

Call for proposals

Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme “Neglected Communicable Tropical Diseases and Related Public Health Research”

The neglected tropical diseases are a group of 14 infectious diseases which affect more than one billion people worldwide, mainly in Africa and mostly living in extreme poverty. Beyond their negative impact on health, NTDs contribute to an ongoing cycle of poverty and stigma that leaves tens of millions unable to work, go to school or participate in family and community life.

This Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, Merieux Foundation, Nuffield Foundation, and the Volkswagen Foundation, supports the development of locally devised and led African research on neglected tropical diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Programme:

- provides funding for outstanding young African researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa to carry out relevant, applied research at African research institutions. Scientific visits to non-African scientific institutions may be included but must not exceed more than 4 months annually.
- focuses on translational or operational research questions and therefore proposals are welcome that address the public health issues related to preventing and treating neglected tropical diseases, including those from social scientists, such as medical anthropologists, as well as from biomedical researchers.
- offers 3-year Junior Fellowships to recently qualified African postdoctoral researchers and 3-year Extended Fellowships for more experienced researchers. Depending on the success of this initiative, further support may be possible so that Fellows can progress from postdoctoral researcher to research group leader positions.
- draws on collaboration between African and European research institutions, with the Fellow determining with which European institution he/she proposes to collaborate and on what research issues and topics.
- provides for additional support to the Fellows beyond salary, travel and research costs – the Mentorship Programme will enable the Fellows to establish links to leading African and non-African scientists and training will be provided in key career skills such as proposal writing and communication at annual meetings of all Fellows.

Note:

The application and selection process is in three stages. The deadline for the first stage, submission of abstracts for an international conference, is 31 March 2008. Abstracts for the conference should be sent in English to ntd2008@volkswagenstiftung.de. Applicants can not proceed to the second stage unless they have been invited to the conference.

Eligibility:

Applicants

Applicants for *junior fellowships* must be postdoctoral researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa. The necessary degree (MD or PhD) must have been granted by the end of 2008.

For the *extended fellowships*, postdoctoral researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa (MD or PhD) must have substantial research experience (for example 3 years of postdoctoral experience or substantial pre-doctoral research experience); applicants will need to demonstrate experience and achievements (as documented by publication record) appropriate to the extended funding and mini-group leader responsibilities.

Applicants from Sub-Saharan countries outside South Africa and applicants returning to Sub-Saharan countries are particularly encouraged to apply for both the junior and the extended fellowships.

Projects

The Programme focuses on neglected tropical diseases (NTD). Diseases in the focus of the initiative are neglected tropical diseases (including where appropriate the vectors) relevant to Africa, e.g. Schistosomiasis, the filariases, soil transmitted helminths, Buruli ulcer, Human Trypanosomiasis, but also bacterial meningitis, viral diarrhoea, etc. Projects on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria will NOT be considered unless, in exceptional cases, for example if candidates are aiming at the development of new methods and techniques that might be directly transferable to other tropical diseases or address co-infection between these diseases and NTDs. In such cases applicants should demonstrate that support for their project is not available in dedicated funding portfolios of other organisations focussing on these diseases.

The biomedical or related public health research projects must address priority translational or operational research questions in the African context. Projects should preferably be linked to ongoing programmes which are delivering interventions to provide a relevant framework for the research. Clinical trials without significant basic research components will not be considered. The work should also aim at the development and establishment of new methods/techniques and/or address research questions related to treatment and/or prevention. Where appropriate, projects should bridge biomedical and public health research questions.

Fellowship Rates

For both the junior and extended fellowships, the official grant recipient will be the scientific host institution at which the Fellow will be employed. Basic infrastructure should be provided by the host African institutions; the fellowship can provide administrative costs for the host institution up to a maximum of 5.000 EUR.

1. Junior Fellowship

The Fellowship covers salary, research and travel costs up to a maximum of 90.000 EUR over 3 years.

In addition, up to 10.000 EUR for an optional Mentorship Programme can be applied for, to enable the Fellow to establish links to two leading scientists of their choice (one from an African and one from a non-African institution) independent from the research project itself, e.g. by annual meetings between the fellow and the mentors or by inviting mentors to the fellow's host institution. These leading scientists must agree to act as supporters for the Fellow – assisting with their career development through, for instance, introducing them to peer networks and helping them to publish in international journals. Please note, that a collaboration with a research institution in Europe is essential

The budget items must be justified for by the applicant and could include:

- Salary of Fellow (depending on customary local salaries and experience).
- Travelling to conferences/workshops.
- Scientific visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3-4 months per year.
- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10.000 EUR). Annual meetings between the applicant and a maximum of 2 mentors (one from an African and one from a non-African institution).
- Language courses or courses for project management.
- Consumables.
- Costs of field work (but not vehicle purchase).
- Publication costs.
- Small equipment (max. 20 % of total budget).

2. Extended Fellowship

The Fellowship covers salary, research and travel costs up to a maximum of 140.000 EUR over 3 years.

In addition, up to 10.000 EUR for an optional Mentorship Programme can be applied for, to enable the Fellow to establish links to two leading scientists of their choice (one from an African and one from a non-African institution) independent from the research project itself, e.g. by annual meetings between the fellow and the mentors or by inviting mentors to the fellow's host institution. These leading scientists must agree to act as supporters for the Fellow – assisting with their career development through, for instance, introducing them to peer networks and helping them to publish in international journals. Please note, that a collaboration with a research institution in Europe is essential

The budget items must be justified for by the applicant and could include:

- Salary of Fellow (depending on customary local salaries and experience).
- Salary of 1-2 PhD students involved in the project, (co-)supervised by the applicant.
- Salary of up to one technician/research assistant.
- Travelling to conferences/workshops.
- Participation in field work and associated costs (but not vehicle purchase).
- Scientific visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3-4 months per year.

- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10.000 EUR). Annual meetings between the applicant and a maximum of 2 mentors (one from an African and one from a non-African institution).
- Language courses or courses for project management.
- Consumables.
- Publication costs.
- Equipment (max. 20 % of total budget). Basic infrastructure should be provided by the host institutions.

Application and selection process:

This is a three-stage process:

Stage 1:

African postdoctoral researchers apply for participation in an international conference “Neglected Tropical Diseases 2008” (“NTD 2008”). Applications for this stage must be received by 31 March 2008. Decisions on this first selection process will be made by the end of May 2008.

The conference itself will be held in September 2008 in West Africa. It will offer invited key-note lectures and contributions by leading scientists in the field as well as providing networking opportunities. Successful applicants will be invited to either give oral or poster presentations.

Stage 2:

Those invited to the conference will be asked to submit a full proposal (including a detailed working plan for their research) by 15 August 2008. Project ideas must be designed by the African scholars and should be executed mainly at an African host institution. In exceptional cases, prospective applicants can apply for a travel grant to the intended host institution in order to develop the full proposal. These full proposals will undergo an international review process.

Stage 3:

The invited participants will be interviewed by two separate review panels at the conference. Fellowship grants will be made at the end of the year 2008 or beginning of 2009.

Stage 1 applications

Applications for participation at the NTD 2008 conference must be submitted in English and include all of the following:

- Short CV of applicant (max. 2 pages).
- Abstract of presentation for the conference (max. 500 words). This must be on applicant's current or recent work.
- A short summary of the proposed research (max. 1.000 words).

The application must be sent by 31 March 2008 to ntd2008@volkswagenstiftung.de.

Stage 2 applications

Only candidates accepted for the conference “NTD2008” will be invited to submit a full proposal. Details of the requirements for this stage will be sent in May 2008 to those accepted for the conference but will include:

- A research proposal written in English of not more than 4,500 words.
- A CV – no more than 2 pages.
- A detailed work plan including timelines.
- A detailed budget.
- A statement about the importance of the research issue and if possible evidence that the research issue is a priority for the Ministry of Health.
- A description of the African-European and intra-African collaborations.
- Evidence that the applicant has been accepted as a prospective colleague by an existing working group at the African host institution.
- Letter of support from the African host institution stating that it will provide the basic infrastructure, and specifying the logistic or financial support it will provide the applicant.

Timetable:

31 March 2008	deadline for the submission of abstracts for the conference
End of May 2008	notification of the selected postdoctoral researchers for the conference “NTD 2008” and invitation to submit a full proposal
15 August 2008	deadline for submission of full proposals
September 2008	Conference “NTD 2008” and final selection of applicants through interview
End of 2008/Early 2009	Fellowships awarded

Further Information

For further information about the Fellowship Programme the conference, please contact the respective program manager of one of the participating foundations:

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