

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Thomas Sankara PhD Scholarships at the Global Partnership Network (GPN)

Application Deadline: **31 March 2021** (12:00 pm, GMT+1)

Earliest Scholarship Start Possible: **1 May 2021**

The Global Partnership Network (GPN) is an interdisciplinary and international network of excellence with the head office located at the University of Kassel (Germany) and partner universities in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. It co-operates closely with various partner NGOs in the respective countries. The GPN is funded by the programme “Exceed – Higher Education Excellence in Development Cooperation” launched by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

The GPN decided to name its PhD scholarships after Thomas Sankara being an outstanding personality from the global South, whose ideas and practices of resisting neo-colonialism and promoting independent pathways for countries of the global South are deemed to inspire the work of the Global Partnership Graduate School.

In the framework of its Graduate School of Research for Global Partnership, the GPN invites students from ODA recipient countries¹ to apply for a Thomas Sankara PhD scholarship at a GPN partner university. Further, it will enable and fund research co-operations between partner universities working on Global Partnership in the global economy (in the fields of agriculture, finance, and energy), in development cooperation (access, accountability, deep participation) and/or in knowledge production (Eurocentrism and alternative knowledge).

The universities contributing to the GPN are the following:

- **University of the West Indies (UWI, Jamaica)**
- **Université de Kara (UK, Togo)**
- **University of Tehran (UT, Iran)**
- **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU, India)**
- **Haramaya University (Ethiopia)**
- **Makerere University (Uganda)**
- Rhodes University (South Africa)
- Université des Sciences Appliquées du Développement (USAD, Burkina Faso)
- Université d'Etat Haiti (UEH, Haiti)
- Université Virtuelle Senegal (UVS, Senegal)
- University of Cape Coast (UCC, Ghana)

¹ Countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA) of the OECD as approved by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) according to the DAC List of ODA Recipients, effective for reporting on 2021 flows

(<http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2021-flows.pdf>)

- University of the Witwatersrand (Wits, South Africa)
- University of Kassel (UKS, Germany)

Only those six universities marked as bold, UWI, UK, UT, JNU, Haramaya and Makerere participate in this call for applications. All other listed universities are only involved as possible secondary institutions providing second supervisors.

The GPN is committed to creating equal opportunities for doctoral candidates. We particularly encourage *women* and people from other marginalized groups to apply.

Background

The Global Partnership Network (GPN) is an ambitious and promising assemblage of higher education institutions and civil society groups for research, teaching and training around SDG 17: “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.” It targets research, teaching and training that investigates the global partnership for sustainable development in three specific areas, challenges its shortcomings and contributes to possible solutions to the concerns posed providing policy relevant research informed by a historical sensibility. These areas are: 1) partnerships in development cooperation, 2) partnerships in the global economy, 3) partnership in knowledge production. In the network, we call attention to the shortcomings, limitations, and problematic aspects of international partnerships that have historically been shaped by colonial relations between North and South and sometimes continue to reflect them. Redressing this historical dynamic requires reconstructing the concept towards a partnership based on mutual recognition and solidarity, adequate to the multi-polar and postcolonial 21st century.

PhD research proposals are required to address one of the following research clusters:

Cluster 1: Partnership in development cooperation: access, accountability, and deep participation

Critical research on development cooperation has concluded that despite its commitment to partnership (manifest already before SDG 17 in the principles of the Paris Declaration of 2005 and in earlier concepts) it suffers from at least three problems: 1) Its benefits are distributed unevenly and seldom reach marginalised groups (in particular women and indigenous people). 2) It sometimes has problematic or even catastrophic side-effects (e.g. development-induced displacement) on its supposed beneficiaries or other project-affected people who can do little about it because of asymmetrical relations of power. 3) Its mechanisms of participation are confined by the structures of the development apparatus. Therefore, the GPN will focus on 1) access to development cooperation for marginalised groups (women, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ persons, people with disabilities), and on 2) accountability of development organisations towards beneficiaries or project affected persons. Out of a concern for equal partnerships and a high level of ownership, our research also focuses on transdisciplinary outreach and on a transfer of research results. We therefore refer to debates on co-creation and co-production of knowledge for instance with regard to creating partnerships, project design, and implementation, and transformation knowledge. Correspondingly, 3) together with civil society development organisations we will explore possibilities for and restrictions of “deep” participation, which does not only include project implementation but also project design and

even the definition of the problem to be solved by the project. This multi-level form of participation will increase the experience of ownership and therefore contribute to the durability and sustainability of projects. Focusing on these three fields will significantly increase the level of partnership in development cooperation.

Cluster 2: Partnership in the global economy: agriculture, finance, and energy

A serious pursuit of the SDGs requires partnerships in the global economy: The principle of policy coherence (also officially endorsed since the Paris Declaration and central to SDG 17 target 13 and 14) maintains that successful poverty reduction must not be confined to development cooperation, but has to go 'beyond aid' and include a coherent global governance in the different fields of the global economy, preventing a situation where measures of development policy are thwarted by foreign economic policies of donor states. Therefore, global economic structures need to be taken into account when talking about global partnership for sustainable development. The GPN will concentrate on three policy fields with particular significance for the SDGs, whose problem constellations and challenges highlight the importance of strong partnerships: agriculture, finance, and energy. For these fields it will provide policy recommendations for policy coherence and successful partnerships in the global economy, in particular regarding the following aspects:

- Agriculture: Partnerships for transformation towards fair trade and organic agriculture and the abolition of forced labour. This field is particularly relevant for SDG 2 ("End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture"), 15 ("Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems") and 8 ("Decent work for all").
- Finance: debt relief initiatives and stakeholder networks, blended finance networks and investment partnerships and microfinance initiatives. This field is particularly relevant for SDG 8 ("Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth") and 10 ("Reduce inequality within and among countries").
- Renewable energy: energy transition processes and local adaption of energy technologies in postcolonial contexts. This field is particularly relevant for SDG 7 ("Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all") and 13 ("Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts").

In all three areas, the GPN will investigate practical examples of partnerships and explore the reasons for success and failure, providing analysis and policy recommendations for policy coherence and partnerships in the global economy. This complements cluster 1 by including policy fields beyond development cooperation crucial to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Cluster 3: Partnership in knowledge production: Eurocentrism and alternative knowledge

Knowledge sharing between partners is also a part of SDG 17 (targets 6 and 16), but whose knowledge is envisioned to be shared? The Post-Development critique has pointed out the Eurocentrism prevalent in development knowledge: Eurocentric ontologies assume a linear scale of social evolution, at the top of which we find the 'developed' (i.e. industrialised, secular, capitalist, democratic) European societies (including the European settler colonies in North America, Africa and Australia). This assumption, implying e.g. that knowledge about progressive social change which helps the global South to advance along this universal scale can be found in the North and that development experts possess this knowledge, has been

challenged by postcolonial theorists stressing mutual learning; alternative, local, non-Western (to be precise: non-hegemonic, because they can also be found in the West) knowledges; and pluriversal epistemologies and alternative, participatory and decolonised pathways to knowledge production and co-construction. The GPN will investigate these alternative knowledges, their generation, diffusion and translation, and the possibilities they provide for progressive social change from the bottom up. Through providing fora and encouraging inter-cultural dialogue including marginalised peoples, it will contribute to mutual learning and foster partnerships in knowledge production. In this regard, cluster 3 can also cross-fertilise and enhance the partnerships in development cooperation and global economic structures.

GPN Scholarships – What We Offer

Building on successful earlier initiatives, the network will include a graduate programme in which PhD students are co-supervised by professors from two partner universities. The supervisors are chosen by the PhD student based on thematic preferences and if they agree to the supervision, they will monitor the thesis progress at least once every three months in a one-hour online session. The PhD student will spend at least six months at the partner university of the second supervisor.

PhD students of the GPN Graduate School will be geographically based at the respective partner universities (see above) and enrolled in the virtual PhD training programme. Moreover, successful candidates participate in the regular virtual PhD workshops of the GPN Graduate School and get involved in the lively academic exchange and activities within the GPN network.

The PhD scholarship will be awarded for three years. An extension is pending on the availability of funding. In exceptional cases, preparatory PhD grants are given for up to one year for students (especially from countries with weaker higher education systems) who exhibit potential for interesting research but need more academic training. This grant will enable them to attend courses in one of the partner universities and improve their proposal. The scholarships will cover a country-specific monthly living allowance, the participation in virtual GPN Graduate School activities as well as the opportunity to apply for funding towards completing empirical research. Final admission to the GPN Graduate School is conditioned on the admittance to the PhD programme of the chosen GPN partner university and a positive progress evaluation by the GPN in the first scholarship year.

Application Requirements

- a completed MA/MSc degree (exception: the defence of the MA thesis should have happened until the application deadline), with very good results, in a discipline related to the above topics; the applicant's last academic degree should not be more than six years ago; if an applicant already started with his/her PhD project, it should have started not more than three years ago;
- a very high proficiency in English (CEFR level: C1 or above) demonstrated by one of the following language certificates: TOEFL, with a minimum score of 95 IBT (Internet-based test); IELTS 7.0 or above; the Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English or an equivalent; native speakers and applicants who have completed [one of] their first degree[s] fully in English do not have to provide an English proficiency certificate; if the PhD dissertation will be written in another language than English: a high proficiency of English (CEFR level: B2 or above) for the participation in the Graduate School demonstrated by one of the just mentioned language certificates;
- academic or vocational experience in one of the disciplines related to the thematic field of global partnership;
- citizenship of an ODA recipient country (cf. list attached). If the applicant resides in Germany or other countries which are *not* on the DAC list *and* is currently *not* enrolled in a university, they should not have lived in the country of residence longer than two years before the potential start of the scholarship.

Application Procedure

The application process involves three elements. Your application is only complete if all three are submitted:

1.) *Application package*

Please provide the following documents in a *single PDF file*. Only complete applications, in the order listed below, will be accepted:

- a detailed curriculum vitae (including the academic background, the list of publications [if applicable], professional experience, language skills, voluntary work);
- a preliminary PhD project proposal on the same topic you will write your doctoral thesis about (about 2000 words, including topic, research question, short overview of the relevant literature, theoretical approach, research design and methodology, justified assignment to one of the three research clusters and potentially possible supervisors from the GPN network. We kindly request you to refrain from contacting supervisors at this stage);
- a summary of the Master thesis (about 1500 words);
- scanned copy of an English proficiency certificate, if required;

- scanned copies of the following documents in the original language **with translations attached, if the language of these documents is not German, English or French:**
 - the certificate and transcript of records of your recognised Master degree, listing all subjects and grades (if you have not yet completed your Master degree, please provide only the transcript and substitute the certificate with a letter from the programme coordinator testifying that you have already defended your MA thesis and the date and likelihood of the successful issuance of the degree)
 - the certificate and transcript of records of your recognised Bachelor degree, listing all subjects and grades;
 - certificates for the completion of additional studies, listing all subjects and grades, if applicable;
 - scanned copies of certificates of previous professional/vocational experience, if applicable.

These items of your application package must be submitted in the order listed above, with your CV as the first item, followed by your project proposal etc. **All items of the application must be assembled in one pdf document** (use e.g. a pdf creator or your word processing programme) of max. 50 MB. Submissions consisting of multiple files cannot be accepted!

Acknowledging the global Corona crisis and the restrictions in the private and public life which come along with it, we may exceptionally accept your application if not all of the necessary documents can be provided by the application deadline. In this case, please provide proof e.g. a letter from a university staff member confirming that a transcript of records cannot be delivered due to the universities lock-down and additionally include one short notice in the field "comments" of the application.

2.) Completion of the online application form and upload of your application package

To complete the online application form and upload your application package (single pdf file), you need to first register with your name and email address on the following website (online survey tool of the University of Kassel, Germany):

<https://www.uni-kassel.de/go/gpn-phd-application>

Once you have registered, a personalized link will be sent to you by email, with which you can then access the online application form. Completing the online application and uploading your application package is possible until the application deadline: **31 March 2021** (12:00 pm, GMT+1).

3.) *Two letters of recommendation*

In addition to your application, two recent letters of recommendation from professors, course instructors or other persons qualified to assess your academic achievements must be provided. Referees must sign the letter and send it as a scanned copy from the referee's email account to:

graduateschool.gpn@uni-kassel.de

As in the letters themselves, the email reference line should mention your full name and "letter of recommendation". The letters of recommendation must also arrive at the GPN by **no later than 31 March 2021**.

Successful applications will need to provide officially authenticated photocopies of all the submitted documents and translations.

For further information or questions, please contact the GPN Graduate School staff:

Email: graduateschool.gpn@uni-kassel.de

The GPN homepage: www.uni-kassel.de/go/GPN/

A list of scholars who can potentially supervise GPN scholarship candidates: <https://www.uni-kassel.de/forschung/global-partnership-network/about-us/people/gpn-academics/>

Find the same call for PhD Scholarships on our homepage: www.uni-kassel.de/go/GPN/CfA-Thom-Sank