Three Year Doctoral Research Fellowships for the Project 'Drylands Transform'

Drylands Transform – Pathways and challenges toward a socio-ecological transformation of landscapes, livestock and livelihoods in the East African drylands, is a multidisciplinary research project (2020 – 2024) led by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). The geographical focus of Drylands Transform is the cross-boundary area between Kenya and Uganda, part of the Karamoja cluster. The project is funded by the Swedish research council FORMAS and involves scholars from seven different universities and organizations in Sweden and the East African region. Dryland Transform is part of the Triple L research initiative.

The project aims to investigate the links between land health, livestock-based livelihoods, human well-being, and land management and governance. We will contribute with new knowledge for transformative change and sustainable development of rangelands in the drylands of East Africa.

Through strong stakeholder engagement in interdisciplinary research, we set out to explore the challenges and pathways towards a social-ecological transformation in drylands that optimizes synergies among the sustainable development goals (SDGs) while minimizing the trade-offs. We will use innovative field research approaches focusing on livelihood improvement through rangeland restoration and governance interventions in four sites in the border region between Kenya and Uganda.

The entry point of Drylands Transform is the urgent need to identify and enhance synergies between food and nutrition security (SDG2), land and ecosystem health (SDG15) and governance and justice (SDG16) for sustainable dryland development, while minimizing trade-offs between agricultural productivity (SDG2), natural resources management (SDG15) and climate change (SDG13).

In Drylands Transform we will:
1. Assess land health at the landscape scale and explore the links with human health and well-being.
2. Co-develop sustainable rangeland management options with local communities, and set-up knowledge sharing hubs ('livestock cafés').
3. Study impacts of seasonality and climate variability on food and livelihood strategies, well-being and resilience.
4. Identify innovative land governance mechanisms and practices that effectively address livestock-keepers' dependence on both flexible and secure rights to land.
5. Co-design and evaluate alternative scenarios for sustainable dryland transformation in East Africa with local and regional stakeholder groups.

Description of the doctoral fellow position

Within the overall aim of the project to contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the East African drylands, the PhD research fellows are expected to conduct their research with a specific focus on Obj 3 – Study impacts of seasonality and climate variability on food and livelihood strategies, well-being and resilience. Two fellowships are available: One of the fellows will be enrolled at the Makerere University, Uganda, in Department of Agribusiness and Natural Resource Economics. The other PhD fellow will be enrolled at the University of Nairobi, Department of Land Resource Management and Agricultural Technology or the Department of Food Science Technology and Nutrition. The PhD fellows will be jointly supervised by researchers from University of Nairobi, Makerere University, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Umea University and Linnaeus University, Sweden.

Subject area

Two subject areas will be covered by the PhD fellowships:
1. Household resilience to climate variability: "Impacts, adaptation and resilience to climate variability and droughts"
2. Climate variability and conflicts: "Effects of Climate Variability on the rise of social conflicts at the household and community level"

Responsibilities of the doctoral research fellows

In close multidisciplinary collaboration with other scholars within the Drylands Transform program, the doctoral fellows will:
a) Contribute to the theoretical/conceptual framing of subject area 1 or 2 (as listed above)
b) Assemble and review peer-reviewed and grey literature for adequate analysis of subject area 1 or 2 (as listed above)
c) Participate in design and implementation of qualitative and quantitative research at the four sites in Uganda and Kenya
d) Author a thesis and joint publications

Funding

The project includes funds for 36 months and covers tuition, fieldwork as well as participation in project meetings, regional workshops and international academic conferences, and a monthly stipend.

Core eligibility criteria

The suitable candidates will have the following qualifications:

- Master's degree in any of the following fields: Agricultural Economics or related fields; Rangeland Management or related fields; Applied Human nutrition or related fields; public health/health sciences or related fields
- Masters degree should not be older than 5 years
- National of Uganda or Kenya
- Prior experience of conducting qualitative and/or quantitative empirical research preferably in the drylands
- At least one publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Other favorable and experience
- Use of basic MS Office tools
- Data Analytical skills using common programs (Excel, Stata, R, etc.)
- Language proficiency (English)
- Ability to work in an interdisciplinary and multicultural team
- Experience with project work and working with partners is of advantage

How to apply:
Interested applicants should send applications to Dr. Alice Turinawe (alice.turinawe@mak.ac.ug) with a copy to Dr. Stephen Mureithi (stemureithi@uonbi.ac.ke) by end of day, **July 31, 2021.**

Candidates are required to submit the following documents:
1. Motivation letter
2. Current Curriculum Vitae, including at least two academic referees
3. Copies (PDF format) of academic certificates and transcripts of degree and courses taken
4. A short summary of master thesis (max. 3 pages)
5. At least one past relevant peer-reviewed publication
6. The applicants should indicate the preferred university to which they would like to be attached, as well as the preferred subject area from the two indicated above