



School of Computing & Informatics, University of Nairobi

University of Nairobi-IDRC Scholarships on ICT for Development Tenable in Universities in Eastern and Southern Africa

**Supported by
International Development Research Centre, Ottawa,
Canada**

**Prof. Timothy Mwololo Waema- Project Leader
School of Computing and Informatics
University of Nairobi, Kenya**

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1. Objectives

The main objective of the project is to enable graduate students registered on a full-time basis in universities within the Eastern and Southern Africa countries to carry out research on different aspects of ICTs and development. Specifically, this project will support 4 scholarships for Masters students and 8 doctoral research awards for Ph.D. students who do not have funding for their field work to carry out research in this field of study.

The key objectives of these awards are to:

- (a) Build institutional research capacity on ICTs and development in the various universities in the region. This will enable the creation of knowledge on the relationships between ICTs and development and the associated impacts.
- (b) Build human capacity on ICTs and development in the region.
- (c) Provide support to weakly funded postgraduate programs on ICTs and development in the region.
- (d) Increase intra-Africa partnerships and collaborations. University of Nairobi has limited relationships with other African countries in comparison to Europe and North America. This project would assist in building up these relationships.

2. Eligible fields of study

Applications for the research grants, both for Masters scholarships and Doctoral research, will be accepted for research in areas corresponding to those of IDRC's Acacia programme priorities or to the specific country's needs and priorities. The themes and sub-themes for the Acacia programme are outlined below:

i. People Empowerment

This theme will cover areas of research that particularly focus on the individual and ICTs, covering topics ranging from income generation opportunities; gender to intellectual property to privacy issues; censorship; local language access; and more.

- ◆ *Gender research.* The theme concerns research to gain a more sophisticated understanding of women's access and usage of ICTs in Africa, as well as the magnitude and evolution of the observed gender gap and changing gender relations in areas such as access and patterns of use; ICT literacy, education, and skills; and ICT employment.
- ◆ *Digital commons.* This theme will support research on innovative models for the creation and use of content, as well as the production of knowledge-based products such as software. It will also support the development of researchers in this trans-disciplinary area and especially the interests of lawyers, authors, librarians, academics, and artists, as well as entrepreneurs in stimulating the growth of alternative approaches to digital copyright.
- ◆ *Localization.* Research under this theme will support work to make a difference by offering real solutions to specific problems in accessing ICTs and information and to develop evidence on what localization possibilities are feasible and on the benefits of ICT support of African languages.

ii. Social service delivery

This theme focuses on the question of whether ICTs have the potential in Africa to improve the way social services are delivered, reduce costs, increase transparency, and, facilitate devolution of government services.

- ◆ *Tertiary education and research.* This theme will fund research work on research and education Internet infrastructure for tertiary institutions in Africa. It will focus particularly on expanding research and education networking in Africa, improving the effectiveness of policy interventions, lowering costs and improving access for African universities, appropriate technologies and the relationship between access to the internet and research capacity.
- ◆ *Local governance.* Little work has been done to adapt emerging e-local governance conceptual and theoretical frameworks as well as methodological approaches to Less Developed Countries and African contexts. This theme will thus aim to build African research capacity and strengthen the quality and significance of applied research on ICT-enabled local governance in Africa.
- ◆ *Health.* ICTs are a tremendous enabler of healthcare and can have a transformative effect on the health sector. This theme will fund research into the innovative use of ICTs (relevant software, content, and communication with small devices, e.g. mobile phones and PDAs) to improve healthcare in Africa. This is limited to applied research and not action research.

- ◆ *New learning environments and practices.* This theme will fund research that contributes to a better understanding of the educational uses of ICTs in the socio-cultural context of Africa; that produces evidence that can inform the main stakeholders (policy-makers, practitioners, researchers, parents, students, etc.); and that promotes the formulation and implementation of policies and reforms supporting the introduction of ICTs in the educational systems.

iii. Economic Development and Opportunity

Evidence of ICTs' potential to combat poverty and promote socio-economic growth in developing countries is largely anecdotal. This theme will support research that leads to a better understanding of the linkages between ICTs and socio-economic growth.

- ◆ *Telecommunication and network infrastructure and policy indicators.* This theme will fund research into strategic ICT infrastructure development for universal human development. In particular, research to be funded must focus, among other things, on universal access to ICTs and the related policy, legal and regulatory frameworks; on access and affordability of ICTs by poor communities; on across-the-board participation in the ICT sector; on mechanisms to influence ICT policy and regulatory processes; and on indicators for access, use and impacts of ICTs.
- ◆ *Small-scale agriculture.* Agriculture and the harvesting of natural resources provides livelihoods for over 70% of the African population; access to appropriate information is known to be amongst the single largest determinants of agricultural productivity. This theme will fund research focused on informational resources and innovative ICT applications that can enhance small-scale agriculture.

If an applicant has proposals with themes that differ from those outlined above, the selection committee will evaluate and judge the relevance of the research project to the specific country's needs and priorities on a case-by-case basis.

3. Eligibility

The awards are only open to citizens of sub-Saharan African countries and who must be studying in African universities. A list of Eastern and Southern African countries:

- ◆ Eastern Africa countries (Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda);
- ◆ Southern Africa countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

An applicant for the Masters scholarships will need to provide evidence that he/she has been admitted to a relevant Masters programme in a university in one of the eligible countries. He/she must not be having any other form of support for the duration of the programme. The selection committee will verify information provided by candidates on funding and will take appropriate action in case an applicant has been found to have cheated. In addition, the applicant must commit to carrying out his/her masters research work in one of the eligible countries.

Applicants for the doctoral research grants must be registered Ph.D. students in one of the universities in an eligible country. In addition, applicants must provide a proposal indicating that they will carry out research at their home university (if the program is offered there) or another African university within the eligible countries, in one of the Acacia programme priorities outlined above or in line with their country's needs and priorities.

All Ph.D. student applicants must have completed course work and have approved proposals.

4. Duration

The award tenure of the research grants will correspond to the period of the research beginning January 2010. In general, this will be no less than three months and not more than 12 months. For the Masters scholarships, the award tenure will be 24 months.

5. Value of Awards

Candidates for the doctoral research awards will be entitled to a maximum of CA\$15,000. This amount includes all the research costs. Funds will also be provided for local communication costs and travel to workshops or conferences. For the Masters scholarships, the project will pay for all the fees for the two years (depending on the fees in a particular university). In addition, a candidate will be entitled to a research allowance, a monthly stipend, a book allowance, local communication costs and travel to workshops or conferences.

6. Deadline for Applications

An application form is attached. An application form can also be downloaded from URL: <http://www.ict4dgrants.org>.

Deadline for application is 30th September 2009.

The following support documents should be submitted together with the application form:

- For the research awards, evidence that the candidate has been registered and their proposal approved from one of the universities in an eligible country, plus transcripts for course work.
- For Masters' scholarships, proof of registration in a university in an eligible country, undergraduate certificate and transcripts for coursework.
- Proof of citizenship or permanent residence in an Eastern or Southern African country (a copy of the Passport, national identification or resident permit).
- Two letters of reference. (At least one must come from a faculty member with extensive knowledge of the candidate's academic history and performance and must document how his/her dissertation research fits into ongoing research programs in the department.)

The completed application form as well as the support documents should be sent as Ms Word e-mail attachments to the Project Coordinator, Isabella Mugo, E-mail: isbellamugo@yahoo.com

For any enquiries, the Project Coordinator may be contacted at the above e-mail address or at this number: +254 722 904 447.