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

Call for Pre-Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities in Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa

1. Objectives

This call is part of the Foundation’s career development strategy for African researchers in which junior and senior postdoctoral fellows should take responsibility for developing and executing their own research project and show leadership responsibilities for their research group (in the case of senior fellows). With this program, the Foundation intends to give support to those postdoctoral researchers who wish to follow academic careers in Africa. The project must be carried out in collaboration with a German academic partner institution. The call is open to all scholars from Africa (both Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa) active in the research fields mentioned below. This Fellowship Program will be coordinated by a German senior scientist and her/his team. The coordinator will bring together the fellows for workshops and summer schools several times during the fellowship.

2. Thematic Scope

Cultural, historic, religious, ethnic, philosophic and linguistic phenomena and research questions in the humanities in Africa are at the core of this call for proposals. Social, economic as well as political approaches can be included but should not be the main focus of the project. All projects should have a strong reference to present questions and problems in Africa. Furthermore, projects that transcend disciplinary boundaries and limitations by exploring linkages between disciplinary approaches are preferred. Applicants are invited to address a comparative perspective and research questions concerning both North African and Sub-Saharan countries. Transcultural dimensions as well as bridging the anglophone/francophone divide in Africa could be important aspects of these projects. Further relevant topics could deal with the history of Africa and its relevance for today as well as cultural and social phenomena such as mobility and migration, transit countries (e.g. Libya), and cross-border relations. Research projects may also concentrate on linguistic and ethnic diversity, the new media as well as social
movements, civil society, and the impact of climate change on Africa (especially the Sahel zone).

The program is open to applications from disciplines like history, cultural anthropology, archaeology, cultural studies, philosophy, literature, linguistics, musicology, art history, media studies, visual studies, and religious studies. Only native researchers from African countries are eligible for funding.

3. Funding Opportunities

This Postdoctoral Fellowship Program aims at supporting young African postdoctoral researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa by (1) providing an opportunity to enhance both skills and academic qualifications, (2) strengthening partnerships between African and German scholars, and (3) developing and extending academic networks inside Africa. The program includes both junior and senior fellowships. For both fellowship types, a cooperation with a German partner institution is required. Furthermore, up to 25,000 EUR for an associated German postdoctoral fellow - to enhance the exchange of scholarly expertise between African and German researchers - can be applied for. Additionally, the possibility of an accompanying assistance by mentors is given. The applications for junior and senior fellowships should include a statement by the fellow concerning the institution she/he intends to collaborate with and what research topics will be covered. The official grant recipient will be the German coordinator, but the funds will be administered by the academic institution in Africa where the fellow will be employed. Basic infrastructure should be provided by the African institution; the fellowship may include administrative costs for this institution up to a maximum of 6,000 EUR.

The Foundation supports the improvement of a good work-life-balance for scholars with children. More information can be found under http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/fileadmin/downloads/merkblaetter/MB_family_related_benefits.pdf.

Junior fellowship

A three year fellowship (36 months) is offered to outstanding African junior researchers holding a Ph. D. (not more than three years after completion of Ph. D.). Project ideas must be developed independently by the applicant and should be realized primarily at an African institution. African scholars who have submitted their thesis but still need to pass the defense are also invited to submit a pre-proposal. If the applicant is still in the final phase of the Ph.D., a letter from the main supervisor is needed that the Ph.D. will be completed until the end of the selection process. The fellowship covers salary, research, travel and administrative costs up to a maximum of 90,000 EUR.
The budget must be justified specifically. It could include:

- Salary of the fellow or topping-up if already employed at the African research institution (depending on experience and customary local salaries),
- Alternatively, the budget for the topping up of the salary can be used to employ lecturers in order to reduce personal teaching duties
- Salaries of graduate students involved in the research project,
- Travel expenses for conferences/workshops,
- Research visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3 - 4 months per year (including visits to the German partner institution),
- Language courses, or courses for project management etc.,
- Consumables,
- Publication costs,
- Administrative costs (max. 6,000 EUR),
- Small equipment (max. 10 % of total budget).

Additional and optional budget items

- Additional German postdoctoral fellow (optional, max. 25,000 EUR),
- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10,000 EUR),
- Costs of Preparatory Meeting for the full proposal with German partner institution and German Postdoctoral Fellow (optional, max. 5,000 EUR).

Senior fellowship

A three year fellowship (36 months) is offered to African scholars with a substantial research experience (3 - 6 years of postdoctoral experience). Applicants will need to demonstrate experience and scientific achievements (as documented by their publication record) appropriate to the extended funding and research group leader responsibilities. The fellowship covers salary, research, travel and administrative costs up to a maximum of 120,000 EUR.

The budget must be justified specifically and could include:

- Salary of the fellow or topping-up if already employed at the African research institution (depending on experience and customary local salaries),
- Salary of 1 - 2 Ph. D. students involved in the project, (co-)supervised by the applicant,
- Salaries of graduate students involved in the research project,
- Travelling to conferences/workshops,
• Research visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3 - 4 months per year (including visits at German partner institution),
• Language courses, or courses for project management etc.,
• Consumables,
• Publication costs,
• Administrative costs (max. 6,000 EUR),
• Small equipment (max. 10 % of total budget).

Additional and optional budget items

• Additional German postdoctoral fellow (optional, max. 25,000 EUR),
• Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10,000 EUR),
• Costs of preparatory meeting for the full proposal with German partner institution and German postdoctoral fellow and mentors (optional, max. 5,000 EUR).

Mentorship Program

By taking part in the optional Mentorship Program, the fellow can establish links to one or two leading researchers of her/his choice. For meetings between the fellow and the mentors, up to 10,000 EUR can be applied for. The full Mentorship Program can only be granted when two mentors are chosen – one from a European and one from an African institution. The mentorship offers the possibility of scientific networking and knowledge exchange between mentors and fellow. The mentors must agree to act as supporters of the fellow by encouraging the career development, introducing them to peer networks and assisting with publications in international journals. Mentors must not be supervisors or main collaborators in the project and should be based at an academic institution different from the institution where the Fellow is employed. Additionally, the mentors must not be identical with the German partner institution. The role of the mentors is meant to give further assistance beyond the support of the German partner institution.

Additional support for Postdoctoral Fellows from Germany

As optional feature of this program, it is possible to receive funding of up to 25,000 EUR for a German postdoctoral fellow. The funds are meant to support German postdoctoral fellows to participate actively in the research project outlined by the African applicant. The African fellow needs to apply for these additional funds for her/his German partner. The German fellow must be based at a German research institution. The grant may include both travel grants and up to three months of a salary for the German postdoc fellow in order to guarantee a substantial contribution to the project of the African postdoc scientist. The role of the German postdoctoral fellow in the project has to be described and justified by the applicant.
Additional workshops, trainings, summer schools

Funding of workshops, trainings, symposia, and summer schools in addition to training courses which are part of the research projects can be applied for. These events should take place in Sub-Saharan Africa and should aim for a high visibility and for the strengthening of networking activities between African and German junior/senior researchers. Applicants are requested to send draft proposals to the Volkswagen Foundation. If approved, the applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals should be submitted at least four months before the proposed activity. They can be submitted any time during the course of the fellowship.

4. Application and Selection Process

The application is organized as a three-stage process, and pre-proposals must be submitted as one pdf file in English by 15 September 2012 to humanities2012@volkswagenstiftung.de, or alternatively via the electronic application system (https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en). In case you choose the latter means, only one file, PDF format, should contain the pre-proposal itself and all the appendices. After the selection of “Pre-proposal description” in the electronic application system this file should be uploaded there.

Stage 1

The pre-proposal applications will be reviewed by an international expert committee. Decisions will be communicated by December 2012. In case of a positive evaluation, recommendations from the review panel for the full proposal will be sent. Please, note the attached check-list for pre-proposals for Postdoctoral fellowships in the Humanities in Africa. Successful applicants of stage 1 may apply for funding of preparatory meetings of the prospective fellow with the German partner institution and the German postdoctoral fellow (if applicable). Date, venue, participants, and costs of these meetings have to be specified already in the pre-proposals. Due to the expected high number of submissions, we ask for your understanding that the Foundation cannot give any reasons in the case of a refusal/rejection of the application.

Stage 2

Successful applicants of stage 1 will be invited to submit full proposals. All full proposals will undergo an international review process. Details of the requirements for full proposals including the recommendations made by the review committee will be forwarded to the successful applicants of stage 1.
Stage 3

Successful applicants of stage 2 will be invited to present their project at a selection workshop to be held in Africa in spring 2013. During the conference they will also be interviewed by an international review panel.

5. Notes for Applicants

The Foundation can only provide funds to academic institutions. Furthermore, it is not possible to fund projects for development aid or short-term applications. The Foundation cannot consider applications which have been submitted at the same time either in the same or some similar form to other funding institutions. Also, the Foundation is not able to allocate funding to cover commitments entered into prior to the receipt of the grant letter.

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Check-list for Pre-Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities in Africa

Pre-proposals have to be written in English and have to be submitted by the applicant. Particular format requirements or application forms do not exist for this call. The project proposal must be submitted either by email to humanities2012@volkswagenstiftung.de or alternatively via the electronic application system (https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de/vwsantrag/login.do?siteLanguage=en). Application deadline for project pre-proposals: 15 September 2012.

A pre-proposal should contain the following information on the front page:

- Full name, address and signature of the applicant,
- Indication of program/call for pre-proposals the application refers to,
- Brief informative title of the proposed project,
- Duration of funding and sum applied for.

The following information is needed for the evaluation of the pre-proposal:

- A summary of the applicant’s current research/work (max. 1,000 words),
- Expertise and role of the participating German partner institution,
- Expertise and role of the German postdoctoral fellow (if applicable),
- Date, venue, participants, and costs of preparatory meetings for full proposals (only funded for successful applicants of stage 1),
- Description of the topic and of the relevant information for the realization (max. 1,000 words):
  - aim of the project and its justification,
  - state of the art including references,
  - preliminary work,
  - theories and methodological approach,
  - working program and time schedule, including distribution of tasks among Fellow and German Postdoctoral Fellow (if applicable),
  - budget.

As appendices:

- CV of the applicant – not more than 2 pages,
- Ph. D. certificate (or letter from the main supervisor confirming the completion of the Ph. D. until the end of the selection process),
- Letter of support from the African research institution stating that it will provide the basic infrastructure and
• Specifying the logistics and/or financial support it will provide for the applicant,
• Letter of support of the German partner institution,
• Statement of the applicant whether this application has been or will be sent to another funding organization,
• Description of the role of the German postdoctoral fellow in the project – if applicable,
• Statement of the German postdoctoral fellow – if applicable,
• Letter of support of the mentors (if applicable).

PLEASE NOTE:

Applications are only accepted if a preceding pre-proposal was evaluated positively. Deadlines will be communicated with the approval of the pre-proposal.

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