (lead author and one (1) additional collaborator) to the two convenings abovementioned will be covered by the DFG/SGCI/OWSD partnership separately.

The following **timeline** is proposed for this project, and will be agreed upon following the contracting of the team:

Action	Timeline
Selection and contracting of authors	2 December 2019
Draft 1 submission	13 February 2020
Paper presented at the Gender Summit	March 2020
Draft 2 submission	15 May 2020
Final paper submitted	15 June 2020
Article for publication in an open access international peer review journal submitted	15 July 2020
Final paper presented at the SGCI Annual Regional Meeting	June/July 2020
Policy brief submitted	30 August 2020

## Submission of Expressions of Interest

The deadline for submission of the above mentioned documents is on or before **Monday 28 October 2019 at 23:59 South African Standard Time (SAST)**. All submissions should be made directly via email to: [penelope.chauke@nrf.ac.za](mailto:penelope.chauke@nrf.ac.za). Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered. The successful candidate(s) will be notified by 2 December 2019. The expression of interest should not exceed two (2) pages, 1.15 spacing, font type Calibri, and font size 11. In addition the following should be submitted: (1) CVs should clearly indicate work done by the team of authors in the broad area of gender, diversity and inclusivity; (2) an annotated table of contents of the paper should indicate clearly the proposed sections and sub-sections of the paper; and (3) a work-plan aligning with the deliverables and timeframe outlined on this document.

## References

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