

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR RESEARCH FELLOWS_2025 COHORT

Position Title: Research Fellow

Duty Station: PAL Network (Nairobi, Kenya)/ Remote, Hybrid, In-Person

Application Deadline: January 30th, 2024. Hiring on a rolling basis.

Start Date: 1 February 2025

About PAL Network

The [People's Action for Learning \(PAL\) Network](#) is a south-south partnership of 17 member organizations working across Africa, Asia, and the Americas to support children's basic reading and numeracy skills. Member organizations conduct citizen-led assessments and action interventions aimed at improving foundational learning outcomes. The PAL Network accelerates and coordinates the shared work of its members toward achieving common goals and objectives and prides itself on being an organization that is for, created by, and led by the Global South.

About the Research Fellowship Program

The PAL Network Research Fellowship Program is designed to foster innovative research that enhances children's foundational learning through inclusive and citizen-led approaches. The program supports researchers, in different stages of their career and education, to generate actionable insights that inform educational policies and practices across the Global South. For 2025, the Fellowship Programme aligns with PAL Network's strategic priorities, focusing on developing inclusive assessment tools, advancing equitable learning outcomes, and strengthening the evidence base for impactful advocacy and policy change. For more information about the program visit [the research fellowship page here](#).

Focus Areas for 2025

The 2025 cohort of the PAL Network Research Fellowship Program will focus on the areas that are aligned with organizational priorities and strategic needs. Applicants are required to mention up to three focus areas (that align with their experiences and interests) in their cover letter. Below are the focus areas.

1. Deep Analysis of Citizen-Led Assessments (CLAs) and Actions

Research will explore disparities in learning outcomes using data from PAL Network's CLAs and action projects, focusing on socio-economic status, gender, geography, school enrollment, and other factors. The analysis aims to provide actionable insights to address educational inequities and inform evidence-based policy decisions.

2. Systematic Review of Foundational Learning Programs

This focus area involves identifying, reviewing, documenting, and comparing foundational learning programs within PAL's network members. The goal is to generate actionable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of these

programs in improving children’s foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

3. Learning Assessments in Emergencies

Research will focus on adapting and validating foundational learning assessment tools to ensure they are practical and reliable in emergency and crisis contexts.

4. Learning Assessments for Children with Hearing and Visual Impairments

This focus area involves researching innovative approaches to include children with disabilities in learning assessments and actions. Additionally, it includes adapting and validating assessment tools to ensure accessibility for children with visual and hearing impairments, enabling more inclusive educational practices and policies.

5. Social Emotional Literacy (SEL) Assessments

Fellows will explore existing assessment tools for socio-emotional literacy, adapting and validating them to be integrated into foundational learning assessments.

6. Communication and Advocacy Research

Fellows will evaluate the visibility and impact of PAL Network’s communication and advocacy efforts, including social media engagement, blog visibility, and website traffic. Research will also identify strategies to increase audience engagement and reach, focusing on understanding demographic preferences and improving geographic distribution and outreach impact.

7. Enhancement of Organizational Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems

Fellows will support the development and adaptation of results frameworks and M&E tools to effectively track progress against organizational strategies and annual plans. Additionally, research will enhance Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Sharing (MELS) mechanisms to strengthen organizational learning and adaptive management.

Fellowship Categories

The PAL Network Research Fellowship Program offers four categories of fellowships to suit various stages of professional and academic development:

- **Graduate Fellowships:** Open to master’s or doctoral students.
- **Early-Career Fellowships:** Targeted at researchers with 2–5 years of experience (with any higher education degree).
- **Postdoctoral Fellowships:** Designed for recent PhD graduates.
- **Senior Fellowships:** For experienced researchers or professionals in the field.

For detailed descriptions of each category, please refer to the [Fellowship Categories section on the PAL Network website](#).

Duration

Fellowships will typically last between 3 to 6 months, with flexibility depending on the project’s scope and objectives.

Responsibilities of the Fellows

Fellows will have the following key responsibilities:

- Conduct research aligned with the specified focus areas.
- Collaborate with PAL Network member organizations and stakeholders to ensure the research is contextually relevant and actionable.
- Develop high-quality research outputs, including working papers, policy briefs, methodological notes, and academic papers, contributing to the body of knowledge in foundational learning and advocacy.
- Participate in regular progress reviews, share insights, and contribute to PAL Network's broader activities to strengthen collaboration and impact.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria for the PAL Network Research Fellowship Program vary based on the focus area and the type of fellowship applied for. Applicants should refer to the Eligibility Criteria page for more detailed requirements specific to each [fellowship category, here](#).

- Academic Background: Master's or doctoral for the Graduate Fellowships, recent PhD graduates for the Postdoctoral Fellowships, and bachelor, master's or doctoral for Early-Career and Senior Fellowships), in education, social sciences, development studies, monitoring and evaluation, public policy, economics, digital communications, or related fields
- Relevant Experience: Demonstrated expertise or interest in foundational learning, inclusive education, or related fields.
- Focus Area Alignment: Ability to align research proposals with the focus areas for 2025.
- Research Skills: Strong research and analytical skills, with experience in qualitative or quantitative methods as applicable.
- Commitment: Availability for the fellowship duration and ability to work collaboratively in a multicultural environment.

Applicants should detail their alignment with specific focus areas in their cover letter to strengthen their application.

Application Process

To apply for the PAL Network Research Fellowship Program, applicants must complete the online application form available on the [Research Fellowship page, here](#). The application process requires the following:

- Online Application Form: <https://palnetwork.org/research-fellowship-programme/fellowship-application/>
- Cover Letter: Indicate alignment with up to three focus areas and explain how your experiences and interests qualify you for the fellowship.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV): Highlight relevant academic, research, and professional experiences.
- References: Provide contact information for two referees familiar with your work.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PAL Network Research Fellows_2025 Cohort

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, with **early submissions highly encouraged**. Should you have questions, reach out to us at jobs@palnetwork.org or nkishani@palnetwork.org.