



Request for Proposals:

(1) Vulnerability, Inequality, and the Politics of Pandemic Responses

(2) Elections and the Pandemic

Deadline for submissions: 5:00 pm U.S. Pacific Time on Tuesday, December 15, 2020

The Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) network is soliciting proposals for quantitative field studies that address two topics: (1) the role of political conditions in enabling or preventing effective societal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic; and (2) the way the COVID-19 pandemic, and its associated economic, social, and psychological stresses, is affecting different dimensions of elections around the globe. We aim to fund 10 grants of up to \$10,000 each to teams led by principal investigators from the Global South. A critical feature of the grant is that it seeks to fund quantitative research (e.g., surveys, field experiments, or large-N analysis of administrative data) in the Global South that may lead to an accumulated understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in both these areas of study.

For studies relating to the first topic, we invite proposals that explore how political conditions have (1) affected governments' responses to the pandemic, (2) exacerbated or mitigated the extent to which the pandemic's effects have been unequally felt, and (3) enabled or prevented communities who have suffered disproportionately from being able to find redress.

For studies relating to the area of elections, we invite proposals that address questions relating to how the COVID-19 pandemic affects (1) the administration, participation, and outcome of elections; (2) the manner in which governments respond to the pandemic within the context of elections; (3) implications of the pandemic on government accountability and legitimacy; and (4) potential strategies for mitigating the negative effects of the pandemic on elections.

Grant Size and Eligibility

- EGAP will award up to \$10,000 to successful proposals and expects to select around 10 award winners.
- Funding can be used to support the investigators' time, travel and lodging associated with field research, research assistance, phone survey implementation costs, data purchase or storage, and other reasonable field research expenses.
- Eligibility is restricted to Global South scholars. This refers to individuals who (a) currently hold a PhD and are employed or at a university or research institute in the Global South; (b) currently study at the doctoral level at a university or research institute in the Global South, (c) received an undergraduate or graduate university degree from a Global South university and are currently a graduate student, postdoc, or faculty elsewhere, or (d) currently teach at a Global South university or research institute and received their PhD no more than five years ago.
 - **Note:** Collaborations between Global South scholars and other researchers (including US-based collaborators) are eligible to apply for this grant; however projects must be clearly led by a Global South-based scholar, and if funds are awarded, the funds will be transferred directly to the Global South-based applicant and not the non-Global South researchers.
 - **Note:** Applications from unaffiliated researchers are not eligible (i.e., those who do not study, teach, or conduct research at a university, international institution, center, or government department).
 - Please contact admin@egap.org with any questions regarding eligibility.
- Grant recipients will be required to secure necessary research approvals where appropriate (e.g., IRB approval must be acquired unless there exists an explicit and legal reason for exemption and such approval must be shared for any primary data collection prior to the start of data collection).

Topics of research

We invite proposals for quantitative field studies on *either* of the two topics discussed below.

1. Vulnerability, Inequality, and the Politics of Pandemic Responses

The first possible topic is quantitative research (e.g., surveys, field experiments, or large-N analysis of administrative data) that looks at the way in which political conditions affect societal responses to the pandemic and how such responses are potentially exposing and/or exacerbating existing social inequalities in vulnerability to crises in the Global South. Examples of political factors that may determine whether or not the effects of the pandemic are deeply unequal include:

- Polarization that may lead to mistrust, hatred, discrimination, or other manifestations of reduced cohesion/solidarity across racial/ethnic, partisan or generational lines;
- Forms and degrees of elite capture and political inequality;
- Public mistrust in governments and/or scientists/experts;
- Perceptions regarding the quality of public health services;
- Role of gangs, armed groups, and other violent non-state actors (i.e. as it relates to enforcing public health restrictions);
- Changes in government capacity resulting from the crisis;
- Institutional barriers to responding to the pandemic;
- Police brutality and other forms of state repression precipitated by the pandemic.

The studies could attempt to characterize such conditions or identify potential interventions and strategies for addressing the factors that lead to marginalization and unequal vulnerability to the effects of the pandemic. Examples of these interventions include those trying to build broader constituencies to redress inequalities; those looking to reach vulnerable and marginalized populations through informal leaders, religious organizations, and other civil society groups; or efforts to broaden citizen inclusion and participation through communication and response planning. Proposed projects may also explore strategies for reducing polarization, preventing brutality or predation during state enforcement of public health restrictions, and combating misinformation or lack of access to information for particular groups.

Outcomes of interest for these studies include government responsiveness to the pandemic, access to care, poverty and food security, inequality, vulnerability (to infection, economic harm, loss of opportunity, etc.), public compliance with health practices, understanding of risks associated with the public health crisis, access to information (and misinformation) for different population groups, social cohesion and trust, attitudes toward the government, distribution and concentration of political and economic power, as well as vaccine coverage and take-up.

2. *Elections and the Pandemic*

The second possible topic is quantitative studies on elections amid the pandemic. Below we describe four sub-themes that fall under the elections topic.

a. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the administration, participation, and outcome of elections

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting elections around the world, and precipitating changes in the way they are carried out and who participates. These changes are affecting a variety of aspects of electoral administration, such as the presence of election observers, the number of polling booths, new registration methods, the use of vote-by-mail and early voting, and the potential presence of military or police at polling stations, among many others.

Voter participation will also likely be severely affected by the pandemic, which leads to questions regarding levels of turnout, whether changes in social capital produced by the pandemic will affect that turnout, how voters weigh the risks of participating in elections, and how social inequalities interact with all these factors. The changes produced by the pandemic may also lead people to engage in other forms of political participation and expression, and even violence. The grants seek to support research that furthers our understanding of these dynamics.

Another aspect of elections research that the grant will fund involves campaigns and voter mobilization efforts. Restrictions on on-the-ground campaigning and get-out-the-vote drives may give traditional broadcast media and social media an outsized role in these elections, which may alter the types of messages used by candidates. These circumstances could also facilitate the spread of misinformation and foreign interference, as well as electoral fraud. The limitations on rallies and face-to-face interactions could also have important implications for clientelism in different countries.

Furthermore, the context of the pandemic may cause different types of candidates to run, either because they are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 due to their age, income, and/or care responsibilities, or because changes in campaign dynamics and election rules make it easier or harder for them to run. Additionally, the way the pandemic is handled by governments may affect a voter's evaluation of candidates, and the way they view different electoral issues.

b. How governments respond to the pandemic within the context of elections

Beyond the way COVID-19 will directly affect how elections are implemented, the prospect of an upcoming election may also influence the manner in which governments respond to the pandemic. For example, it may alter decisions over the timing of social distance regulations, and the manner in which resources are distributed to the public. We invite research that explores comparisons in the response to the pandemic between countries with and without elections.

c. Implications of the pandemic on government accountability and legitimacy

We invite research on the implications for government accountability and legitimacy that may arise due to changes in the timing of elections, in reporting of election results, and in levels of voter participation produced by the pandemic.

d. Potential strategies for mitigating the negative effects of the pandemic on elections

Finally, we welcome research that explores potential strategies for mitigating these complications. These initiatives may include information-technology solutions, new ways of engaging and communicating with voters, or other innovations.

Submission Guidelines

Interested applicants should submit the following documents:

- [Proposal Cover Sheet and Narrative Template](#)
- [Budget Template](#) with accompanying [Budget Narrative](#)
- CV

Send completed application documents to admin@egap.org by the submission deadline of Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 5:00 pm U.S. Pacific Time.

Deliverables for Grants

Projects that are awarded funding will have the following deliverables:

- Implementation plan, budget, and IRB approval before launch of field activities and transmission of funds.
- Implementation reports on progress toward completion of project milestones.
- Budget and financial report, including copy of receipts or other proof of expenditure after completion of field activities.
- A working paper based on the data collected in the field research.
- Funded scholars may be invited to participate and prepare a short presentation (15 – 30 minutes) at an in-person or online EGAP meeting in 2021/2022.

The timing for these deliverables will be determined at the time of award.

About EGAP

Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) is a global research, evaluation, and learning network that promotes rigorous knowledge accumulation, innovation, and evidence-based policy in various governance and accountability domains. EGAP operates as a research initiative out of the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of Berkeley. These grants are supported through funding from The Hewlett Foundation.