



Call for Applications: ASCEND Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Climate Justice Centred-Approach to Environmental Impact Assessment in Rural Southern Africa

Application Deadline: Sunday 19 January 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 expertise in the areas of environmental law, including environmental impact assessment (EIA), land law, development studies, and climate justice.

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 specialised 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 [EIA 4 Climate Justice synthesis research team](#) hosted by ASCEND. The team has up to 15 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 develop law and policy reform proposals that strengthen EIA in a time of climate crisis, particularly for the most vulnerable in society.

Project research will address the following key objectives:

- (1) Explore the adequacy of EIAs in addressing climate justice concerns for rural communities in South Africa, focused on Lesotho, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.
- (2) Synthesise EIA laws, practices, and community experiences to propose improvements that empower rural communities to advance climate justice, ensuring they are more actively involved in climate-related decisions and better protected against the adverse effects of development projects.

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 **Dr Melanie Murcott at the Institute for Marine and Environmental Law and Ncedo Mngqibisa at the Land and Accountability Research Centre, both at UCT**. ASCEND will also appoint a mentor to the PDRF based locally to provide professional development support in consultation with the academic mentors.

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 organised 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 EIA 4 Climate Justice 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 larger ASCEND PDRF cohort.

Value and tenure:

- The value of the fellowship is ZAR 450,000 – 480,000 per year for up to 2 years, with potential extension for a 3rd year based on performance and funding availability.
- 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. environmental law and/or governance, climate change law and/or governance, climate justice, development studies).
- Demonstrated ability to produce peer-reviewed research articles in international journals.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.
- Desire and ability to work in an interdisciplinary research team setting.
- Experience of handling diverse datasets, including relating to legal materials, climate science, and community experiences.
- Demonstrated ability to critically engage with and propose reforms of relevant environmental laws and policy.

Desired

- A commitment to climate justice.
- An ability to engage in decolonial research.
- An ability to engage in systems thinking.
- Experience in giving oral presentations and interest in public communication of law and policy reform proposals.
- Excellent data visualisation skills.
- Coordination and problem-solving ability.

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 early March 2025**.
- The successful applicant will be required to be a full participant in the EIA 4 Climate Justice 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 explanation on 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: EIA 4 Climate Justice” as the email subject line.

Closing date

Midnight (GMT+2) on Sunday 19 January 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 academic mentors will conduct interviews of 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*