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**Call for Application for PhD Candidates in Gender and Rural Transformation under  
the UR-Sweden Research Training Partnership Programme 2019-2024**

**1. Background**

The University of Rwanda – the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture Economics of CAVM- UR- in collaboration with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Sweden through the Research Training Partnership Programme, Rwanda (2019/24) has received funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Sweden, to implement a research and training programme entitled: **Engendering Rural Transformation for Sustainable Development (ENTRUST)**. The main focus of ENTRUST programme is to increase the understanding of rural transformation and its drivers using an inter-disciplinary approach. In addition, the programme integrates a gendered approach to examine the influence of policies on local economic development, agricultural entrepreneurship and value chains as well as in depth exploration of farming, food consumption patterns and health outcomes using micro and meso level data in Rwanda. This PhD training aims specifically to:

- position the theme of rural transformation both in the context of the UR teaching curriculum and research programme and with regard to sustainable development; as well as meet the goals in higher education to make UR a prime research institution in the region and the continent, influencing policy and practice;
- contextualise livelihoods, diversification of rural economies, and strengthen the role of the University of Rwanda in addressing socio-economic issues in relation to rural development, rural transformation, rurality, and gender; and
- apply holistic approaches to understanding rural transformation as they relate to very specific SDGs (no 1-5, 8-11 and 16-17), Rwanda's Vision 2050, the NST, Sector Strategic Plans in Rwanda, District Development Strategies, and national retreat and dialogue resolutions.

In view of the above, the University of Rwanda is pleased to invite well motivated and committed potential candidates to apply for Sandwich based PhD positions in Gender and Rural Transformation starting 2022. 4 PhD students will be registered at SLU, Sweden but field research will take place both in Rwanda and Sweden to expose Rwandan PhD students to comparative studies with some possible visits in other regions based on their research projects. According to the Sandwich PhD training model, students are expected to spend 6-7 months per year in Sweden and carrying their research activities at UR, Rwanda for the remaining period of the year. However, this period can change depending on prevailing and acceptable circumstances. The students will be jointly supervised by professors and senior researchers from both SLU and UR.

**2. Research themes/ areas**

The proposed research training under the ENTRUST program will focus on three thematic areas:





**Thematic research area 1: Gender and Rural Entrepreneurship:** This research programme will move beyond the study of women and entrepreneurship by emphasising performance and growth, and instead understand entrepreneurship as a gendered process by which institutional change and increased empowerment can take place (Ahl, 2006), drawing on theories from organizational research. We recognize that there is a need to consider context-specific factors such as socio-cultural, legal-institutional, economic and political (Ahl et al. 2016). By framing entrepreneurship as a gendered process with potential to increase the empowerment of rural women, men and youth, we enable the identification of women, men and youth entrepreneurs' different interests, needs and preferences. Moreover, in contrast to earlier research on women and entrepreneurship, we recognize the importance to include both women and men in the gender analysis, as well as accounting for generational issues. Pettersson with colleagues have previously developed and applied the analytical framing of entrepreneurship as empowerment for women in both a Nordic and Tanzanian context, which they call FemInc.ism (Ahl et al 20). In this research theme, we want to apply this concept specifically to the rural sector in Rwanda, as well as to expand it to also consider the empowerment of marginalized men and youth. Research questions will include: (i) What are the factors that can explain the limited engagement and reluctance of women and youth in the agri-food sector? (ii) What types of entrepreneurship exist and how do they affect local economic development? (iii) What are the contexts of successful rural entrepreneurs? (iv) What is the role for gender norms and responsibilities? (v) How do gender norms and practices impact women's, men's and youth's opportunities and constraints in rural entrepreneurship/entrepreneurial processes? (vi) What institutions facilitate or constrain the engendering of rural entrepreneurship?

**Available PhD Positions: 1 position**

**Thematic Research Area 2: Gender, Rural Transformation and ICT:** Rural research has repeatedly shown the importance of looking at local development from a neo-endogenous perspective, meaning acknowledging how local activities draw on local resources as well as integrating external influences and resources to increase local potential (Rauch et al 2016). Rural entrepreneurship, agribusiness, agrifood systems as well as rural living conditions in general, such as health and well-being issues, are all influenced by the developments within the field of Information Communication Technologies (ICT). ICT has been shown to be one of the most important factors influencing livelihood diversification in Rwanda (Maniriho & Nilsson, 2018). The challenges posed by "competing norms and taboos", "gender policies and competing opportunities and challenges of development" cannot be underestimated. Due to these challenges, some of the programs aimed at engendering rural transformation, for instance the national *Girinka* program get marred in the patriarchal cultural structures; and often produce a backlash that can entrench some of the very traditional attitudes that they were meant to change (Kubai and Ahalberg, 2013).





ICT could transform rural development as they are both a source and a consequence of gender relations (Ibid), meaning that the gender structure ordering the lives of a group of people contributes to how ICT is integrated. Hence where men struggle with trust of digitalised information, and women do not, a social approach to the integration of ICT will assist in revealing the mutual production of gender and ICT. This leads to the formulation of the following tentative research questions to guide this work package: (i) How can ICT be capitalized on to improve rural business opportunities and the functioning of rural markets? (ii) How can ICT be capitalized on to improve access to services in rural areas for women, men and youth? (iii) How do changes in population structures influence rural transformation outcomes?

**Available PhD Positions: 2 Positions**

**Thematic Research Area 3: Farming, food consumption patterns and health:** The main goal of this research thematic area is to shed light on farming, food demand and security, dietary habits, nutrition and the health situation in Rwanda, taking into account prevailing regional characteristics and disparities. Food crop production in Rwanda is predominantly dependent on the productivity characterizing small farm-holders. Increasingly, there is need for more research to contribute to debates regarding household agriculture and food security, and its contribution towards nutrition and wellbeing (Mackay et al 2018). This is crucial for addressing the double burden of nutrition particularly in countries with rising incomes like Rwanda. Raising productivity levels among smallholder farms therefore represents a vital means to address problems of undernutrition, overnutrition and farm household wellbeing. A body of evidence now exists underscoring the need to have good nutrition between a woman's pregnancy and a child's second birthday. This period sets the health course for irreversible brain development, growth and predisposition to later adult life diseases, viz. cardiovascular related, obesity and diabetes (Black et al, 2013).

The overall transformations experienced by the Rwanda economy at all levels are not uniformly distributed in the country and they are influencing households in the following manner: i) through an evident rural/urban divide and ii) regional disparities that are presently prevailing. This situation would require combining a meso approach considering the five established economic and administrative regions (provinces) and micro- approaches. In this process, special attention needs to be devoted to the peri-urban areas within which households could be at the same time part-time farmers and also involved in other economic activities (for instance informal markets).



The proposed research thematic area addresses the following tentative questions/issues: (i) How do the regional farming activities and their related upstream and downstream industries respond to the nutrition and health situation among Rwanda population? (ii) how do increase in household income, a rapid urbanization and a continuous re-structuring of its farming sector influence individual's health status, (iii) what are the implications of agriculture-nutrition-health knowledge among different gender groups on food production, household food security, food preparation, consumption, dietary diversity and nutritional outcomes for adults and children? (iv) What are the opportunities for the land use consolidation (LUC) policy and crop intensification program (CIP) to contribute towards promoting nutritional outcomes in rural and peri-urban Rwanda? (v) What is the impact of globalisation, environmental change and urbanisation on dietary patterns and nutritional status of the population in Rwanda? (vi) What is the status of knowledge level among genders in relation to nutrition, healthy diets and food preparation and how can this knowledge be increased, communicated and sustained to promote, maintain or recreate healthy food dietary habits?

*Available Positions: 1 Position*

### 3. Funding

These PhD positions will be fully funded and will be supported by Sida through UR Sweden Program for Research, Higher education, and Institutional Advancement.

### 4. Admission

Potential PhD Candidates are expected to express their motivation and interest to undertake the PhD programme in the area of engendering rural transformation for a maximum period of four years from date of registration. Applicants must qualify and meet the admission criteria and conditions both at UR and SLU. The following are key eligibility criteria:

#### 4.1. Eligibility Criteria

- Be a Rwanda Citizen
- Hold a Masters Degree in relevant field. For **thematic research areas 1 and 2**, the degree should be in field of gender and rural transformation towards sustainable development. For **thematic research area 3**, you are required to have a degree in economics or agricultural economics.
- Be a UR staff.
- Both men and women are encouraged to apply. However, if it happens that two candidates or more have similar conditions, priority will be given to women candidates in order to promote gender parity in research and teaching at UR.





#### 4.2.Key documents to support the application

**The following documents are required to support your application:**

- Application letter addressed to the UR- centre for postgraduate studies
- Certified copy of your Masters' degree relevant to this PhD program
- A cover or motivation letter stating your interest in this programme and the gap to bridge after your PhD research and education [ Max: 2 pages];
- A copy of your detailed Curriculum Vitae, demonstrating your previous experience relevant to this PhD program plus the publication or academic experience [ Max: 3 pages]
- Indicative PhD Project proposal with specific theme selected by the candidate among the above three themes. This should comprise (1) the background, (2) the problem statement demonstrating the research gap and the current art of science in the area of research of interest among the three thematic areas; (3) the methodology and anticipated sources of data to be used, (4) how you intend to make this project successful and what you see as future challenges in undertaking this research, (5) five to ten key references well documented likely to inform this study, (6) other relevant additional statements. [ Max 5 pages].
- Three recommendation letters: one from your current employer, one from your previous supervisor, and the other from any other reference person (former employer or professor).

#### 5. Selection criteria

In addition to the above admission and eligibility conditions, the candidate will have to satisfy the conditions to be set by the Research and Post-graduate committee. These will include: fulfilment of the requirements, quality and relevance of the PhD project proposal, satisfactory responses to the questions and comments of the interview or recruitment committee, and gender consideration.

#### 6. Important dates

- Application deadline: **27<sup>th</sup> August, 2021**
- Shortlisting for interview: 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021
- Appeal to the shortlisting results: 10-17<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- Interview: **28-29<sup>th</sup> September 2021**
- Notification of the winners: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021
- Appeal to interview results: 20-27<sup>th</sup> October 2021



### 7. How to apply

Application and support documents should be done electronically using the following link:  
For more information and further clarifications can be addressed to Dr. Alphonsine Mukamuhirwa, Deputy Team Leader of the sub-programme. E-mail: [amukamuhirwa@gmail.com](mailto:amukamuhirwa@gmail.com) and to UR-CPGS Scholarship officer Mrs Gashayija Umulisa Glorioso to the E-mail: [ur-cpgscholarship@ur.ac.rw](mailto:ur-cpgscholarship@ur.ac.rw)

Done at Kigali, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Prof Nosa O. Egiebor**  
**Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research**  
**University of Rwanda**

