



NELGA-DAAD Post-Doc Research Fellowships

List of Eligible Topics

NELGA and DAAD recognize the importance of research on land governance in Africa. Land is a critical resource for the continent's transformation, and its effective management is essential for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and peace and security. The African Union (AU) and the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) are working on those areas as outlined by the [AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges and in Africa](#), the [report on the progress](#) made, the [AU Land Governance Strategy](#), and [ALPC's Guidelines for the Development of Curricula on Land Governance in Africa](#).

Additional research is necessary to address the dynamism of land use and institutional change in Africa and to ensure that land policy development and implementation is done responsibly. The supported research shall contribute to the understanding of how to improve land governance in Africa and enhance capacities and skills to support land policy development and implementation.

In light of this, NELGA and DAAD are calling for proposals for post-doctoral research projects across Africa with a focus on four key areas:

- 1) Institutions and Land Transactions,
- 2) Tenure Rights,
- 3) Survey and Land Information Management, and
- 4) Socio-Economic Aspects of Land Governance.

Each of these four key areas has set subcategories. Proposals need to cover one of the subcategories to be considered for a research fellowship. Research proposal will be evaluated based on their academic quality and the policy relevance of the suggested topic and methodology. The research proposal shall clearly highlight, how the findings can contribute to improve land policies and land governance systems on a national, regional, or continental level. Proposals that integrated cross-cutting issues including gender, climate change, customary land rights, and digital solutions for land issues are strongly encouraged. More information on each topic in the following.

1) Institutions and Land Transactions

Land institutions play a crucial role in shaping the political, social, and economic environment in Africa. How land institutions operate, what policies they follow, and how they implement land rights and facilitate transactions has a big impact on rural and urban population. Under this topic research proposal on the following subcategories are accepted:

- (i) Land policy development processes,
- (ii) Institutional arrangements,
- (iii) Land transactions, and
- (iv) Corruption in land governance

There is a need for greater public participation in land policy development and for more effective mechanisms to ensure accountability. Moreover, findings from research should enter the policy discussion to enable evidence based decision-making processes.



On the other hand, institutional arrangements for land governance are often weak and fragmented, which makes it difficult to regulate land transactions, prevent land grabbing, and reduce corruption. There is a need for stronger and more coordinated institutions for land governance, with clear lines of authority and accountability. Land transactions are often conducted in an informal and unregulated manner, making it difficult to track land ownership and prevent corruption. There is a need for greater transparency and regulation of land transactions, and for the development of a land registry systems that are accurate and robust enough to accommodate the multiple land tenure systems co-existing in the African context.

There is also need to address corruption which is a major hindrance to good land governance in Africa. Corruption takes many forms, including bribery, extortion, nepotism etc. Corruption can lead to loss of land by smallholder farmers, displacement of communities compromising their social economic wellbeing. This may result into disputes, environmental degradation and other unintended negative effects. There is therefore a need for stronger anti-corruption measures in land governance, including the establishment of independent judicial systems and other institutions governing land.

2) Tenure rights

Land tenure rights are a critical issue in Africa, as they play a crucial role in shaping the political, social, and economic environment within which development occurs. How land institutions operate, what policies they follow, and how they are implemented has a big impact on rural and urban populations. Under this topic, research proposals on the following subcategories are accepted:

- (i) Land tenure rights,
- (ii) Women land rights, and
- (iii) Conflicts & Disputes

Land tenure determines the rights of individuals or groups to own, use, or control land. They are often enshrined in law but can also be customary or traditional. Land tenure rights are important for a number of reasons. They determine how communities access land for food, shelter, and to fulfil other livelihood needs. Security of tenure influences environmental protection, as people are more likely to better care for land that they have secure tenure to. Land tenure security can also help to reduce poverty and reduce inequality. When people feel secure, investment decisions on their land are more solid and long term.

There are different types of land tenure including Freehold, leasehold, occupancy rights, and multiple forms of traditional land tenure. Land tenure rights can be complex and may significantly vary from country to country, community to community etc. Women's land rights are a particularly important issue in Africa. Women account for 70% of family farming in Africa, but less than 20% have full access to agricultural land. While 70 to 90% of all wealth in Africa is generated through land, less than 10 per cent is owned by women. Women's land rights tend to stay at plans and policy levels, hardly implemented. This disparity deserves increased international attention and country-level debate to ensure that women have equal access to land and its benefits.

Conflicts and disputes over land rights are also a major concern in Africa. Competition for access to Africa's land and natural resources is increasing. This has led to displacement and resettlement of many rural people and created insecure tenure situations. Under weak tenure circumstances, people will often mine their soils and extract natural resources to maximize short-term benefits, eroding the resource base, negatively



impacting ecosystems, and undermining long-term agricultural productivity. Research on conflicts and disputes over land will help to identify best practices in preventing and resolving land conflicts, that could be replicated elsewhere.

3) Surveying and Land Information Management

Land is a finite resource. It is therefore necessary to govern and manage it effectively for social stability, sustainable economic development and equitable taxation. In this regard, the development of comprehensive cadastre and modern Land Information Management Systems (LIMS) for use by decision makers, is essential.

A cadastre is a parcel-based land information system, or a comprehensive record of all land parcels, and the information relating to the parcels, within a defined jurisdiction. Such a record serves as a key source of information on land ownership, land values and land use, and is therefore an important tool for land governance at national and local level. A cadastre is often represented by a cadastral map database linked to a database of corresponding attributes through identifiers unique to each land parcel. The establishment of these parcel-based land information systems is crucial for developing countries where land governance and service delivery are weak as a result of ineffective land administration systems.

A Land Information Management System on the other hand (LIMS) is defined as the combination of human and technical resources, together with a set of organizing procedures, that produce information on land in support of a broad range of managerial requirements. New innovations are emerging towards flexible land information management systems that are less technical, fast, and affordable. GIS technology helps in managing different data sets of information on, for instance, land tenure, value, management, and use within a LIMS, through its ability to overlay and display the different data sets of information to meet different user needs. The development of GIS-driven LIMS should be a priority in jurisdictions where these have not yet been established.

A sound spatial reference framework (coordinate system), aligned to the Global Positioning System (GPS), and which can be upgraded through continuous observations, is central to the development of modern cadastral and Land Information Management Systems within the continent. Technology has made it possible to harness modern methods of surveying for the collection of land information, its processing, storage and dissemination for improved land governance. Therefore, research proposals on the areas below will be consider: -

1. Use of technology and modern survey methods to upgrade existing spatial reference frameworks for compliance with global positioning, and continuous updates
2. The development of inclusive cadastral in which the tenure rights of all are recognized, as is provided for in the AU Declaration
3. The development of land information management systems suited to the peculiarities within Africa

4) Socio-Economic Aspects of Land Governance



Socio-economic aspects of land governance are critical to understanding the complex relationships between land, people, and the environment. Under this topic, research proposals on the following subcategories are accepted:

- (i) Socio-economic trends in land governance,
- (ii) Titling, Land Markets, Land use and Climate change,
- (iii) Large Scale Land Based Investments.

Socio-economic trends in land governance are important to study as they reflect the competition over land use due to the scarcity of natural resources and the socio-political characteristics of the countries involved. Land use accounts for 13-20% of carbon emissions, so it will be vital in tackling climate change and keeping the global temperature increase under 1.5°C as recommended by the 2015 United Nations Paris agreement on climate change. The implications of titling on climate change and land markets are also important to consider. For example, a large-scale titling initiative in the Brazilian Amazon found that small and medium landholders increased deforestation in response to the program, whereas large landholders remained largely unaffected.

Large Scale Land Based Investments (LSLBI) have increasingly become an important policy concern in Africa as acquisitions have grown in scale and number. The practice involves the purchase or lease of large tracts of land by foreign nations, companies, or individuals for agricultural production. Evidence suggests a marked disparity in the benefits received by those involved in and affected by these transnational land acquisitions, particularly for those originally dwelling on the land. Such a problem deserves both increased international attention and country-level debate to ensure such agreements provide more equal benefits to all parties involved.

	Key Areas	Subcategories
1.	Institutions and land transactions	Land policy development Processes
		Institutional arrangements
		Land transactions
		Corruption in land governance
2.	Tenure rights	Land tenure rights
		Women land rights
		Conflicts/Disputes
3.	Survey and LIM (Technical areas that may require a specialized expertise for review proposals)	Cadaster/Geomatics
		Land Information Management
4.	Socio-economic aspects of land governance	Socio-economic trends in land governance
		Titling, Land Markets, Land use and Climate change
		Large Scale Land Based Invest