

Academia 4 Social and Behavioral Change Network

Small Research Grants

2025/2026

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Academia 4 SBC Network, in partnership with CISP and UNICEF ESARO, launches a Call for proposals to award **12 Small Research Grants** to support research in child rights using approaches informed by ***Social and Behavioral Change***.

The call is open to young Researchers and Students in the final phase¹ of their Master or PHD program at one of the participating institutions of the Academia 4 SBC Network.

The purpose of the Call is to reinforce the capacity of students to generate evidence on SBC for child rights in collaboration with the Academia 4 SBC Network's partners.

Research topics

More specifically, the proposed research shall contribute to investigating the impact and identifying best practices of interventions on SBC focusing on harmful practices, social and gender norms impacting children's rights. The research should contribute to generate:

- evidence on impact produced by the SBC approach among different groups and contexts;
- evidence on best practices and discussion of policy actions and programs on SBC undertaken by governments and programs promoted by the development sector;
- overview of the state-of-the-art of the policy debate on social and gender norms impacting children's rights in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Given the limited time available, the proposed research may be embedded in research already existing² and ongoing or be based on simple research questions which can be addressed through a small qualitative study or a desk review that will not require any ethical approval.

An example of possible research topics might be:

Understand the impact of specific SBC Project/Intervention's and identify best practices and lessons learned from an ongoing study. In collaboration with the study team, the awardee might conduct a small qualitative

¹ Students are expected to have completed at least 80% of their coursework and exams.

² For Kenya, Somalia and Malawi there are 3 research opportunities with CISP as in annex 1, but in all the network countries also proposal embedded in other already existing research offered by the partners universities will be considered.

study, using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with target groups and analyze the qualitative data to identify social and behavioral barriers to the expected project impact.

Research project duration

The research is expected to be completed within 3 months of being awarded, and in any case no later than 31st of January 2026. Researchers will present a draft paper to the Academia 4 SBC Network by the 6th of January for review and comments to be incorporated in the final paper that will be presented at a VIRTUAL workshop planned for the 15th of January 2026.

Selection procedure

A selection committee (composed of CISP representative, UNICEF representative and 3 representatives of the Academia 4 SBC Network) will examine the applications received and award the research grants. Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria: 1) adherence to the research topic and relevance; 2) originality of the proposed research; 3) fitting with available projects; 4) sources data availability; 5) methodological rigor; 6) feasibility within project's duration; 7) potential use of the outcomes; 8) degree of methodological innovation.

Call Timetable

1. Applications must be submitted via email to marcella.ferracciolo@cisp-ngo.org and cgstrigelli@unicef.org specifying in the subject of the email "Application for CISP_UNICEF ESARO Research Grants 2025/2026".
2. The deadline to receive applications is set for **October 17th, 2025**.
3. Research grants will be awarded within two weeks of the application deadline. The selection results will be communicated over email by 30th October 2025.
4. Applicants who are awarded a research grant will sign contracts by **1st November 2025**.

Submission

Eligible applicants are required to submit their application which must include:

1. Application Form
2. A two-page outline on how the candidate aims to address the aspects of his/her expected contribution (evidence of best practices, policy action, state of the art of the debate) in terms of data source, policy and administrative information, academic literature etc.
3. Updated CV (no specific format is required)
4. Certification of exams and marks received in the applicant's Master or PHD program

5. Motivation letter (maximum length 1 page)
6. Letter(s) of support for the application signed by the supervisor of the student's who will oversee the research

Award and Duration of the Research Grant

The research grant is **USD 600**. The grant will be disbursed in two tranches: 50% at signing, 50% after the presentation of the final paper.

Deadline for Submission

October 17th, 2025

Contact:

Marcella Ferracciolo
CISP HE Program Coordinator
email: marcella.ferracciolo@cisp-ngo.org

The **ACADEMIA 4 SBC Network** is a UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNICEF ESARO) initiative that is bringing together 24 leading universities from across 16 countries to accelerate progress on children's rights through evidence generation, capacity building and policy influence. This initiative builds on more than five decades of UNICEF's leadership in social and behavioural change and reflects its ongoing commitment to harness partnerships to ensure that every child survives, thrives, and is protected.