

Call for applicants for three PhD scholarship opportunities

The research project on Governing Nature based Solutions, prospects for a just green transition in Kenya

(Justice, Carbon, Nature, JUCAN)

The University of Nairobi (UoN), the University of Copenhagen (UCPH), and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) with funding from DANIDA hereby invite applications for three PhD scholarships under the project *Governing Nature based Solutions: The prospects for a just green transition in Kenya (JUCAN – Justice, Carbon, Nature)*. Subject to satisfactory performance and legal requirements, each PhD scholar can obtain a double degree from The University of Nairobi and the University of Copenhagen.

About the research project

Nature based Solutions (NbS) are, in brief, actions that aim at benefiting climate, biodiversity and people simultaneously. NbS are high on the global and national carbon offsetting and biodiversity conservation agendas. The number of NbS projects is growing in the Global South, including in Kenya. While NbS scholars tend to focus on technical aspects of how to address the climate, biodiversity and people objectives simultaneously, there is less knowledge about NbS governance. Critics argue that there are considerable trade-offs between the NbS objectives, and there is a risk that interventionist approaches and skewed power relations marginalize local communities by disrupting their institutions and undermining their rights to land and other natural resources, thus contributing to environmental injustice. JUCAN sets out to learn from the institutional dynamics and government arrangements of NbS in Kenya. Kenya has a long and devastating record of environmental injustice, but rural communities depend on the conservation and restoration of their degraded natural resources. The main research question is: What are the implications of NbS governance for a just green transition in Kenya?

The project has four research questions (R1-4) and related four Work Package teams (WP1-4). The four research questions are:

R1. Priorities and perceptions: How and to what extent do private, public and civil society actors' priorities differ and align vis-à-vis the possible trade-offs between climate, biodiversity and community development objectives, and what is their "sense of environmental justice" in NbS?

R2. Agency and practices: How do the different actors engage in, influence, and shape the emergence of NbS institutions as they pursue their priorities, and what NbS governance practices and arrangements emerge from this at national and local levels?

R3. Outcomes: How do NbS governance practices and arrangements affect the nature of carbon, biodiversity, and socioeconomic activities and outcomes in NbS projects?

R4. Implications: What are the implications of 1-3 for environmental justice, and what lessons can be learned for policy and practice to ensure a just transition in Kenya?

JUCAN focuses on three NbS projects having in common that they 1) generate income from carbon credits, 2) are multiple-stakeholder projects with strong private governance elements and 3) aim to involve local communities. They are located in the Northern Rangelands, the Southern Rangelands and along the Coast in Kenya.

All WP teams work towards an increased understanding of the governance structures and institutional dynamics of NbS projects through an environmental justice lens in addressing all research questions (R1-4). The work packages differ, however, with regard to methods and study sites. Each WP1-3 examines a separate NbS applying in-depth qualitative methods and analysis. WP4 will apply quantitative research methods across all three selected NbS projects, such as social network analysis to examine actor interactions in NbS project design and implementation, developing an index to measure perceived environmental justice and explore its determinants, assess how current and expected future ecological and biodiversity and carbon accumulation outcomes relate to NbS project governance practices and arrangements using participatory recall and modeling methods including fuzzy cognitive mapping and future scenario analysis.

Two of the selected PhDs will work with their Kenyan and Danish supervisors in WP1-2 (qualitative research). One of the selected PhD scholars will work with Kenyan and Danish supervisors in WP4 (quantitative research).

The selected PhDs will enroll at the involved departments at the UoN and engage with DIIS and/or UCPH as potential double degrees.

Eligibility

For the two W1-2 PhDs (qualitative methods), the call is open to Kenyan nationals with a documented master's degree (MSc or MA) in Development Studies, Geography and Environmental Studies, Environmental governance, Natural Resource Management, Political Science, Political Ecology, Sociology, or related studies. The candidates should have proven research knowledge on governance, institutional dynamics, and/or environmental justice and with skills/interest in applying qualitative research methods.

For the W4 PhD (quantitative research), the call is open to Kenyan nationals with a documented master's degree in Economics, Development Studies, Natural Resource Management, Geography, Conservation Science, Environmental Governance, Sociology,

Anthropology, or related studies. The candidate should have proven research knowledge in some of the following fields: implementing surveys, carbon assessment, natural resource quantification, ecological and biodiversity assessment and its link with governance and environmental justice. Moreover, the candidate should have skills and interests in applying quantitative approaches to studying natural resource governance, household economics, ecological-biodiversity aspects, social and institutional networks and dynamics, and/or creating indexes of environmental justice.

All candidates are expected to commit full time to the PhD study and must be flexible in collaborating and sharing data with the other JUCAN PhD scholars and research team for mutual benefit and coherence. They must be ready to stay in Denmark for two periods each of three months.

We strongly encourage female applicants to apply.

About the scholarships

Each scholarship includes funds for equipment and materials, fieldwork and other operational costs, participation in international courses and conferences, and monthly allowances for three years. Each scholarship, moreover, includes two times three-months stay in Denmark covering costs related to travel, accommodation and per diem during the stays. The stays in Denmark constitute one of the requirements for obtaining a double degree. Successful applicants will have their principal supervisor at UoN and co-supervisors at UCPH or DIIS.

The successful candidates affiliated with WP1-2 (mainly qualitative research) will be enrolled at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at UoN, respectively. The successful candidate affiliated with WP4 (mainly quantitative research) will be enrolled at the Wangari Maathai Institute at the UoN. All three candidates will be enrolled at the Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO) at the University of Copenhagen with an option for obtaining a double degree.

The Wangari Maathai Institute, moreover, can offer special office facilities for mothers or fathers with small children.

The scholarships are for a duration of three years and will commence on September, 2024 as per University of Nairobi academic calendar.

Requirements for the application and submission

Applicants should submit the following documents.

- Cover letter/Motivation letter. It should be clear from the motivation letter, whether the applicant prefers to work with qualitative or quantitative research methods

- Curriculum Vitae
- Certified copy of Bachelor of Science/Art and Master of Science/Art and MSc/MA transcript of records
- Certified English translation of transcripts if not already in English
- Official explanation of the grading system if qualifications were obtained from outside Kenyan Universities
- Two recommendation letters from academic referees
- A maximum of two-page doctoral study concept relevant to the research project. The concept should include a proposed title, background, problem statement, objectives, and indicative methodology related to one of the research questions 1-4.

The deadline for submission is **10th May 2024 at 11pm.**

The application must be submitted electronically to Thuita Thenya –tthenya@uonbi.ac.ke, cc: Iben Nathan, in@ifro.ku.dk.

Assessment process

- After the submission deadline, the applicants will be assessed academically.
- Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an oral interview and a written aptitude test late May 2024.
- The preferred doctoral studies starting date is September, 2024.
- The interviewing panel reserves the right not to consider material received after the deadline and to consider only such applications that fulfill the requirements mentioned above.

Inquiries about this particular scholarship must be addressed to T.Thenya tthenya@uonbi.ac.ke, cc: Iben Nathan in@ifro.ku.dk