



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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African Climate & Development Initiative
acdi.uct.ac.za



Call for Applications: ASCEND Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Climate Sahel Team - Climatic events, Conflicts, and Socioeconomic Challenges in the Sahel Region

Application Deadline: Sunday 8 November 2025 or until the position is filled

Call for applications

The African Synthesis Centre For Climate Change, Environment and Development ([ASCEND](http://ascendclimate.org)) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is seeking a Postdoctoral Research Fellow (PDRF) with an interest in working on the intersection of climate change, conflicts, and socioeconomic challenges in the Sahel region.

This PDRF is a unique and excellent opportunity to expand your network with researchers and decision-makers, as well as deliver cutting-edge research to inform policy and practice. ASCEND provides specialized infrastructure for hosting collaborative synthesis teams that accelerate solutions-oriented research for climate action across Africa and globally.

Synthesis team project description

The PDRF will join the Climate Sahel [synthesis research team](#) hosted by ASCEND. The team has up to 12 members from research, policy, and practitioner backgrounds who will travel to ASCEND for up to four in-person working meetings over 2 years. The PDRF will be based full-time at ASCEND as a core member of the team, working closely with the team's co-leads to deliver actionable research.

The overall aim of the project is to provide improved synthesis knowledge and patterns on Climate events, Conflicts, and related Socioeconomic issues in the Sahel to enhance climate change management policies and practices and improve wellbeing amidst growing conflict problems. Candidates will be encouraged to develop their own research ideas within the goals of the project.

Project research will address the following key objectives:

- (1) Document different climate events, conflicts, and related socioeconomic parameters from existing literature in the Sahel pre-and-post 2015
- (2) Analyze and synthesize the different climate events, conflicts, and related socioeconomic information to find and understand patterns, trends, and interrelations if they exist
- (3) Analyze related national policies and adaptation plans to assess the nature and the effectiveness of interventions on climate variability and conflicts

Roles and responsibilities of the Postdoctoral Research Fellow

The PDRF will be highly motivated to work as part of a transdisciplinary research team, grow their research expertise, engage with climate change researchers and decision-makers, and generate peer-reviewed publications. The PDRF will be based at ASCEND at UCT and advised remotely by team's mentor **Dr. Christophe Béné at Alliance Biodiversity International & CIAT and Wageningen University and Research, other co-leads and Dr Farai Kapfudzaruwa, Deputy Director at ASCEND**. ASCEND will also appoint a mentor to the PDRF based locally to provide professional development support in consultation with the team mentor and co-leads. ASCEND will support, when possible, travel for short visits to work with the team mentor at their host institution.

The PDRF will also be part of a larger cohort of PDRFs at ASCEND working on climate change and development-related topics with other synthesis teams. The PDRF will participate in career development activities organized by ASCEND for the wider cohort of ASCEND PDRFs to develop transdisciplinary skills, share knowledge on what works for actionable research, and foster

interdisciplinary collaboration.

Other responsibilities of the PDRF will be discussed and assigned collectively with the Green Resilience synthesis team. It is expected that these responsibilities will result in specific outputs, such as policy briefs and toolkits.

Resources provided by ASCEND

The PDRF will be given the necessary resources for their work, including:

- Desk and office space
- IT and communication infrastructure
- Career and professional development activities as part of a larger ASCEND PDRF cohort.

Value and tenure:

- The value of the fellowship is ZAR 475,000 per year for up to 2 years.
- Application for tax exemption of the fellowship stipend will be made by the University.

Academic / experience criteria:

Required

- A PhD, awarded within the previous five years, in a related discipline (e.g., Climate science, Data Science, Geography, Environmental Social Sciences, Sustainability Science, Policy)
- Strong understanding of climate change, geophysical datasets, conflict, migration and national climate change adaptation policies in the Sahel region.
- Experience in synthesizing and managing large datasets.
- Experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis
- Excellent technical ability to code in *R*, *Python*, and/or other statistical programming language, ideally including analysis of socio-economic data, geophysical (ecological) as well as and/or other geospatial datasets.
- Experience in working in a virtual and interdisciplinary research team setting.
- Demonstrated ability to produce peer-reviewed research articles in international journals.
- Excellent ability to communicate scientific results both orally and in writing, including preparation of policy briefs, synthesis reports, and stakeholder presentations
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English, and French as an added advantage but not mandatory

Desired

- Familiarity with the specific socio-economic and environmental contexts of Africa and particularly in the target countries in the Sahel region (Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria).
- High interest and experience in creative science communication.
- Interest and experience in transdisciplinary collaborations; particularly engagement with decision-makers.
- Experience in giving international oral presentations and interest in public communication of science to an international audience.
- Excellent data visualization skills.

Conditions of award:

- Applicants may not previously have held a full-time permanent academic post.
- The successful applicant will be required to register as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Cape Town and will be expected to join the synthesis team at a mutually agreed date that is ideally **no later than December 2025**.

- The successful applicant will be required to be a full participant in the Climate Sahel synthesis research team.
- The successful applicant will be required to comply with the university's approved policies, procedures and practices for the postdoctoral sector.

Application requirements:

Applicants should submit as a single PDF: (i) an application letter no longer than 2 pages that includes a description of research interests, research expertise, and an explanation of how they can work as part of the transdisciplinary synthesis team in line with the project objectives described above; (ii) a CV including a publication list; (iii) copies of academic transcripts and/or certificates; (iv) an example of written work; (v) email addresses of two references who have been directly involved in their PhD and/or previous postdoctoral research.

Applicants must submit the PDF application document to ascend.info@uct.ac.za. Please type "Baobab PDR Application: Climate Sahel" as the email subject line.

Closing date

Midnight (GMT+2) on Sunday 8 November 2025 or until the position is filled.

Selection process

Eligible and complete applications will be considered by ASCEND and we will communicate with short-listed applicants. ASCEND, in consultation with the synthesis team and mentor, will conduct interviews with the short-listed applicants.

If you have not heard from ASCEND within two months of the deadline, please assume your application has been unsuccessful.

Contact details for enquiries about the PDRF and ASCEND: farai.kapfudzaruwa@uct.ac.za

Additional information on ASCEND can be found at: <https://ascendclimate.org/>

The University of Cape Town reserves the right to

- *Disqualify ineligible, incomplete and/or inappropriate applications;*
- *Change the conditions of the award or to make no awards at all*

