Context Matters Research Grant 2021
Call for Research Proposals:
Literacy Practices in Local Context and Girls' Empowerment in Teacher Education

Deadline for submission: August 1, 2021

CODE, through its Context Matters program funds research initiated, designed, and undertaken by African researchers. To date, research on literacy learning has largely been carried out in high-income countries and contexts and generalized to low-income countries and contexts. CODE established Context Matters to support African researchers as they take the lead in evidence-based, exploratory studies. The intent is to support research which is clearly situated in local contexts and recognizes the multifaceted and complex relationships between the local and global in education.

With this, the fourth Call for Research Proposals going out under the Context Matters banner, CODE is pleased to announce that we are partnering with the International Literacy Association (ILA) and its global network of scholars, researchers, and literacy educators to bring greater support and expertise to the Context Matters Research Grant program. ILA will join the Context Matters International Advisory Committee; recommend members of their International Development in Africa Committee as Context Matters grant jurors; and tap into their grassroots network of educators from across Africa to disseminate news of the grants and promote access to the completed research.

Together, CODE and ILA will offer up to five (5) research grants of a maximum CAN $10,000 each.

We invite researchers, academics and educators who are resident in the countries listed below to submit proposals to CODE at ContextMatters@code.ngo by August 1, 2021.

Eligible countries include[i]: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea: Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The Context Matters Research Grants are designed to:

- Support work by African scholars and researchers addressing issues identified in collaboration with the African literacy and teacher education communities.
- Advance research in Africa by Africans in ways that are responsive and respectful of participants and their communities.
- Strengthen the research capacity, knowledge, and recommendations of those working in the African context.
- Fund research initiated, designed, and undertaken by local teams.
- Foster international partnerships and alliances that bolster Africa's ability to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the areas of education and gender equality.
- Build a body of evidence that can be used to support education policy recommendations at local, regional, or national levels.

In 2021, CODE and ILA are primarily interested in research projects that relate to one or more of the following:

- advancing local literacy practices;
- advancing context specific ways of knowing;
- the intersection between literacy, education, and girls' empowerment;
- the role that pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development plays in strengthening the educational opportunities for girls and vulnerable populations;
- the relationship between the school, the home, and the community and the role this plays in strengthening culturally relevant literacies;
- the impact of digital literacies as well as the use of technology in teacher education and classroom learning;
- the factors and/or interventions that contribute to reducing barriers to quality education for women and girls: with disabilities; in fragile, conflict, refugee and crisis situations; and/or in relation to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

Online Information Session
Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. (EST = UTC+4hrs)

Interested researchers are invited to participate in an online information session on Tuesday March 30, 2021. Go to Context Matters on the CODE website to register. The information session will provide an overview of Context Matters, a review of the process for applying, tips for putting together a winning proposal, and provide an opportunity to ask questions. The session will be recorded and made available on the CODE website.

Download the Application Form from the CODE website.
See ANNEX I for detailed guidelines for completing the application form.
Download ANNEX II (the Excel file) to complete the budget.

2021 Context Matters: Call for Research Proposals

Deadline for submission: August 1, 2021

Send all inquiries and completed documents to: ContextMatters@code.ngo

1.0 CODE SEEKS RESEARCH PROPOSALS THAT:

- Are realistic in terms of scope, number of research questions to be addressed, number of participants, the amount of data collected, timeframe, and budget.

- Examine the development of communities of learners that awaken an interest in social change, support empowerment, and foster individual literacy growth.

- Include K-12 education programming, which includes but is not limited to: pre-service or in-service teacher education (especially as it relates to women teachers); family literacy programs; and women's community organizations.

- Include interventions aimed at increasing access to quality education for girls with disabilities and explores ways to ensure that their interests and priorities are taken into account.

- Along with standard methodologies, we encourage methodologies that are rooted in indigenous and local epistemologies that incorporate local ways of knowing and research methods, participatory action research, and/or involve and engage the community in meaningful ways. Be sure to give a description of how participants will engage actively in the research process (for example where appropriate: data collection, analysis, and/or interpretation of findings and subsequent recommendations).

- Demonstrate clearly how the research results will contribute to one or more:

  - the evidence-base for research on gender-inclusive pedagogy;
  - improving literacy development;
  - the quality of information and data available on the specific topic;
  - interventions and tools that improve educational opportunities for women and girls, especially in fragile, refugee, or health crisis situations;
  - the design of larger or further studies;

- informing education policy;
- the increase in knowledge about how to best measure the impact of such interventions on the learning, health and wellness outcomes of women and girls.

1.1 Submissions can also include:

- Proposals that describe a pilot research project.

- Proposals that build on successful pilot research projects that address the themes and concepts listed above.

- Proposals that draw from other aspects of Context Matter's guiding Landscape Review, entitled <u>Girls' Empowerment through Language and Literacy (GELL): A Landscape Review of Gender and Literacy Research in African Contexts.</u>

2.0 AREAS OF INQUIRY

2.1 Themes

In 2021, CODE and ILA are primarily interested in research projects that relate to one or more of the following general themes:

- advancing local literacy practices;

- advancing context specific ways of knowing;

- the intersection between literacy, education, and girls' empowerment;

- the role that pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development plays in strengthening the educational opportunities for girls and vulnerable populations;

- the relationship between the school, the home, and the community and the role this plays in strengthening culturally relevant literacies;

- the impact of digital literacies as well as the use of technology in teacher education and classroom learning;

- the factors and/or interventions that contribute to reducing barriers to quality education for women and girls: with disabilities; in fragile, conflict, refugee and crisis situations; and/or in relation to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

- the role that pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development plays in strengthening the educational opportunities for girls and vulnerable populations;

- the relationship between the school, the home, and the community and the role this plays in strengthening culturally relevant literacies;

- the influences and uses of digital literacies as well as the use of technology in teacher education and classroom learning;

- the factors and/or interventions that contribute to reducing barriers to quality education for women and girls: with disabilities; in fragile, conflict, refugee and crisis situations; and/or in relation to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

2.2 Three areas of inquiry:

Proposals should address at least one of the three areas of inquiry **Teacher Education, Literacy Practices, Sexual Health Literacies.** The questions written under each heading are suggested topics to consider. Researchers are encouraged to propose other topics so long as they relate to one of the three areas of inquiry and address literacy, education, and gender-equality.

Research proposals must clearly address how the results will contribute to or fill a gap in existing knowledge and understanding.

1. **Teacher Education**
   This includes K-12 education programming, which can be interpreted broadly to include but not limited to pre-service or in-service teacher education (especially as it relates to women teachers); family literacy programs; and women's community organizations.

   - What are the characteristics of successful pre-service education (teacher education) programs, as it relates to girl's empowerment, within public institutions in your region?

   - What is the role of building connections between school, home, and communities and how does this influence learning outcomes?

   - How might incorporating culturally relevant literacies relevant to the everyday lives of teachers and students improve or influence literacy and learning outcomes? (consider language, measuring quality instruction and learning, national curriculum, etc.)

- How have pre-service or in-service teacher education programs adapted to remote learning processes and/or the use of technology?

- How are in-service teachers and their pupils adapting to the use of technology (any form of technology) inside and outside of the formal classroom setting? (challenges, barriers, successes, process of adaptation).

- How does formal and informal instruction within clubs, coaching programs, mentorship programs, (or other informal programs) influence literacy and learning outcomes? How do these influence: empowerment, gender equality, and/or sexual health?

- How can communities of practice support teachers as they strive to promote empowerment and equality in their classrooms and schools?

2. Literacy Practices

- What is the relationship between literacy and empowerment?
- How do literacy policies support or discourage girls' education and empowerment?
- How do literacy practices connect to or influence the reality of communities and students?
- How do education policies build bridges to communities and students?
- How do classrooms, community agencies, networks and structures support adolescent girls' empowerment and education? (For example, in book clubs, writing circles, reading groups, gender clubs and human rights clubs).
  - How are new technologies being used in these contexts? How do we measure the impact that such interventions have on the wellbeing of adolescent girls and boys?
- What is the relationship between "digital literacy" and empowerment? (in regular classroom and learning settings, or among girls with disabilities, or among refugee or other vulnerable populations)?
- In what ways does the use of technology help or hinder literacy and learning outcomes? How do we measure the impact or influence of "learning through technology" on the wellbeing of adolescent girls and boys?

3. **Sexual Health Literacies**

- What influence does formal or informal classroom material with sexual and reproductive health and rights content have on how adolescents negotiate safer and more gender equitable relationships in education systems and in society at large?

- How is gender, puberty, menstrual hygiene represented in reading materials? (such as books, training materials, or mass media formats, or other pop culture media.)
    - How are these various representations understood by youth in a variety of contexts? For example, how do these materials work in classrooms, after-school programs, families, and communities?

- How do schools and/or teacher education programs support and prepare teachers to address gender equity, and sexual health and wellbeing?

- What are the barriers and/or successful pathways to implementing curriculum related to comprehensive sexual education?

- How do teachers and students define empowerment and what are effective interventions for supporting the further empowerment of teachers, girls and boys?

- How do government policies compare with those of civil society in terms of effectiveness? What influence do government policies and the formal curriculum have in comparison to civil society or community initiatives? (For example, what are the messages reflected in the formal curriculum and directives versus the messages in society/community / sexual health messaging and programs?)

3.0 WHO CAN APPLY?

CODE and ILA welcome proposals from researchers, academics, and educators who are residents of and work in the education sector in eligible countries listed below.

Eligible countries include: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea: Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Funded researchers must be affiliated with and/or collaborate with an academic institution. All proposals should reflect current professional research standards and must articulate how they will adhere to ethical standards and procedures for research involving human participants.

Research proposals must clearly address how the results will contribute to or fill a gap in existing knowledge and understanding. Context Matters does not fund "monitoring and evaluation (M&E)" components of existing programs.

4.0 TERMS OF RESEARCH
The studies can be of any duration but are envisioned to cover a two-year period.

5.0 FUNDS
The grant is issued in Canadian dollars up to $10,000.00.

Funds may be used to support:

1. Items needed for the research and not routinely available through the place of employment of the applicant
2. Materials and supplies (paper, books, etc.)
3. Travel directly related to the research
4. Books for student and teacher use or library reference
5. Administrative expenses (postage, duplication costs, printing)
6. Payment in support of a graduate student

Funds may NOT be used to support:

1. Salary of the Principal Investigator
2. Equipment (computers, mobile devices, audio-visual equipment); Specialist equipment required to implement the proposed study can, in certain instances, be supported, if justified.
3. Indirect costs (costs not directly associated with the project such as charging for existing office space).
4. Costs of conference attendance and/or support for the dissemination of the research, will not be supported. (However, upon successful completion of the study, new funds may be made available for this purpose).

6.0 REVIEW PROCESS

- Information Session. Interested researchers are invited to participate in an online information session on Tuesday March 30, 2021 (see https://code.ngo/approach/research-initiatives/ for registration and more details). The information session will provide an overview of Context Matters, tips for putting together a winning proposal, and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

- Proposals will be reviewed by CODE for adherence to the stated submission requirements indicated in Call for Proposals, Application Form, and Submission Guidelines.

- A panel of anonymous jurors comprised of African researchers and/or researchers from African institutions will then review all eligible applications and provide recommendations to the International Advisory Committee.

- The International Advisory Committee will then provide feedback, recommendations, and requests for more information as needed.

- Research teams may be assigned a mentor to assist in the revision of proposals. CODE and ILA will then determine which proposals to fund.

- All efforts will be made to notify all applicants of the status of their applications on or before December 15, 2021.

6.1 Proposals will be assessed/evaluated in these categories:

Intellectual Merit: Will the research results and analysis advance: knowledge in the fields of study outlined in the Call for Research; contribute to the evidence-base on gender empowerment or gender-inclusive pedagogy; or increase knowledge about how to best measure the impact of interventions that improve the educational opportunities, health, and wellbeing for women and girls, and vulnerable populations? Does the proposal go beyond existing research?

Potential Impact: Will the research results make an impact on an aspect of the education system, community engaged in the project, or society as a whole? Will the results of the project help African countries to meet the UN's sustainable development goals? Will it contribute to evidence-based decisions regarding policy, better data collection and evaluation of gender equality? In what ways will it contribute to Context Matters targeted areas of interest (such as refugee education, reading materials, literacy practices, or sexual health literacy)?

Methods: Are the methods employed ethical, culturally sensitive, gender sensitive, and inclusive? Is there a sufficient level of detail provided in the proposal in relation to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of research information? If appropriate, does the research methodology clearly demonstrate the procedures for how research participants will engage in activities such as data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings and subsequent recommendations? Will the methods employed result in relevant, meaningful, and valid data regarding literacy development, enhanced in-service teacher education programs, or advancing gender-responsive practices? How do the methods align with "best practices" of education researchers? How do the methods align with the goals of the research? How do the methods align with the interests of the community or research site? How will the research process ensure the health and safety of researchers and research participants? How will the research process approach or address interactions between male/female researchers and male/female research participants?

Qualifications of Researcher: Does the research team have the necessary skills (personal, social and technical) to carry out the proposed research project? Is there evidence that the team has an adequate track record? Do the researchers have experience, knowledge, or qualifications related to the topic? Are the researchers affiliated with an institution with adequate subject matter and methodological expertise to monitor their work? Can the researchers clearly demonstrate the strategies that will be used to build trust and rapport with participants around sensitive topics. Have issues around consent for children under 18 to participate, child protection and code conduct including prevention of sexual exploitation been identified and addressed?

Budget: Is the proposed budget adequate to complete the research? Are the costs outlined in keeping with stated requirements in the Call for Proposals? Are the overhead costs in line with CODE and ILA's requirements?

If the proposed budget is beyond the $10,000.00 CDN grant, is it clear where the remaining funds will come from? Collaborations/joint research projects are encouraged and acceptable.

ANNEX I: GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

Please review these Guidelines for Submission carefully before completing the Application Form

All proposals should be submitted in English using the attached Application Form.

Proposals should be a maximum of 7 single-spaced pages, not including references and required attachments (CVs, work plan, budget, letters of reference). Follow the guidelines below for each section.

CODE and ILA strongly encourage women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to participate fully in all programs.

Section 1:
Contact information: Title, Name and Institutional Affiliation: The Principal Investigator must have a formal institutional affiliation evidenced by the signature of a senior official from the affiliated institution in section 6 of the Application Form.

Section 2: Project Title, **country** (region/city), **proposed start date** (Jan 2022 is earliest recommended date), **duration of the research** (a max of two years) and a **list of investigators,** include the names, titles, institutions, departments or organization names, and the gender of the co-researchers.

Section 3: Project Summary
- Summary should be one 500 words <u>maximum (1 page, 12 pt font, single spaced)</u>,
- The summary of the proposed project MUST include the following:
    - Proposed title
    - Statement of objectives and research questions
    - Description of the intellectual merit (contribution to the field) of the proposed research
    - The significance of the proposed activity to the research participants
    - Statement on the expected impact and/or potential influence on policy, teaching practices, learning outcomes, teachers, students, or community. of the proposed activity

Section 4: Project Description
- It should be 2,500 words <u>maximum (about 5 pages, single spaced, 12 pt font)</u>.
- It must include a description of each of the following:
    - Background (a brief literature review or description of the context) of the topic under investigation
    - Proposed target population (including specific ages and estimated number of participants) being investigated
    - Objectives and research questions
    - Methodology (qualitative, quantitative, action research, methodologies that are rooted in indigenous and local epistemologies, etc.).
    - Definitions of key terms/concepts including precise definitions of any variables to be measured
    - Activities to be undertaken
    - If using focus group discussions (FGD) give sample questions and indicate strategies for building trust and rapport with participants when discussing sensitive topics
    - Data collection tools, instruments
    - Proposed data analysis procedures
    - Intended outcomes including a note on what would make this research project a 'success'
    - A brief plan for sharing the results with the community involved, as well as a national or international audience: such as conferences, publications, media outlets, coalitions, or education sector meetings.
    - Work plan with timeline

Section 5: Ethical Clearance
- CODE and ILA expect strict adherence to ethical standards and procedures and the rules of attribution.
    - Describe the ethical standards and clearance procedures of your institution and how you will (intend to) meet these.
    - If your institution does not have such standards or procedures in place, describe the standards and procedures you will follow to ensure compliance with best practices. Note that this section must be completed in order for the proposal to be forwarded to the review jury.

Section 6: Institutional Affiliation

The Principal Investigator must have a formal institutional affiliation included in the Research Proposal. This stipulation requires the signature of an official from the Institution.

Section 7: Appendices. Complete and attach the following to your application:
- Annex II. Proposed Research Project Budget Template (separate Excel template)
- Reference list (up to one (1) page single-spaced,).
- Letters of support from those involved in the project (for example target group, government officials, community members, school administrators, up to 3 letters). Please note that letters of support are not required for jury review. However, if your proposal is accepted, you will be asked to provide these letters of support.
- CV of the Principal Investigator
- CVs of co researchers

8. Budget
- Complete **Annex II. Proposed Research Project Budget Template** (separate Excel template). The proposed budget should clearly link your expected results to the amount requested.
- If the proposed budget exceeds the $10,000.00 Canadian dollar amount indicate where the remaining funds will come from. Collaborations/joint research projects are acceptable.

Funds may be used to support:
- Items needed for the research and not routinely available through the place of employment of the applicant
- Materials and supplies (paper, books, etc.)
- Travel directly related to the research
- Books for student and teacher use or library reference
- Administrative expenses (postage, duplication costs, printing)
- Payment in support of a graduate student

Funds may NOT be used to support:
- Salary of the Principal Investigator
- Equipment (computers, mobile devices, audio-visual equipment); Specialist equipment required to implement the proposed study can, in certain instances, be supported, if justified.
- Indirect costs (costs not directly associated with the project such as charging for existing office space).
- Costs of conference attendance and/or support for the dissemination of the research, will not be supported. (However, upon successful completion of the study, new funds may be made available for this purpose).

ANNEX II: PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT BUDGET TEMPLATE

Please provide an estimated budget for your research projects including notes with justifications using the Excel template provided, download the Excel file here: https://code.ngo/approach/research-initiatives/