

CALL FOR PROPOSALS • 2026

A Call to Host the HERI Africa Research Chair on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion in Education

The Commission for University Education, in collaboration with Mizizi Elimu Afrika, invites eligible Kenyan universities to apply to host Kenya's leading centre of excellence for research, innovation, policy engagement and capacity development on gender equality, equity, social inclusion and equitable education systems.

Harnessing Education Research for Impact in Africa (HERI Africa)

PORTAL OPENS

1 September 2026

Applications close 31 October

MAXIMUM BUDGET

US\$1 million

Covering 2027–2029

PUBLIC LAUNCH

February 2027

Of the Research Chair

Universities are encouraged to nominate women Research Chairs.

10

Priority research
areas

14

Required application
documents

2

Applicant webinars
ahead of the deadline

5_{yr}

Minimum deliverables
period

AN INITIATIVE DELIVERED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

1 Background

The Commission for University Education (CUE), in collaboration with Mizizi Elimu Afrika, under the Harnessing Education Research for Impact in Africa (HERI Africa) initiative, invites eligible Kenyan universities to submit applications to host the HERI Africa Research Chair on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion in Education (GESI). HERI Africa is a pan-African initiative that aims to revitalize and transform the education ecosystem across Africa, with Kenya serving as a proof of concept.

The Research Chair aims to establish Kenya's leading centre of excellence for research, innovation, policy engagement and capacity development on gender equality, equity, social inclusion and equitable education systems. The proposed research should be impactful and sustainable and should promote equity.

The Research Chair shall be guided by, among others, Kenya's National Gender Research Agenda (2026–2029), which seeks to strengthen the generation and use of evidence for advancing gender equality and social inclusion. The agenda responds to persistent gender disparities despite constitutional and policy commitments to equality, and emphasizes coordinated, high-quality and policy-relevant research. It promotes stronger gender data systems, enhanced research capacity, multi-sectoral collaboration across government, academia, civil society and the private sector, the responsible use of technology and artificial intelligence, and the translation of evidence into policy and practice.

WHO THE EVIDENCE MUST SERVE

The Research Chair will generate evidence that informs policies and practices aimed at ensuring that no learner is left behind, with particular attention to women and girls, persons with disabilities, marginalized communities, refugees, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable populations.

The Research Chair is expected to become not just a national but also a continental hub supporting governments, universities, development partners and civil society through high-quality research, postgraduate training and policy engagement.

2 Overall Goal

GOAL

To strengthen the capacity of Kenyan universities to generate transformative, policy-relevant and action-oriented research that advances gender equality, equity and social inclusion within education systems and broader social development, while contributing to national, regional and continental development goals.

3 Specific Objectives

The Research Chair is expected to:

- i. Produce internationally recognized research outputs on gender and inclusion.

- ii. Influence educational policy, institutional reforms and practice.
- iii. Build the next generation of Kenyan and, by extension, African gender and inclusion scholars.
- iv. Strengthen institutional capacity in inclusive research.
- v. Promote evidence-informed decision-making.
- vi. Establish Kenya-wide as well as Africa-wide research collaborations.
- vii. Develop innovative approaches to inclusive education.
- viii. Support implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 5 and 10, Agenda 2063, and any other international agreement provisions relevant to national, regional and continental aspirations.
- ix. Strengthen capacity development and mentorship for emerging scholars, with particular emphasis on increasing the participation, retention and leadership of women researchers and early-career academics in gender, education and social inclusion research.
- x. Promote collaborative and multidisciplinary research ecosystems that reduce fragmentation and duplication of research efforts while fostering partnerships among universities, research institutes, government agencies, civil society organizations and development partners.
- xi. Generate rigorous evidence that addresses the root causes of gender inequality and exclusion.
- xii. Design, test and evaluate innovative interventions aimed at transforming harmful gender norms and reducing structural barriers that impede equality and inclusion.
- xiii. Strengthen research uptake and utilization by facilitating sustained engagement between universities, policymakers, practitioners and communities (producers and users of data).

4 Priority Research Areas

In addition to referring to the National Education Research Agenda (NERA) and any national gender policies and frameworks, applicants should align their proposed research programme with Kenya's National Gender Research Agenda (2026–2029). Proposed research/GESI programmes should demonstrate how they will contribute to generating evidence that informs policy, institutional transformation and societal change.

Additionally, applicants should propose a research programme covering several of the following themes, or any other areas they consider a priority.

1. Root causes and drivers of gender inequality and social exclusion.
2. Intersectionality and multiple dimensions of disadvantage, including disability, poverty, age, geography, displacement and ethnicity.
3. Gender-transformative pathways for changing harmful social and institutional norms.
4. Structural and systemic barriers to equality and inclusion in education and society.
5. Emerging issues in GESI, such as:
 - Artificial intelligence and gender equality.
 - Digital inclusion and digital learning environments.
 - Technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
 - Climate change and gender.

6. Social and disability inclusion.
7. Gender-based violence and learner outcomes.
8. Gender-transformative educational leadership and governance.
9. Gender data systems, measurement and evidence generation.
10. Gender, research utilization, policy influence and implementation.

5 Eligibility of the Host Institution

The university intending to host the Research Chair on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion in Education should demonstrate:

- i. Postgraduate training capacity in gender, education, equity, social inclusion or related disciplines, evidenced by:
 - Accredited Master's and/or doctoral programmes.
 - Availability of qualified academic supervisors.
 - Active research and publication in relevant thematic areas.
 - Capacity to support doctoral and postdoctoral researchers.
- ii. Proven research excellence based on publication records and influence on policy and practice.
- iii. Existing gender and inclusion strategy, policies, practices and other initiatives.
- iv. Institutional commitment to diversity.
- v. Capacity to administer interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary grants.
- vi. Strong financial management systems.
- vii. Research ethics approval mechanisms.
- viii. Digital infrastructure.
- ix. National, regional and international partnerships.
- x. Commitment from the Vice Chancellor and senior management to support the operationalization of the Research Chair in GESI in Education.
- xi. How the Research Chair initiative will be sustained beyond the initial funding period.

6 Eligibility of the Proposed Chair Holder

The proposed Research Chair holder should:

- i. Hold a PhD in a relevant field such as gender, inclusion or a closely related discipline.
- ii. Be an Associate Professor or Professor.
- iii. Demonstrate national, regional and international research recognition.

- iv. Have a proven publication record in gender and inclusion, with extensive publications in high-impact journals indexed in Scimago, Web of Science or Scopus, including at least **10 publications as lead author**.
- v. Have a minimum of **500 citations** and an **h-index of at least 12**.
- vi. Have successfully supervised **five (5) PhD students** to completion, of whom a substantial proportion should have undertaken research in GESI issues or related fields.
- vii. Have secured at least **three competitive grants worth US\$100,000** cumulatively.
- viii. Demonstrate policy influence.
- ix. Have demonstrated experience in mentoring women researchers and early-career academics, and in leading multidisciplinary research teams.

7 Institutional Commitments Required

The Research Chair host university should commit to providing:

Physical Resources

- i. Dedicated office space for the proposed Research Chair.
- ii. Administrative support.
- iii. Research infrastructure.
- iv. ICT facilities.
- v. Institutional co-investment.
- vi. Sustainability beyond HERI Africa funding.

Human Resources

- i. Administrative assistant
- ii. Research officers
- iii. Finance support
- iv. Procurement support

Academic Support

- i. Reduced teaching load (protected time to allow optimal concentration on research)
- ii. Dedicated postgraduate positions
- iii. Postdoctoral fellowships
- iv. Visiting scholars

Financial Contribution

Applicants should indicate institutional co-investment (even in-kind) through:

- i. Staff time
- ii. Infrastructure
- iii. Scholarships
- iv. Operational support
- v. Matching funds where possible

8 Expected Deliverables (Minimum Five-Year Period)

40+ PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES min. 10 in first 2 years	8 PHD GRADUATES 3 in first 2 years	10 MASTER'S GRADUATES 5 in first 2 years	6 POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS 2 in first 2 years
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Research

- i. 40+ peer-reviewed journal articles (minimum of 10 in the first two years).
- ii. Books and edited volumes (a minimum of 1 in the first two years).
- iii. Policy briefs and policy influence (a minimum of 1 in the first two years).
- iv. Working papers (a minimum of 5 in the first two years).
- v. Demonstration of citation of publications under HERI Africa support and beyond.
- vi. It is recommended that the university develops a phased strategic plan (**Phase 1: 2027–2029; Phase 2: 2030–2033**).

Human Capital

- i. 8 PhD graduates (3 within the first two years).
- ii. 10 Master's graduates (5 within the first two years).
- iii. 6 Postdoctoral fellows (2 within the first two years).
- iv. Structured early-career researcher and mentorship programme for women researchers and early-career scholars, with demonstrated uptake and impact (programme developed and 10 early-career researchers supported in the first two years).
- v. Undertake annual GESI research methods training workshops.
- vi. Establish a national doctoral research network on Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion issues.
- vii. Inter-university collaborative research programme involving at least five Kenyan universities.

Policy Impact

- i. National policy reviews.
- ii. Technical advisory reports.
- iii. Government engagement.
- iv. Regional policy dialogues.
- v. Development and testing of evidence-based interventions aimed at addressing root causes of gender inequality and exclusion.
- vi. Demonstrated uptake of research findings by government/policymakers, educational institutions and other partners.

- vii.** Contributions to implementation of the National Gender Research Agenda (in partnership with, and support to, NACOSTI in tracking research undertaken in GESI).

Innovation

- i.** Gender and inclusion measurement tools
- ii.** Digital platforms
- iii.** Training modules
- iv.** Open educational resources

Knowledge Exchange

- i.** Annual conferences
- ii.** Public lectures
- iii.** Community engagement
- iv.** Media dissemination

9 Evaluation Criteria

EVALUATION AREA	WEIGHT (%)
Research excellence (host institution and Research Chair holder)	25
Strategic research programme	20
Institutional and proposed research team capacity	15
Human capital development	15
Partnerships	10
Transformation and inclusion	10
Sustainability	5
Total	100

10 Required Application Documents

IMPORTANT

Applicants should submit a comprehensive proposal **through the portal**. Any proposal submitted outside the portal will not be considered.

APPLICATION PORTAL — OPEN 1 SEPTEMBER TO 31 OCTOBER 2026

<https://herirecruitment.mizizielimu.org>

- i. Cover page — proposal title, logo of institution(s) submitting the proposal.
- ii. Executive Summary.
- iii. Institutional Profile (attach institutional publications and other awards since 2020 as **Appendix 1**).
- iv. Chair Holder and Associate Chair Holder CVs (detailed CVs of the Research Chair, the Associate Chair and team members to be attached as **Appendix 2**).
- v. Research Programme (5–10 years).
- vi. Human Capital Development Plan.
- vii. Institutional Transformation Strategy.
- viii. Partnership Plan.
- ix. Theory of Change.
- x. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (detailed results framework to be attached as **Appendix 3** — Monitoring and Performance Indicators; refer to Section 11).
- xi. Sustainability Plan.
- xii. Summary Budget (detailed budget to be attached as **Appendix 4**).
- xiii. Letters of Institutional Commitment (to be signed by the Vice Chancellor or Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of research and impact as **Appendix 5**).
- xiv. Risk Management Plan.

11 Monitoring and Performance Indicators

Applications should include measurable indicators in:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| i. Publications | vii. Policy influence |
| ii. Citations | viii. Innovation outputs |
| iii. PhD completion | ix. Active partnerships |
| iv. Master's completion | x. Community/societal impact |
| v. Postdoctoral development | xi. Gender transformation outcomes |
| vi. External grants | |

12 Funding Model

The Research Chair budget should be utilized as follows:

65%

MINIMUM · RESEARCH

20%

MAXIMUM · PERSONNEL

15%

MAX · INDIRECT

Covering:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| i. Investments in research outcome areas | viii. Chair Holder |
| ii. International collaboration | ix. Associate Chair |
| iii. Conferences | x. Research Fellows |
| iv. Knowledge dissemination | xi. Postdoctoral Fellows |
| v. Equipment | xii. Postgraduate scholarships |
| vi. Institutional capacity strengthening | xiii. Research assistants |
| vii. Monitoring and evaluation | |

13 Selection Process

Open call for applications on **1 September 2026**, followed by:

- 1 Eligibility screening
- 2 Independent peer review
- 3 Institutional capacity assessment
- 4 Interviews and presentations (where necessary)
- 5 HERI Africa Steering Committee approval
- 6 Funding negotiations
- 7 Signing of the host agreement
- 8 Public launch of the Research Chair in **February 2027**

14 Additional Information

To distinguish the HERI Africa-supported Research Chair from conventional research chairs in university ecosystems, applicants should demonstrate how they will:

- i. Position the Research Chair as a national, regional and continental centre of excellence on gender and inclusion in education.

- ii. Produce actionable evidence that informs policy and practice in Kenya and across Africa.
- iii. Integrate intersectional approaches that address gender alongside disability, socio-economic status, age, ethnicity, language, displacement and other dimensions of exclusion.
- iv. Build sustainable research ecosystems by mentoring early-career scholars and strengthening institutional capacity.
- v. Foster South–South and North–South partnerships while promoting African-led scholarship.
- vi. Engage governments, regional bodies, civil society and development partners to maximize research uptake.
- vii. Leverage digital technologies, data science and artificial intelligence in a responsible and ethical manner to advance inclusive education.
- viii. Ensure long-term sustainability through diversified funding, institutional commitment and regional networks.
- ix. Serve as Kenya's leading platform for generating transformative evidence, piloting innovative solutions, challenging discriminatory norms and supporting evidence-based policy reforms on GESI.

APPLICANT SUPPORT

The Commission for University Education, in collaboration with Mizizi Elimu Afrika, will run **two webinars** to present the details of this call and respond to applicants' questions. Potential applicants may consider **joint applications**, with a clear demonstration of the responsibilities of each partner institution.

ENQUIRIES Dr Hezron Mogaka Programme Director, HERI Africa	EMAIL director@heriafrica.org	SUBMISSION PORTAL herirecruitment.mizizielimu.org Outside the portal, proposals are not considered
MAXIMUM BUDGET US\$1 million Covering 2027–2029	APPLICATIONS OPEN 1 September 2026 Portal opens	DEADLINE 31 October 2026, 23:59 East Africa Time

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