



Global Platforms for Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems (GPEKE)

2022 Annual Report

Mai Skovgaard (mskovgaard@inasp.info), Jon Harle, Andy Nobes, Joanna Wild, Tabitha Buchner



Thank you to our partners Ethiopian Academy of Sciences and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology for contributions to this report, to all the participants in our activities for sharing their feedback and to Sida for funding this work.



Cover pictures (all AuthorAID members): Babajide Falemara from Nigeria doing fieldwork (top left), Tuan-Anh Nguyen from Vietnam teaching at the Centre for Continuing Medical Education in Ho Chi Minh City (top right), Tu Nguyen Cam performing lab work in Vietnam (middle left), Uko Eyo from Nigeria doing medical outreach (middle centre), Md. Kamrul Islam from Bangladesh conducting clinical research (middle right), Susana de la Torre doing field work in Mexico (bottom left), Tuong Vu Dang and colleague identifying wild bananas in Vietnam (bottom right)

INASP

The Old Music Hall,
106-108 Cowley Rd,
Oxford OX4 1JE,
United Kingdom

t +44 (0)1865 249909 f +44 (0)1865 251060

inasp@inasp.info

www.inasp.info

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Executive Summary

The **Global Platforms for Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems (GPEKE)** project works with Southern researchers and research organizations to develop stronger and more equitable research systems.

- **Globally**, it aims to achieve greater equity by enabling Southern researchers to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence through INASP's AuthorAID community and Moodle learning platforms, so that they can develop their careers, publish their work, and build new collaborations.
- In **Uganda and Ethiopia**, it supports national-level initiatives, through partnerships with Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS), that aim to make research more visible, develop online learning, and overcome gender biases.
- In **Cambodia** the project is providing modest support to researchers at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), aligned to Sida's pilot research cooperation programme.

At the global level (Outcome 1)

We continued to **enhance our online learning curriculum** and resources on our AuthorAID and Moodle learning platforms and to **strengthen the community-led aspects of AuthorAID** as part of our transition to a more sustainable funding and operational model.

Key results this year included:

- We ran **three Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** on research writing and grant proposal writing on the AuthorAID platform, with a total of **9,144 participants** from **130 countries**, and a completion rate of 33%. 48% of the course participants were women.
- We continued to **expand our online offer in response to community needs**. This year we have developed **three new short courses**: 'Foundational skills for social science and health research'; 'Scientific writing in global health: learning from examples'; and 'Effective writing in ecology and environment'.
- Updating our course '**Facilitating events and courses in an online world**'.
- The **emergence of new AuthorAID 'hubs'** in several countries, to enable AuthorAID members to enhance early career support locally, while also connecting and contributing to the overall AuthorAID community.

In Uganda, Ethiopia and Cambodia (Outcomes 2 and 3)

We continued partnerships with EAS and UNCST to improve equity within the research systems in Ethiopia and Uganda and provided support to researchers at Cambodia's principal university, RUPP.

As in previous years, responding to the needs and priorities of our country partners has been of vital importance for the success and sustainability of the project. Our focus throughout the year was to build on and sustain work that has shown the greatest promise.

Key results this year included:

- In **Uganda and Ethiopia**, the **Gender Equity in Research Alliance** and the **Ethiopian Gender Learning Forum** were further consolidated. Since their establishment in 2019 and 2020 respectively, **more than 60 institutions in each country** have been engaged in conversations and networking around gender equity in research in Uganda and Ethiopia. Both of the networks **developed strategic plans** to guide their work beyond the project.
- UNCST has grown the research collections and further developed the platform for the **National Research Repository of Uganda**, in collaboration with the Research and Education Network for Uganda (RENU), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), and the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL).

- **Partners have embedded GPEKE activities in future plans** to increase sustainability beyond the project. Both the Gender Equity in Research Alliance and the National Research Repository of Uganda have been embedded in UNCST’s strategic plan and in Ethiopia there is a strong commitment from both EAS and the Ethiopia Gender Learning Forum members to continue with the forum.
- In **Cambodia**, we provided **bespoke support to 13 PhD students** in the RUPP social science faculty on proposal writing and research writing. Responding to the needs of the RUPP students, we developed a resource focused specifically on PhD proposal writing.

Our partners reflect on how the GPEKE project has added value to their work

Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS)

“The project contributed on two main points: [The first point is] the establishment of the forum [the Ethiopian Gender Learning Forum]. This is a plus because it brought together individuals [and] institutions under one bigger theme within Ethiopian higher education and research - the Ethiopian Gender Learning Forum. And [...] everyone [has] responded positively that having such a broader forum will contribute in the expansion of gender related activities of higher education [institutions]. The second point is the initiative that it brought to the Academy. [...] because of these initiatives at the Academy, we thought of raising it [gender] up to program level, and we are bringing together all gender related activities under one umbrella and moving from project to program.”

Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)

“The project [GPEKE] has enabled the UNCST [to] establish a national research dissemination platform, which we are calling the National Research Repository of Uganda, the first of its kind, and it’s growing daily. The next outstanding achievement is [...] the Gender Equity in Research Alliance, that has national coverage [as] it has four [regional] steering committees.”

“The work around gender has fitted quite neatly with ongoing conversation around gender in science and the work on the repository fitted into the Open Science conversation. Uganda ratified the UNESCO recommendation for open science in 2021. And the [repository] speaks to that.”

Key reflections and lessons learned in 2022

Enabling AuthorAID members to lead can enable us to support more researchers in more places

- The emerging AuthorAID hubs and related initiatives established through the ‘seed grants’ have demonstrated the appetite and energy that exists within the community to lead and develop their own initiatives, with AuthorAID’s support.
- They have shown how the central resources and expertise of AuthorAID – for example our courses, or our toolkits – can enable local groups to organise their own events and support programmes. This in turn will increase AuthorAID’s capacity to serve the needs of more researchers in more places.

Professional and personal pressures are making it harder for researchers to complete courses

- As in 2021, we have continued to see that participants in our online courses are finding it difficult to make sufficient time for professional development. We saw a further fall in the completion rate for our MOOCs to 33% in 2022.
- Of the participants who successfully completed the course in 2022, an increasing number reported issues with time management and pressures of other work. In a survey of non-completers, a high number of respondents reported that unexpected increases to their work or study load had prevented them from completing the course. We will investigate this further in 2023 and consider how we can best respond to the challenges reported by participants.

Gender networks continue to meet an important need and have built strong commitment from their members

- The efforts to establish the gender alliance in Uganda and gender learning forum in Ethiopia were “cited by nearly all contributors to the evaluation as one of the big successes of the project”.

Effective partnerships and outcomes depend on strong relationships, and these take time and effort to nurture

- Maintaining and building relationships requires ongoing time and effort. Strong inter-organisational and interpersonal relationships between UNCST, EAS and INASP have been key to the success of our work in each country, particularly the work to establish the gender alliance in Uganda and gender learning forum in Ethiopia.
- These strong relationships have been achieved “despite challenges related to high turnover of staff in INASP and fewer opportunities to meet face-to-face than initially planned due to COVID-19”.¹

Consolidating our learning on digital approaches

In addition to the core activities of the project, we have consolidated what we have learnt about using digital tools and technologies as part of capacity development initiatives in a new book. This builds on work enabled through our cooperation with Sida over the last decade, and we have deliberately published it Open Access with an African publisher to maximise its availability to our’s and Sida’s partners.

[*Digital Technology in Capacity Development: Enabling Learning and Supporting Change*](#)

Deeper learning from a collaborative evaluation with partners

During 2022 we conducted a self-evaluation of the GPEKE project using a collaborative outcomes reporting (COR)² approach to develop a ‘performance story’³ for the project. The evaluation found that “there is good evidence that GPEKE activities are strengthening the capacity of individuals to produce research worldwide, and the increased numbers of publications they report suggests that it is high quality and relevant”.

Furthermore, there was evidence that “individual researchers are passing on the skills they acquire through AuthorAID to others in their institutions, and that the gender alliance and gender forum in Uganda and Ethiopia are improving the environment for women researchers”.⁴

The full evaluation report is available here:

[*Enabling Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems in Africa and Asia: An evaluation of the Global Platforms for Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems \(GPEKE\) Project*](#)

¹ John Young, ‘Enabling Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems in Africa and Asia’ (Oxford, United Kingdom: INASP, February 2023), <https://www.inasp.info/publications/enabling-equitable-knowledge-ecosystems-africa-and-asia>.

² Jess Dart and Megan Roberts, ‘Collaborative Outcomes Reporting’, Better Evaluation, 4 November 2021, <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/collaborative-outcomes-reporting>.

³ ‘Performance Story’, in Encyclopedia of Evaluation, by Sandra Mathison (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412950558.n410>.

⁴ Young, ‘Enabling Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems in Africa and Asia’.