

Call for applications for research fellowships under the “Network of Excellence for Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)” during the **COVID-19 crisis**



Background

The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has forced the world into action. The measures taken to contain the virus have impacted the whole of society, including the education sector, with research becoming more important than ever. To help investigating how COVID-19 and related measures potentially affect housing, land, and property rights in African countries, and to deliver high-quality research on the COVID 19 implications for land governance institutions and systems in the long-term, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) offers support for **special research fellowships** under the "Network of Excellence for Land Governance in Africa (NELGA)" in the form of desk studies.

What is NELGA?

The "**Network of Excellence for 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 across Africa.

The objectives of NELGA are:

- Enhancing training opportunities and curricula on land governance in Africa;
- Promoting demand driven research on land policy issues;
- Connecting scholars and researchers across Africa;
- Creating data and information for monitoring and evaluation on land policy reforms.

Who can apply?

We invite staff members or students of NELGA partner institutions with a background in land governance or a related field to apply for funding for special **NELGA research fellowships** during the COVID-19 crisis.

Applicants must:

- have completed at least a first university degree (undergraduate) at a state or state-recognized institution of higher education;
- be nationals of an African country;
- be granted leave of absence by their home institution for the purpose of conducting a study.

Female applicants and candidates from less privileged regions or groups are especially encouraged to participate in the program.

Details of the research fellowship

Place of Tenure:

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the fellowships must be undertaken as desk research.

Duration:

The fellowship will be awarded for studies taking place in August 2020. The grant is non-renewable, a postponement is not possible. One month after the end of the fellowship the fellow must provide a detailed report on the implementation of the study and its findings. The fellow may be invited to present the findings to an audience in a format to be determined.

Value:

- A one-off research allowance of EUR 460.

The fellowship does not cover living expenses. It can only be awarded once per year. The funds will be transferred to the fellowship holder's personal bank account.

What are eligible research fields?

NELGA invites applicants to apply for funding to undertake desk research on the COVID 19 implications for land governance institutions and systems. Research topics can be selected based on the most pressing questions and realities on the ground. Potential topics and questions can include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Consequences of COVID-19 on rural communities in Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic will have both immediate and long-term consequences for rural communities. When COVID-19 arrived in African countries in January 2020, many governments announced strict measures to contain its spread, including restricting movement and association. This has led to the partial or complete shutdown of many countries, putting people out of work and disrupting daily activities that support the livelihoods of millions of people. The crisis has halted the implementation of land laws and regulations and stopped processes that provide tenure security and protection of smallholder farmers in their quest for land rights. Furthermore, the expected higher number of deaths, particularly amongst older generations, could bring forward much administration related to land inheritance and probate. Because these people/land issues often cut across agencies, systems are typically slower in dealing with these often-contested land transactions. In the short term, many systems may struggle to deal with the spike in transaction requests. Secure land rights will be essential to overcome challenges posed by the pandemic and extra resourcing and fast-tracked procedures may need to be considered.

To better understand the immediate and long-term effects of COVID-19 on tenure security in rural areas, research could, amongst other things, tackle the following questions: What are the immediate and long-term effects of COVID-19 on land tenure security and how are these effects intersected with other sectors? How can technology and recent innovations in land administration (e.g. digital auctions, signing of virtual contracts, and virtual 'open for inspections') be utilized and upscaled to meet the challenges related to the COVID-19 crisis as well as for future preparedness?

2. The Impacts of COVID-19 on Housing and Sanitation in Africa

Historically, epidemics have acted as strong catalysts in transforming how diseases are handled in urban areas. With rates of rural-to-urban migration reaching record highs, today more than half of all urban residents in Sub-Saharan Africa live in informal settlements, often characterized by a lack of access to basic sanitary infrastructure and critical resources, as well as a general tenure insecurity. This makes an effective control of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the African continent difficult. As practices of social/physical distancing are implemented to flatten the curve, concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on informal settlements and populations without adequate housing are rising. Currently the threat of COVID-19 is mainly being discussed on a universal scale, but there is a great risk that the impacts on the urban poor in developing countries will be considerably higher than elsewhere. With the already vulnerable parts of the population losing their jobs and the ability to support their livelihoods, many of those unemployed are facing eviction or mortgage default. The COVID-19 crisis could therefore result in widespread dispossession of housing and land, creating social upheaval, ultimately leading to informality and new slum formation.

The following questions therefore need to be answered: How could COVID-19 impact people living in densely populated and unsanitary environments (short-term and long-term)? And what could mitigate the worst of these impacts?

3. Effects of COVID-19 on women's housing, land, and property rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to significantly affect the housing, land, and property of women and girls, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. In many parts of the world, women and girls are already at a disadvantage, with limited economic assets, education, and job opportunities; and they could find themselves further behind when the crisis ends. Previous epidemics, and post-conflict or post-disaster situations, have shown that women are likely to be further disenfranchised if their rights are not protected. Many women work in the informal sector and lack any job protections or access to social security or insurance structures. Women are also more likely to be burdened with the care of family members during the crisis – children home from school and sick relatives – and, compounding that, the enforcement of quarantines and social distancing is predicted to lead to a rise in domestic and gender-based violence.

Potential research questions could therefore include: What precise effects does the COVID-19 crisis have on women and girls in African countries? What protective measures could mitigate the risk to further weaken women's land and housing rights? How could inheritance laws and marital property regimes be reformed to improve the implementation and enforcement of women's rights to housing and property?

Application Procedure

Applicants will be required to:

- register online via the DAAD-Portal: <https://portal.daad.de/>
- apply online under the following link: https://portal.daad.de/sap/bc/bsp/sap/z_set_cookie/setcookie.htm?fund_ar=stv&id=57388733

Documents to be submitted:

- Curriculum Vitae, including list of publications (if applicable);
- Detailed description of the research proposal and a description of previous research work (max. 10 pages);
- Schedule of planned research work;
- All university certificates received so far on all annual examinations with individual grade(s), incl. explanation of grading system;
- One recent reference from a university teacher which provides information about your qualifications.

Applications for the NELGA research fellowships may be submitted throughout the year. For this specialized call we invite you to apply before **the 15th of June 2020**. The fellowship will be awarded for August 2020.

Contact details

For further questions please contact:
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