AfricaLics Call – Postdoctoral Visiting Fellows 2018-2020

*Developing Innovation Capabilities for Sustainable and Inclusive Industrialisation in Africa*

AfricaLics – the African research network on Learning, Innovation and Competence building systems in collaboration with Aalborg University (AAU) – invites interested female and male candidates from low and lower-middle income countries in Africa to apply for a pilot programme for visiting postdoctoral fellows working in the field of innovation and development. A maximum of three visiting scholarships are available. Each includes funding for two study visits to Aalborg University in Denmark over a two-year period (2018-2019). Successful applicants will receive travel costs and stipends for the two study periods in Denmark, each expected to last about three months (between 80-89 days) as well as travel and other costs for participation in two joint workshops in Africa during the project period. Limited funding to support fieldwork or obtain data sets in support of the defined research project is available.

Applicants must have a relevant background in innovation and development studies research (i.e. PhD degree in economics, science and technology studies, development studies, innovation studies or other related and relevant field) and must be dedicated to building a research career in innovation and development studies research.

Financial support for the pilot programme comes from the Swedish development agency (Sida) as part of the AfricaLics Research Capacity Building Project, which aims at building research capacity in Innovation and Development studies research in Africa through support to the development of the AfricaLics network (see [www.africalics.org](http://www.africalics.org)).

Interested candidates will need to apply on a competitive basis submitting project proposals developed and defined by themselves under the overall theme for the programme: *Developing Innovation Capabilities for Sustainable and Inclusive Industrialisation in Africa*. The research theme relates closely to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) under the Global Development Agenda and to the focus on the Accelerated Industrialisation Action Plan of the African Union.

**Background to research theme and focus of the AfricaLics Postdoc VFP**

National governments and development agencies are currently developing policies and strategies aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals agreed during the UN Summit in 2015. Goals
related to industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG9) are particularly important because of their role in providing foundations and solutions to meet other goals such as poverty reduction and green transformation.

In Africa, the realization of SDG 9 poses a particular challenge due to the structural nature of growth over the past decades. This growth has been based more on remittances and on trade and exports of commodities (although Africa as a whole trades relatively little compared to other regions) rather than on the development of the manufacturing and high-value service sectors and on other forms of knowledge-based growth (Lundvall and Lema 2015). Furthermore, exports of relatively low value added primary products dominate the intermediate exports of most African countries. As African nations participation in global value chains (GVCs) is largely confined to low value added primary inputs, possibilities for learning and upgrading within GVCs are likely to be limited (McGregor et al. 2016). In fact, there has been a clear tendency of deindustrialization in many African countries during the period (McMillan and Rodrik 2011).

Meanwhile, there are no examples of nations that have achieved sustained prosperity and a decent standard of living for their citizens without a robust industrial sector. Industrialization is enabled in particular by having a sustainable infrastructure including energy, transport, communication, water and sanitation. Important gaps in Africa’s infrastructure are slowing growth and arguably are contributing to industry’s low, and in some cases, declining contribution to GDP (PIDA, 2012).

At the same time, large scale industrial development conventionally has been associated with negative impacts on environmental sustainability including resource depletion and pollution at the local and regional levels. In this light there is a need to consider sustainable alternatives to traditional infrastructural development including the use of small-scale off-grid renewable energy systems drawing on local resource endowments (solar, wind and hydropower) – but also including new and emerging opportunities linked to the use of digital technologies. Infrastructure and supportive policies more generally to be inclusive need to be adapted to the needs of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) which account for over 60 percent of non-agricultural employment and constitute an important source of job creation over the last decade for Africa’s burgeoning youth that is increasing concentrated in urban areas. While a variety of evidence shows that micro and small firms in Africa are innovative and can develop products and services responding to unmet local needs, especially low income needs, they face important constraints on their development and growth especially in the areas of infrastructure and accessing finance and technical skills.

The post-doc visiting fellowship programme offers Post-Doc researchers from low- and lower-middle income countries in Africa the possibility to have dedicated time for focussing on a research
project relating to the issue of developing innovation capabilities for sustainable and inclusive industrialisation in Africa.

Proposals addressing the following themes are especially encouraged:

1) A recent Africa Development Bank report (2014) estimated that 620 million Africans or 60% of the population have no access to electricity. Proposals are welcome exploring the potential of innovative and inclusive solutions to meeting Africa’s energy needs and with potential for creating sustainable, green industries e.g. based on stand-alone and renewable energy mini-grid systems, which are expected to account for an increasing share of the total installed generation in the coming decades.

2) Micro and small firms (MSEs) account for the majority of non-agricultural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa. They are sources of diversity and complementarity in industrialization and provide needed job opportunities for Africa’s youth. Proposals are invited that focus on how policies, institutional support structures and the adoption of new technologies can be devised at the local/regional levels to promote the development of MSE innovative capabilities.

3) Given Africa’s resource abundance, agro-industry development - including development of products that originate from agriculture, fisheries and forestry - holds tremendous potential for promoting industrialisation and for increasing higher value added production. Proposals may take a value chain approach, focussing on the importance of linkages and cooperation between MSEs in agribusiness and communities of smallholders for capacity development and technology transfer and adoption. Other approaches to developing innovation capabilities in agro-industry may be explored, including the use of new digital technologies, development of agri-business incubators and usefulness of agro-industry parks.

There are important potential synergies between the three areas that could also be considered as part of the project proposals. For instance, proposals related to energy issues might consider the potential for community participation in local energy development schemes or consider how renewables may create spin-off opportunities for skills development and local job creation/entrepreneurship. Such efforts could also be linked to questions of how to promote agro-industrial development. Proposals might also focus on innovative financing mechanisms and gender issues related to the topic concerned.
Aims of the programme

The major aim of the AfricaLics postdoctoral VFP is to help young African researchers (early career scholars) establishing themselves as first-rate researchers in innovation and development studies research. By doing so, the programme aims at contributing to the development of funded hubs of excellent research in innovation and development at selected African universities/research centres in Africa and to the development of a vibrant research community in Africa in this field.

Content and organisation

The AfricaLics Post-Doc VFP will run over a period of approximately two years, starting from September 2018 and ending in December 2020. It will offer successful visiting fellows the possibility to work on their own, self-defined project with scholars from the Innovation, Knowledge and Economic dynamics research group at AAU with an explicit interest in and experience from innovation and development studies research in an African context.

During the period of the pilot programme, funding (travel costs and stipend) is available for two study periods in Denmark. These visits may have a maximum duration of 90 days each. Funding is available for a kick-off workshop and an end-of-project workshop with mentors/collaborating partners on the selected projects from the home country (one person per post-doc) and from AAU. In addition, limited funding to support fieldwork or obtain data sets in support of the defined research project is available. Co-funding (in-kind or otherwise) in the form of e.g. teaching buy-out and research time while working on the project at home institution/in home country is expected and should be included in the budget form.

A group approach - inspired by positive experience from the AfricaLics VFP for PhD students - will be applied. Hence, all postdocs will be invited to come to AAU during the same time-periods. The post-docs will furthermore work on thematic areas that facilitate interaction and exchange of experience both with other post-doc fellows on the program and with collaborating partners from AAU. A kick-off workshop will be held during the first year of the project and a wrap-up workshop will be held during the end of the project period to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and joint publication work of the scholars engaged in the programme. Each post-doc must identify a mentor/collaborating partner from his/her home institution/home country that is willing to engage in the project. The mentor/collaborating partner from home university as well as the AAU mentors/collaborating partners will be invited to participate in the kick-off workshop and the end-of-project workshops.
During the fellowship period, visiting fellows will be able to make use of modern research facilities and to engage with internationally renowned scholars in the field of innovation and development studies research at AAU. A few discussion and capacity development sessions regarding how to become a good project investigator and develop high-quality project proposals will also be organised as part of the programme.

Finally, presentation of research papers at conferences organised by Globelics, AfricaLics or other related regional LICS and other relevant networks is also expected to contribute to building up the capacity development of the participating fellows. Such interaction will also help the visiting fellows develop new research ideas and networks that can help consolidate their position as excellent researchers in the field beyond the time-frame of the AfricaLics Post-Doc VFP.

The visiting postdoctoral fellows will thus during this process achieve support in consolidating their research skills and their capability to develop fundable research applications, manage research projects and shape ideas for their future career as researchers in the field of innovation and development.

Eligibility

Eligible candidates are African PhD holders from low- and lower-middle income countries in Africa who:

- have obtained their PhD degree in either economics, science and technology studies, development studies, innovation studies or other related fields within the past five years (2012-2017, both years included)
- are currently working at universities or research institutions in low income or lower-middle income countries in Africa.

Female candidates that fulfil the criteria above are particularly encouraged to apply, but the opportunity is open to both female and male candidates.

Applicants should be in the process of establishing themselves as researchers in the field of innovation and development and should describe clearly in their application how the AfricaLics post-doc visiting fellowship may help them consolidate their position as researchers able to contribute to or develop a research hub in the field at their home institution.

How to apply?

Applicants must submit a brief application (max. 2 pages) explaining own background, motivation for applying and expected outcomes of participation in the AfricaLics Visiting Post-doc Programme.
The application must be accompanied by the following documents:

- A research proposal (max. 6 pages) on which the applicant will work during the duration of the post-doc programme (two years), if selected. The research proposal should include the following sections:
  - Brief and clear (non-expert) summary of the proposed research and how the proposal relates to the overall thematic areas indicated in the Call;
  - 3 – 5 short research questions (and how you arrived at these, i.e. the theory behind) that will guide the research activity. If your application is successful, you may revise the questions based on inputs from peers and mentors in the programme;
  - A brief section on how the research questions will be explored and which methods/methodology you expect to use;
  - Explain briefly how this work will fit into your wider career path and how participation in the programme will contribute to developing a research hub in Innovation and Development at your home institution.
- A brief CV including a list of main publications (max. 3 pages).
- Letter of support for the application from the head of department at home institution
- Letters of support for the application from university administration if required by the home institution
- Work-plan and related budget specifying sources of funding for the post-doc work over and above what is covered by the AfricaLics Visiting Fellowship Programme (e.g. own research time in home country, field work costs etc.). Template for budget is available here.

Please use the application form available from on AfricaLics website here when you submit your application. Further information on background to the research theme, selection criteria, timing, visa etc. is available on the AfricaLics web-site.

Applications with all relevant attachments should be forwarded to visitingpostdoc@africalics.org by 10 January 2018 (COB).
Selection criteria

Selection of successful candidates for the post-doc project will be based on the following criteria:

- Relevance of proposal vis-à-vis the Call
- Scientific quality and rigor of research proposal
- Academic background and qualifications, including proven background within innovation and development studies research e.g. from attendance in AfricaLics or Globelics PhD Academies or other training on innovation and development research.
- The potential of proposed research project to support development of a research group in innovation and development in home institution
- The potential for raising external research funding at the end of the project.

Efforts will be made to ensure gender balance and geographical spread in the final selection of candidates but scientific rigour of proposals and strong scientific skills are required to qualify for the Post-Doc fellowships.

Important dates:

The preliminary time-line for the AfricaLics post-doc VFP is as follows:

**Deadline for applications:** 10th January 2018
**Selection:** February 2018
**Application for visa and other preparations:** March – July (including one video-call in June)
**First workshop in Africa (Nairobi):** End of August/early September 2018
**First research period in Denmark:** Sept – Dec. 2018
**Second research period in Denmark:** Sept – Dec 2019
**Second workshop in Africa:** First half of 2020

Expected outputs and milestones:

The expected key outputs for each post-doc from the project will be the following:

- Contribution to joint book project (chapter based on own case plus inputs to general chapters such as introduction, conceptual framework and concluding chapter).
- A fundable project proposal that (if funded) will support development of hub at home institution in the field of Innovation and Development
- Documented participation in activities aimed at improving the post-docs’ skills as Project Investigators, both during the project duration and after.

Additional outputs (e.g. journal articles) may be defined in the process.

Key milestones are the following:

- Draft working paper on own case/project submitted by end of first study visit to DK
- Progress report on own project three months after return from the first study visit to DK
- Draft outline of funding application submitted two months before second visit to DK
- Draft chapter for book project submitted by end of second study visit to DK
- Draft project proposal submitted by end of second study visit to DK (should be targeted to potential funder).

**Visa and accommodation**

Successful candidates will be notified in February 2018, following which they will be required to confirm their interest by signing an agreement form.

Successful postdoctoral fellows will need to apply for visa to Denmark. Fees related to the processing of the application will have to be paid by the visiting fellows themselves but invitation letters will be provided by Aalborg University and assistance in the process will be received from the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC). The postdocs are expected to be accommodated at the DFC College in Copenhagen.

**Additional information on terms and conditions**

1. Travel costs (economy class) related to the two study periods in Denmark and the two workshops in Africa will be covered.

2. Successful postdocs may be covered by the DFC group insurance but postdocs may also choose to take out their own health insurance for each stay. Proof of relevant health insurance needs to be forwarded to AAU before ticket(s) can be issued.

3. The visiting scholars will receive personal allowance at DKK 227 per full day (Rate per 1 January 2017). This corresponds to DKK 6,818.00 for a full month. Accommodation, including heating, water and electricity, is paid directly by the AfricaLics VFP and is hence additional to the personal allowance. The personal allowance covers food, clothes, medicine,
spectacles, dental visits, daily transport and pocket money for the visiting fellows him/herself. Costs related to accompanying spouses, children or others are not covered by the programme and all expenses related to bringing family members to DK in connection with the visit(s) will have to be covered by the visiting fellows themselves. AAU must be informed up-front, if the visiting fellow intends to bring family members to Denmark during the study visit(s).

**Contact us**

Questions regarding the AfricaLics Postdoctoral VFP and the call should be forwarded to visitingpostdoc@africalics.org