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African Centre for Technology Studies  
ACTS  
Knowledge for Better Livelihoods



AI4D Africa Scholarship Programme

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

**AI4D Africa Scholarship Enhancing  
Doctoral and Early Career Research in  
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine  
Learning (ML) in Sub-Saharan Africa by  
Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)**

# AI4D Africa Scholarship Enhancing Doctoral and Early Career Research in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) in Sub-Saharan Africa by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

## Background

The African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) has received a grant from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to support the scholarship of Persons with Disability (PWD) within sub-Saharan Africa. The funding will support the training of PhD students in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) as well as the research work of Early Career Academics in AI & ML. The research work within this program must be in AI that attempt to address any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The award of the scholarships shall strive to achieve uniform distribution of beneficiaries across Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone sub-Saharan Africa. Our strategy is to enhance representation of equity-seeking groups. Based on the applications received, we will seek to ensure women fill a minimum of 50% of the positions given their under-representation in the AI field. There will also be an effort to achieve fair distribution in terms of region. The supported studies **MUST** adhere to responsible AI.

**Data Collection:** The studies need to be solution facing, with a carefully designed problem definition which involves a user community, a systematic data collection regime which will result in good quality data that will be used to develop solutions with predictive/diagnostic/generative precision. Please note that elaborate and precise data collection with the user communities is the main factor that ensures usability of a solution and therefore its success in deployment. Data collected in this project will be accessible to the grant manager and published to support future research activities in accordance with [IDRC Open Access Policy](#).

You will be required to show active efforts to deploy the solutions beyond the studies.

**Eligible Countries:** Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini (Formerly Known as Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, The Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The call for the AI4D Africa Scholarship Program has been designed to target the following two categories.

### Category 1

Registered PhD students

### Category 2

Early Career Academics

If you are interested in applying, please visit the

[Scholarship Page](#)



For general enquiries, email:  
[lepsai@acts-net.org](mailto:lepsai@acts-net.org)

# Scholarship

Please read details of each category and click the link to the category of scholarship that you wish to pursue and follow the subsequent application instructions.

## Category 1: Registered PhD Students

Invitation will target [Persons with Disabilities \(PWDs\)](#), and predominantly women, candidates who are already registered for a PhD, have finished course work as well as had their research proposals approved. This opportunity will be open to all universities offering PhD in AI (or any of its derivatives). Scholarships will be given for a period of two years. Selection will be based purely on the quality of the candidates and proposals.

### Eligibility

1. All applicants must be already registered in an AI study (machine learning, expert system, natural language processing, intelligent robotics etc.) under a supervisor, have finished coursework as well as had their research proposal approved. The applicant must attach a letter of support by their supervisor, a copy of the PhD study admission letter, and evidence of approval of research proposal.
2. All applicants should have competent academic credentials and demonstrate motivation and commitment to pursue an academic career.
3. All applicants should have thorough knowledge of the language of instruction within their host university. (French or Portuguese, English).
4. All applicants must be nationals or permanent residents of an eligible sub-Saharan country. (See the list of eligible countries above).
5. Must be a [Person with Disability \(PWD\)](#) - physical, sensory, intellectual, or any other recognized disability. Should have a PWD registration certificate issued by state/national council/body or any other relevant form of documentation.
6. Have all necessary national or other approvals to conduct the proposed research. Please note, the approval process may be conducted in parallel with the grant application, if necessary.
7. Have the technical capacity - or the ability to create sustainable AI solutions addressing social challenges faced by user communities.

### Benefits

Each successful student will receive a **partial scholarship** of up to **US\$ 28,000** distributed as shown below:

1. Tuition fees for two years up to **\$ 4,000**
2. Research activities up to **\$ 24,000**

**Funding will be for 24 months.**

## Category 2: Early Career Academics (ECAs)

This will mainly target those ECAs who have the capacity to supervise at least MSc students.

### Eligibility

1. Each applicant must have held a PhD in AI and ML, for not more than 5 years as at application.
2. All applicants should have competent academic credentials and demonstrate motivation and commitment to pursue an academic career.
3. All applicants must be nationals or permanent residents of an eligible sub-Saharan country (See the list of eligible countries above).
4. Must be a [Person with Disability \(PWD\)](#) - physical, sensory, intellectual, or any other recognized disability. Should have a PWD registration certificate issued by state/national council/body or any other relevant form of documentation.
5. Have all necessary national or other approvals to conduct the proposed research. Please note, the approval process may be conducted in parallel with the grant application, if necessary.
6. Have the technical capacity - or the ability to create sustainable AI solutions addressing social challenges faced by user communities.

### Benefits

Each successful ECA will receive a scholarship of up to **US\$ 41,500**. This will cover:

1. Research costs up to **\$ 25,000**.
2. Research infrastructure up to **\$ 10,000**.
3. Travel costs up to **\$ 2,500**.
4. Tuition fees for **2 MSc** students for two years up to **\$ 4,000** (@ **\$2,000** per student).

**Funding will be for 24 months.**

# Capacity Strengthening

The following complementary activities will be provided to strengthen the capacity of beneficiaries of the scholarships (PhD candidates and their supervisors; ECA candidates and their MSc students);

1. SRAIS (Scaling of Responsible AI solutions) mentoring.
2. Sensitization of responsible data collection framework.
3. Scaling of AI solutions.
4. AI policy brief development.
5. One regional research and development conference after 24 months.

## Key Benefits

1. **Financial Assistance:** Scholarships will be awarded to cover projects/applications expenses, tuition fees, books, and other academic expenses.
2. **Accessibility Support:** Each scholar will have access to AI ethics toolkits at all times. These resources will guide scholars in the responsible development of AI solutions that can be scaled and adapted for diverse contexts.
3. **Mentorship and Ethics:** Each scholar will be paired with a mentor specializing in responsible scaling of AI solutions.
4. **Collaborative Learning and Networking:** There will be efforts to enable cross-learning and networking among scholars, and between scholars and existing AI innovation hubs across the continent.

## IMPORTANT DATES

### Call for Applications Opens:

- 5 November 2024

### Webinars

- 27 November and 18 December 2024  
from 3:00 pm EAT

### Call for Applications Close:

- 5 January 2025

For more information on application procedures and eligibility criteria, please visit

[Call for Applications Link](#)



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