



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

*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 DRC, we are looking for **2 PhD candidates** who will work with either fisherfolks or displaced populations 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 at the Institut Supérieur pour le Développement-Bukavu (ISDR-Bukavu) in DRC. If successful, the applicants will receive a joint/dual degree, with the Institute for Water Education- Delft (IHE-Delft) [PhD A- fisherfolks] or Erasmus University Rotterdam [PhD B- displaced populations]. The dissertation must be written in English.*

Expected starting date: September 1, 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 DRC centre around action-oriented research with communities and other stakeholders, such as civil society actors, private actors, and government representatives. The project aims 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.

- Project A (Fisherfolks) will focus on climate-related challenges and innovation strategies of fishers navigating changes in lake water levels, fish species, and extreme weather events.
- Project B (Displaced populations) will focus on climate-related challenges and innovation strategies of forcibly displaced populations and their resilience strategies in relation to their experienced climate-related threats and uncertainties.

Where you will work

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

The PhD trajectory will start with an intensive two-month training in the Netherlands. After this, you will return to the DRC to spend significant periods of time with either fisherfolks, or displaced people 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 ISDR and the IHE-Delft for PhD A, and scholars from ISDR 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 ISDR-Bukavu, as well as – through a joint/dual degree arrangement – from IHE-Delft (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 all candidates:

- 1) You have a master's degree or an equivalent diploma in social sciences, climate sciences, development studies, 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 DRC, or have extensive experience working in DRC, preferably with either fisherfolks (PhD A) or displaced people (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, such as Swahili.
- 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. Candidates who are not yet proficient in English are strongly encouraged to follow an intensive language course (for instance in Uganda or Kenya) after selection and prior to the start of the programme.

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 start date of this position is September 1, 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter and you will be based at the Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural in Bukavu, DRC.

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

The Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural – ISDR Bukavu

The Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural, ISDR Bukavu, is the leading higher education and university institution specializing in teaching **development studies in the Great Lakes** region since 1962. For more than sixty years, ISDR has focused on theoretical and practical teaching to respond effectively to the real problems of rural and urban communities. Its vision is "a DRC where living conditions are improved, thanks to competent development practitioners with a profound understanding of and constructive engagement with rural communities". This vision is based on two pillars: the ambition to create a framework for the training of competent development practitioners, and to be an actor of socio-economic change. It is materialized through the organization of teaching and training via 6 departments: Social Organizations (A), Regional Planning (B), Administration and Public Management (C), Environment and Sustainable Development (D), Gender and Development (E) and Humanitarian Action and Reconstruction (F)

The two positions of this call **fisherfolks (A)** and **forcibly displaced people (B)** will be co-supervised by ISDR Bukavu with other universities in the North as outlined below. The departments of Environment and Sustainable Development, Gender and Development and Humanitarian Action and Reconstruction constitute the framework in which the PhD students will have to work. There are three doctoral programmes at ISDR: Socio-economics and Development Planning (1), Technology and Governance of Natural Resources (2) and Gender and Governance of Territories (3). Training in these fields is interdisciplinary and addresses rural issues, rural dynamics and peasant's structuring, land and agriculture, climate change and resilience, rural transformations, natural resource governance, rural economy...in all their singularity and complexity. The PhD students will each be enrolled in one of the programmes above while being enrolled in the host university which is involved in the Work Package in the North. PhD will have to integrate into the dynamics of the specialized research centres of the ISDR Bukavu, namely the Angaza Institute, the Centre de Recherche et d'Expertise en Genre et Développement (CREGED) and the Centre de Recherche en Gestion de la Biodiversité et Changement Climatique (CRGBC).

About the host universities

Position A, focusing on **fisherfolks**, will be co-supervised by IHE-Delft in the Netherlands. IHE Delft is the world's largest international water education facility. Its mission is to contribute to the education and training of water professionals and build capacity in organisations active in the fields of water and environment. IHE has provided graduate education to over 15,000 water professionals from 162

countries. The Institute offers two Masters of Science Programmes with several specializations. The Institute's demand-driven research focuses on and contributes to the knowledge base concerning water & development. IHE has cooperation agreements with 86 partners worldwide. The Institute's involvement in regional and local networks adds value to the Institute's activities and gives access to global knowledge.

The PhD candidate will become part of the Water Governance Department, a Department that brings together experts from disciplines such as human geography, engineering, law, anthropology, political science and public administration. Department staff collaborate with natural science and engineering experts to produce actionable insights that support transformations to sustainability in water.

Position B, focusing on **forcibly displaced people**, 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 April 16, 2025. You can apply by emailing your application to:

Position A: m.zwarteveen@un-ihe.org PLUS emery.mushagalusa@uclouvain.be

Position B: c.i.m.jacobs@law.leidenuniv.nl PLUS patrickmilabyo@gmail.com

Clearly indicate whether you are applying for position A (fisherfolks) or position B (forcibly displaced people).

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

Please include the following documents:

- A motivation letter (max. two pages)
- A curriculum vitae (CV)
- Names and contact details of two referents
- A brief description of potential research ideas for the position, of maximum 1000 words. In this document, you should outline your intended focus, possible research questions and the methodological and theoretical focus

- One writing sample (this may also be in French)

After reviewing all applications, we will make a shortlist of candidates who are invited for an online interview. These interviews are tentatively scheduled to take place on April 28, 29 and 30. There might be a second interview before a final selection is made.

Further information

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

For specific questions, please contact Prof. Emery Mushagalusa Mudinga:
emery.mushagalusa@uclouvain.be, Tel: +243 971 600 598

