



PhD vacancy: Climate change and resilience in Africa: 2 PhD positions in Uganda

Are you passionate about tackling climate-related challenges and empowering climate-affected communities in Africa? Do you aspire to complete academic research with a real-world impact? Join Climares, a groundbreaking research project that supports the climate resilience of at-risk populations in five African countries. For our work in Uganda, we are looking for 2 PhD candidates who will work with either smallholders or refugees and other stakeholders using innovative, participatory research methods. The positions are initially for one year, extended, conditional upon good performance, to a maximum of five years, on a full-time basis. The positions are based in Makerere University, Uganda, Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Climatic Sciences. If successful, the applicants will receive a joint/dual degree with Wageningen University, The Netherlands [PhD A- smallholders] or Erasmus University Rotterdam [PhD B- refugees].

Expected starting date: July 1st - August 1st, 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Job description – what you will do?

You will be part of an exciting new research project called Climares (www.climares.nl). Climares is a consortium of 7 African and 7 Dutch universities, along with societal partners, working in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Morocco, Senegal, and Uganda. Our mission is to support at-risk populations—smallholders, fisherfolk, urban outdoor workers, pastoralists, and displaced people—by transforming weather and climate data into actionable insights that enhance resilience and enable early adaptation. Climares uses participatory digital and in person research, co-created climate storylines and advocacy methods to ensure that weather and climate information becomes accurate and actionable and integrated with local knowledge systems.

Within the scope of the project, you are expected to develop your own PhD research focus and thematic interest, in close collaboration with your supervisors. The supervision team consists of African and Dutch academics with a range of research areas. You will also be part of an interdisciplinary group of eleven PhD researchers, who are recruited from the five African countries and who will be the core of the Climares project. The PhD researchers will work independently and in collaboration, by sharing knowledge, skills, and experiences.

The PhD projects in Uganda centre around action-oriented research with communities and other stakeholders, such as civil society actors, private actors, and government representatives. The projects aim to support the agency and resilience of communities by creating and supporting Knowledge∞ Action (K∞A) networks. These networks are composed of all stakeholders that have an interest in the resilience of a population group, including affected communities. As a PhD researcher, you will be responsible for setting up and facilitating these networks over a five-year period, and for collecting data on the process. For

the duration of the project, you will be part of the Climares Academy that meets online for one day per week for training, supervision and meetings with your peers.

- 1) **Project A (SMALLHOLDERS)** will focus on the climate-related challenges and innovation strategies of smallholders engaged in cash crop production, notably highland coffee cultivation.
- 2) **Project B (DISPLACEMENT)** will focus on refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in Uganda, and their resilience strategies in relation to their experienced climate-related threats and uncertainties.

Where you will work

These PhD positions are based in Uganda, with occasional travel to the Netherlands (or other countries) for training purposes and consortium meetings.

The PhD trajectories will start with an intensive two-month training in the Netherlands. After this, you will return to Uganda to spend significant periods of time with either smallholders or refugees and to start working on the Knowledge∞Action (K∞A) networks. During this period, you will attend online training and reflection meetings one day per week.

You will be a member of the Climares PhD school, called the Climares Academy. Training will include academic courses as well as training on skills and content required for Climares, and individual career development support. Training will be provided by members of the Climares consortium, including academic partners and societal partners such as the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Deltares, and the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute. PhD candidates will receive cutting-edge teaching and mentoring from a diverse range of experts, combining theoretical knowledge with practical applications.

Supervision and degree

The supervision teams for these PhD projects will consist of scholars from Makerere University and Wageningen University for PhD -A and scholars from Makerere and Erasmus University for PhD-B. With your supervisors, you will develop a detailed PhD project plan, including research activities and milestones. You will also jointly develop and regularly monitor your own career development plan.

You will be admitted to and graduate from Makerere University, as well as – through joint/dual-degree arrangement – from Wageningen University (PhD-A) and Erasmus University [PhD-B] in the Netherlands.

Requirements

We are looking for an interdisciplinary team of PhD researchers. We therefore invite candidates with various profiles to apply.

Requirements for both candidates:

- 1) You have a master's degree or an equivalent diploma in social sciences, climate sciences, geographical sciences, environmental sciences or a related field;
- 2) You have experience with, and a strong affinity for, research related to climate change, climate resilience, climate change impacts, or climate vulnerability;
- 3) You possess strong research skills, either qualitative or quantitative, and have experience working with communities, preferably using participatory methods;

- 4) You are motivated to develop your methodological skills in both qualitative and quantitative research;
- 5) You are a resident of Uganda, or have extensive experience working in Uganda, preferably with either smallholders (PhD-A) or refugees (PhD-B). For participatory research with communities, it is important that you are familiar with local customs and that you speak one of the relevant local languages.
- 6) You are able to carry out your work independently and proactively, and you are also able to work well in a team. You support the idea of interdisciplinary teamwork and knowledge sharing.
- 7) You have excellent academic skills (analytical thinking, scientific writing and presentation), evidenced for example by a good review of your master's thesis and potentially some scientific publications;
- 8) You have excellent social skills that will allow you to work with communities, other stakeholders and other PhD candidates over a long period of time.
- 9) Proficiency in English is a must. Graduation at one of the Netherlands universities must be done on the basis of a dissertation in English.

What we offer

We offer you an interdisciplinary PhD position, where you will obtain academic skills with practical application, in an enthusiastic team of world-renowned scholars and organizations working on climate issues.

The expected start date of this position July 1st - August 1st, 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter. You will be based at Makerere University, the Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Climatic Sciences, one of the Departments within the School of College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

We offer a competitive remuneration as well as research costs.

The initial contract has a duration of one year (12 months), to be extended to five years conditional upon performance.

About the Home University: Makerere University

General description

Established in 1922 as a technical college, Makerere University was affiliated to the University of London until 1963 when it became one of the three constituent colleges of the University of East Africa. It became an independent University in 1970 by Act of Parliament. This status continued until 2001 when the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act was enacted (<https://mak.ac.ug/about/facts-figures>). Makerere University is committed to providing transformative and innovative teaching, learning, research and services responsive to dynamic national and global needs.

The successful PhD candidates will be hosted at the Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Climatic Sciences, one of the Departments within the School of College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (<https://mak.ac.ug/study-mak/colleges-departments>). The Department offers crosscutting academic programmes and research, combining the aspects of Human, Physical and Environmental Geography. Our research foci spans climate science, climate change and earth observation; Coupled human-environment systems, demography and development; disaster risk management and reduction and Urban and regional systems, transformations and sustainability.

About the Host universities

A) Wageningen University

Position A, focusing on **smallholders**, will be co-supervised by Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Wageningen University is the most renowned life science university in the Netherlands, hosting high quality research and training on biodiversity, climate change, food security, health, and society. The mission of the University is 'to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'. The university contributes with impact-oriented often interdisciplinary research and hosts a strongly international community of staff and students. <https://www.wur.nl/en.htm>

The PhD research on smallholders is interdisciplinary in nature. The supervision team from Wageningen University will combine social science (from the chairgroup Sociology of Development and Change, SDC, part of the Social Science Department) and environmental science (from the chairgroup Soil Physics and land management, SLM). SDC hosts expertise on rural and urban development, natural resource governance and conflict, vulnerability and resilience; and a strong tradition of fieldwork and collaborative methodologies. SLM hosts expertise on sustainable land management, soil and water conservation, and farmer-led adaptation and innovation.

B) Erasmus University

Position B, focusing on **refugees and other forcibly displaced persons**, will be co-supervised by the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), part of Erasmus University, in the Netherlands. ISS is an international graduate school of policy-oriented critical social science. Established over 60 years ago, ISS brings together academics and students from the Global South and North to study political, economic, and social developments in transition economies. It has a long tradition in action-oriented research and a wide range of expertise working on and with African societies.

The PhD candidate will be embedded in The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre, a research centre for academic and applied research, teaching and training, and networking and impact in the field of humanitarian studies that focuses on the impact of humanitarian crises, including climate-related disasters and displacement.

Application process

The deadline for applications is 25 March 2025. You can apply by emailing your application to: Position A: climares-phdapplication@wur.nl PLUS frank.mugagga@mak.ac.ug

Position B: climares-phdapplication@wur.nl PLUS paul.mukwaya@mak.ac.ug

Clearly indicate whether you are applying for position A (smallholders) or position B (refugees).

The application must be in English. Please note: We strongly discourage the use of generative AI in your application.

Please include the following documents:

- 1) A motivation letter (max. two pages)
- 2) A curriculum vitae (CV)
- 3) Names and contact details of two referents
- 4) A concept note or description of research ideas of not more than 4 pages, outlining the intended focus, possible research questions, and the methodological and theoretical focus

5) publications if any; and as it is often difficult to judge the applicant's contribution to publications with multiple authors, a short description of the applicant's contribution must be included.

After reviewing all applications, we will make a shortlist of candidates who are invited for an interview. There might be a second interview before a final selection is made. Interviews will be online and are to be scheduled for April 9, 10, and 11.

Further information

For more information on Climares, please visit: www.climares.nl

For specific questions, please contact:

- 1) Prof Frank Mugagga; Email: fmugagga@gmail.com or frank.mugagga@mak.ac.ug for the position on smallholders (position A)
or
- 2) Dr. Paul Isolo Mukwaya; Email: pmukwaya@gmail.com or paul.mukwaya@mak.ac.ug for the position on refugees (position B)



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