



## NELGA GOOD PRACTICES:

Improving Academic  
Publications through  
Scientific Writing  
Workshops

The Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) is a partnership of leading African universities and research institutions with proven leadership in education, training and research on land governance. Currently NELGA has more than **70 partner institutions** in over 40 countries and is organized in 6 regional and 1 technical nodes supported by a Secretariat.



## Introduction

Scientific writing is the lifeblood of academia, yet it can be a formidable challenge, particularly for postgraduate students and early career researchers. The Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa (NELGA) recognises this hurdle and is dedicated to addressing it. NELGA, comprising leading African institutions, is committed to elevating scholarly communication and research quality.

Within NELGA's vibrant efforts, the Southern African node, represented by the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), shines as a hub for nurturing scientific writing skills. NUST's collaboration with partners has led to two successful workshops, fostering research collaboration, mentorship skills, and scientific proficiency.

Turning to Central Africa, the NELGA Central Africa node has pioneered an online workshop, equipping young researchers to navigate job and scholarship opportunities in the land sector. This initiative empowers researchers to access and contribute to advancements in land governance, underlining the role of effective application strategies and the power of networks.

## Implementation

NUST has thus far successfully hosted two writers' workshops. These workshops exemplify our commitment to elevating academic excellence and scientific writing within the region.

The inaugural workshop was convened in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2018, in close collaboration between NUST and the project Advancing Collaborative Research in Responsible and Smart Land Management in and for Africa (ADLAND). Building on this success, the second workshop took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 25 to 28 October 2022, in a collaborative effort between NUST and the University of Zambia.

NELGA's dedication to promoting comprehensive land governance education encompasses nurturing effective scientific writing practices, underpinning its resolve to elevate scholarly communication and impactful research outcomes



These workshops were meticulously designed to achieve the following key objectives:

**1. Enhancing scientific writing skills:** At the forefront of our efforts was the aim to improve the quality of scientific writing skills among participants. We recognize that the ability to articulate research findings effectively is fundamental to scholarly communication.

**2. Support for early researchers:** Another pivotal goal was to assist early-stage researchers in transforming their scientific work into publishable papers. By doing so, we seek to bridge the gap between academic research and impactful dissemination.

**3. Promoting research collaboration:** We also sought to foster greater collaboration among NELGA member universities. These workshops served as a platform for networking and knowledge exchange, thereby increasing research collaboration.

**4. Strengthening research supervision:**



Acknowledging the crucial role of academic staff in guiding postgraduate students, the workshops emphasized enhancing research supervision and mentorship skills. This is vital for nurturing the next generation of scholars.





*“High-impact workshops like this should be conducted in other countries in Southern Africa in order to benefit more students and researchers.” – Dr Fatima Mandhu (NELGA partner – University of Zambia)*

Areas covered in the trainings include:



**Foundational skills**

-  Understanding key metrics: H-index and social impact factors in scientific academic publication
-  Effective scientific writing strategies.


**Writing techniques**

-  Comparative analysis of different styles of scientific writing
-  Mastery of literature review techniques

**Publication process**

-  Navigating the process of writing and publishing scientific articles
-  Insights into submitting manuscripts to high-ranking journals.

**Advanced academic skills**

-  Guidance on PhD discourse

While these workshops have yielded commendable results in Southern Africa, NELGA recognizes the need to extend similar initiatives across the continent. Efforts to replicate and adapt these workshops to different African regions, are actively underway. By doing so, NELGA aims to foster academic excellence throughout the continent.



In Central Africa, where many qualified young researchers grapple with the intricacies of securing employment and scholarships in the land sector, NELGA has taken proactive steps. On 26 June 2023, the NELGA Central Africa node organised an online workshop aimed at empowering these aspiring researchers.

This workshop was strategically designed to equip young researchers with the skills and insights necessary to navigate job and scholarship opportunities effectively within the land sector. Key objectives included:

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**Techniques for opportunity:** Providing participants with practical techniques for identifying and pursuing job and scholarship opportunities in the land sector.

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**Understanding prerequisites:** Clarifying the prerequisites for successful job and scholarship applications, ensuring that participants meet the necessary qualifications.

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**Effective application strategies:** Educating participants on how to critically assess job and scholarship offers and respond effectively.

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**Emphasising best practices:** Encouraging the adoption of best practices and attitudes in the pursuit of jobs and scholarships.

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**The power of networking:** Highlighting the significance of forming connections and networks to facilitate information and experience sharing, a practice highly recommended by our panellists.

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*“Future structural changes on land sector in Africa depend on current capacity-building strategies for young scholars.” – Paul Tchawa*

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## Results and recommendations

### Achievements from the Southern Africa Workshops

The Southern Africa workshops conducted by the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) through the NELGA Node for Southern Africa have yielded significant achievements:

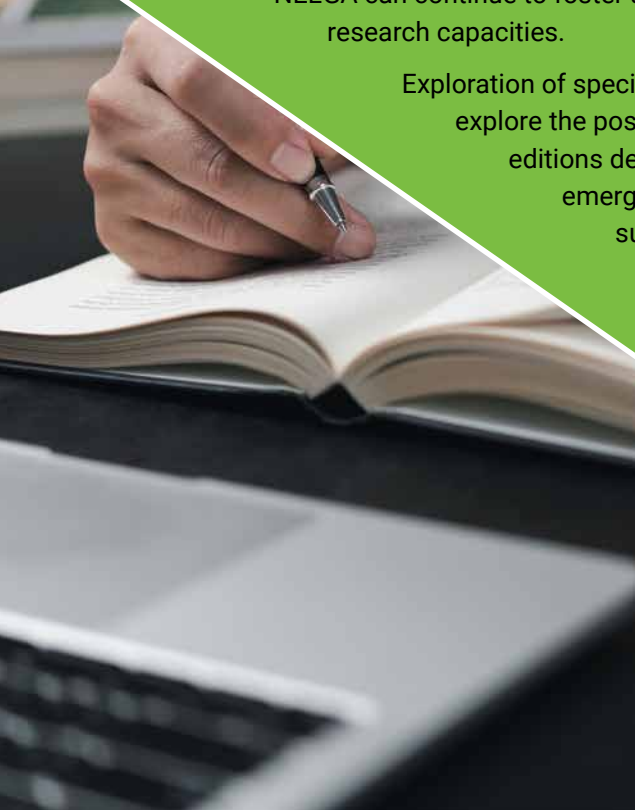
- ✓ **Formation of a writing team:** In the wake of these workshops, a dedicated team has been established with the express purpose of creating a comprehensive scientific writers' and supervisors' manual. This manual is poised to become a cornerstone resource for researchers and educators, equipping them with the essential tools to navigate the complexities of scientific writing and supervision effectively.
- ✓ **Contributions to academic discourse:** Participants of these workshops have actively contributed abstracts, which are now invaluable chapters in an upcoming book. This collaborative endeavour has not only broadened the academic discourse but has also enriched the field of land governance with diverse perspectives and insights.

### Recommendations for future initiatives

Building upon the success of the Southern Africa workshops and recognising the vital role of similar programmes in enhancing academic excellence, NELGA offers the following recommendations for future initiatives:

**Expansion and replication:** It is recommended to expand and replicate these workshops across diverse regions, reaching a broader spectrum of students and researchers. By extending the reach of these programmes, NELGA can continue to foster academic growth and strengthen research capacities.

**Exploration of special journal editions:** NELGA should explore the possibility of curating special journal editions dedicated to showcasing the research emerging from these workshops. Additionally, submitting research findings to NELGA-affiliated journals can further amplify the dissemination of impactful research.





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