

Knowledge for Tomorrow – Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa

Call for Pre-Proposals for Postdoctoral Junior Fellowships for African Researchers on “Resources, their Dynamics, and Sustainability – Capacity Development in Comparative and Integrated Approaches”

Deadline

15 December 2009

Contact**The Natural and Engineering
Science, Medicine****Africa Initiative**

Dr. Detlef Hanne

Phone: +49 (0) 511 8381 389

Fax: +49 (0) 511 8381 344

E-mail:

hanne@volkswagenstiftung.de

VolkswagenStiftung

Kastanienallee 35

30519 Hannover

Germany

www.volkswagenstiftung.de

The Foundation's funding initiative “Knowledge for Tomorrow - Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa” and this call for pre-proposals aim at providing sustainable support for research in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is to be achieved in cooperation between African and German scholars, and further partners, if necessary. The overall intention is to provide junior scholars in Africa with opportunities to enhance their skills and academic qualifications, and thus to open up perspectives for the best of them to stay in academia. Besides this Afro-German cooperation, a second focus lies on the development and extension of academic networks in Africa.

The call at hand builds strategically on a first call for proposals in the field of natural resources research, which was launched in 2004 (“Resources, their Dynamics, and Sustainability – Capacity-Development in Comparative and Integrated Approaches”, see: www.volkswagenstiftung.de/fileadmin/downloads/merkblaetter/MB_81c_e.pdf). It represents the second phase of a career development, in which postdoctoral fellows should take ownership in developing and executing their own research project. The call is open to all relevant scientists from Sub-Saharan Africa working in the fields described below.

1. Thematic Scope

Four main areas of natural resources are in the focus of this call for pre-proposals: a) land, b) water, c) biological resources, and d) sustainable energy for domestic use. Projects focussing on natural hazards are accepted, if the applicants can provide evidence that these hazards have a major effect on large parts of the population in Africa. Studies on non-renewable natural resources, such as minerals and oil/gas, will not be eligible under this call.

Pre-proposals will only be accepted, if they are internationally competitive, innovative and interdisciplinary. Each pre-proposal has to demonstrate that it will address an urgent and important research question within the African context. Studies on natural resources have to focus on their sustainable use,

changes within existing or past systems and the impact on the environment and on the development of mitigation strategies.

Projects should aim at the development of new methodologies and techniques. They should also reflect on their application and refer to integrated and comparative approaches. The consideration of socio-economic aspects of projects is welcome, but should not be at the center of the proposal. Research projects should lead to recommendations for local communities and/or local or governmental administrations. Funds for the implementation of new technologies in the field can only be granted to a very limited extent, and applicants are encouraged in these cases to seek complementary funding from other sources. The participation of local communities and local authorities right from the start of the respective project as well as the incorporation of local/indigenous and traditional knowledge into projects is encouraged, where appropriate.

2. The Call

Through the call funding will be provided for outstanding young African researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa to carry out applied research at African research institutions in the field of research on natural resources. The Fellow should explain with which institution he/she proposes to collaborate and on what research issues and topics. However, pre-proposals can only be considered if there is a substantive and explicitly stated cooperation between African and German academics working on the project. There is also an opportunity to apply for support for junior postdoctoral scholars from Germany in a collaborative setting. The call offers 3-year junior Fellowships to recently qualified African postdoctoral researchers. Further support is envisaged at later stage so that Fellows can progress to a senior postdoctoral or group leader level.

It is not possible to fund projects for development aid or other short-term applications. The Foundation can provide funds only to academic institutions.

Please note: The application and selection process is in three stages. The deadline for the first stage is **15 December 2009**. The first stage applications should be sent to resources2009@volkswagenstiftung.de. Applicants can not proceed to the second stage unless they have been invited to do so.

3. Eligibility

Applicants

Applicants must be junior postdoctoral researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa with less than 3 years of postdoctoral experience. The necessary degree (PhD) must have been granted at the latest by the End of 2010. Applicants from Sub-Saharan countries outside South Africa and applicants returning to Sub-Saharan countries are particularly encouraged to apply.

4. Funding Opportunities

Fellowship

The Fellowship covers salary, research and travel costs up to a maximum of 90,000 EUR over 3 years. In addition, up to 10,000 EUR for an optional Mentorship Program can be applied for (see below). Furthermore and also optional, up to 25,000 EUR can be applied for costs of an associated German postdoctoral Fellow (see below). The official grant recipient will be the scientific host institution where the Fellow will be employed. Basic infrastructure should be provided by the African host institutions; the Fellowship may include administrative costs for the host institution up to a maximum of 5,000 EUR.

The budget items must be justified specifically and could include:

- Salary of Fellow (depending on customary local salaries and experience);
- Travelling to conferences/workshops;
- Scientific visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 4 months per year;
- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10,000 EUR);
- Additional German Fellow Program (optional, max. 25,000 EUR);
- Soft skill development, e.g. language courses or courses for project management;
- Consumables;
- Costs of field work (but not vehicle purchase);
- Publication costs;
- Small equipment (max. 20 % of total budget). Basic infrastructure should be provided by the host institution.

Mentorship Program

A key feature of these Fellowships is the funding provided for personal mentorship. Through the Mentorship Program, the Fellow can establish links to two leading scientists of her/his choice – one from an African and one from a non-African institution. The mentorship is intended to extend the Fellow's scientific networks and skills base. Up to 10,000 EUR can be applied for under the Mentorship Program for meetings between the Fellow and the mentor. The mentors must agree to act as supporters for the Fellow – assisting with their career development through, for instance, introducing them to peer networks and helping them to publish in international journals. They should not be supervisors or main collaborators in the project and they should not be based at the Fellow's host institution.

Additional Support for Junior Postdoctoral Fellows from Germany

An additional feature of this Fellowship Program is the possibility to include funding of up to 25,000 EUR for German postdoctoral Fellows. The funds are meant to support German postdoctoral Fellows to participate actively in the research project lined out by the African applicant. The African applicant needs to apply for these additional funds for his/her German partner. The German Fellow must be based at a German research institution.

5. Application and Selection Process

This is a three-stage process:

Stage 1

The applicant must be an African post-doctoral researcher. Project ideas must be designed by the applicant and should be executed mainly at an African host institution. **Applications must be submitted in English by 15 December 2009** to resources2009@volkswagenstiftung.de. First stage applications will be evaluated by an international scientific expert committee, and decisions communicated by March 2010. Applications should be submitted as one .pdf document and must include all of the following:

- Short CV of applicant (max. 2 pages);
- A summary of the applicant's current work (max. 1,000 words);
- A short summary of the proposed research (max. 1,000 words);
- A short description of the role of the German Postdoctoral Fellow, if applicable.

Stage 2

Applicants who successfully pass the first selection phase will be invited to submit a full proposal (including a detailed working plan for their research) by 30 June 2010. Project ideas must be designed by the African scholars and should be executed mainly at an African host institution. In exceptional cases, prospective applicants can apply within the project outline in stage 1 for a travel grant to the envisaged host institution in order to develop the full proposal. These full proposals will undergo an international review process. Details of the requirements for this stage, including the recommendations made by the review committee will be sent in April 2010 to the successful applicants from the first stage. The full proposal will have to include:

- Project description written in English of not more than 4,500 words with:
 - Research proposal;
 - Detailed work plan including timelines;
 - Detailed budget;

- Description of the African-German and intra-African collaborations.
- Description of the role of the German postdoctoral Fellow in the project, if applicable;
- Description of the Mentorship Program, if applicable;
- CV of the applicant – no more than 2 pages;
- CV of the German postdoctoral scientist, if applicable – no more than 2 pages
- Evidence that the applicant has been accepted as a prospective colleague by an existing working group at the African host institution;
- Letter of support from the African host institution stating that it will provide the basic infrastructure, and specifying the logistic and/or financial support it will provide for the applicant;
- Letter of support of the German partner institution;
- Statement of the German postdoctoral Fellow, if applicable;
- Statement of the applicant whether this application has been or will be sent to another funding organization.

The full proposal should be split into three separate .pdf documents:

- The proposal itself;
- CVs;
- Further appendices.

The application should also be sent electronically to resources2009@volkswagenstiftung.de.

Stage 3

Applicants who submit full proposals will be invited to present their project at the conference “Natural Resources 2010” in Hanover in October 2010. At the conference they will also be interviewed by an international peer-review committee. Final decisions on fellowship grants will be made in December 2010.