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**Third call for scholarship application
for MSc, Academic/Administrative
Staff and Trainees positions in the
framework of the Intra Africa
ORPHAN project**



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ORPHAN Project:

Mobility for high skilled scientists and entrepreneurs on orphan crops in higher education for accelerated climate change solutions in Africa

I- Context

The sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region is on a very low pace of the achievements the nutrition and sustainable development goals. The alarming food and nutritional security situation in the region caused by the growing population in SSA and worsen by the negative effects of climate change on agri-food systems calls for innovative approaches. Yet, SSA is endowed with a huge diversity of species known as orphan crops that have the potential to address food scarcity caused by climate change due to their adaptability and nutritional value in low-input agricultural systems. Despite this potential, modern agricultural systems in SSA depends only on 1% of the crop diversity available to feed 60% of the population. Orphan crops have benefited from very limited modern scientific and technological advances. ORPHAN (Mobility for high skilled scientists and entrepreneurs on orphan crops in higher education for accelerated) Scholarship Program is an initiative **of five highly qualified public universities from three African regions and one university in Europe to advance knowledge on orphan crops through digital agriculture. This Project is coordinated by University of Nangui Abrogoua (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire). The different partners include University of Abomey-Calavi, Republic of Benin; Ebonyi State University, Nigeria (West Africa); Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, JKUAT, Kenya (Eastern Africa), the University of Zimbabwe (Southern Africa), Catholic University of Louvain (UCL), Belgium (Technical partner).**

ORPHAN is funded by the Intra-Africa Program of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission

Initially, the consortium mainly intends to:

- 1)** Train 12 high-profile PhD graduates, 32 MSc graduates, 10 academic staff and 10 trainees with skills in plant breeding, food technology and nutrition to address current and future challenges related to climate change and agrifood systems with a focus

on promising orphan plant species of Africa;

- 2) Harmonize training programs and research agenda on the improvement of the value chain of orphan crops for food and nutrition security in Africa;
- 3) Enhance national – regional – international collaboration and programmatic agenda that promotes orphan crops research and training for agricultural innovations in Africa through cross regional mobility.

2- Profile of the proposed positions and study crops

2-1 MSc and selected crops

The MSc are the students who have finished a MSc coursework in his/her home institution OR will finish their coursework before their departure to the host country, if selected) and will conduct research work in selected host institution members of the ORPHAN project consortium (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebonyi State University, University of Zimbabwe). After completing the research activities in the host University, the MSc student will return to his home country to defend his/her thesis. Such scheme is named: credit seeking mobility. Selected crops per country as well as key words for MSc subjects can be found in Table 2. MSc students are invited to develop their research proposal on a selected crop with focus on the key words listed in Table 1

Table 1 Selected crop for MSc student along with keywords

Countries	Crops	Key words for PhD candidates at UAC
Cote d'Ivoire	Bambara groundnut	Genotyping, yield improvement, formulation of a complementary food
	Sesame	Exploration, utilization and etymology; Agro-morphological diversity; Photosynthesis; flower phenology and pollen fertility; Functional foods and Value chains
Republic of Benin	Taro	nutritional value- processing-sensorial and sociocultural acceptability
	Bambara groundnut	Genotyping, Agronomic practices for yield improvement, Nutrient Management, photosynthesis, value chains approach
	Groundnut	Genotyping, Agronomic practices for yield improvement, Nutrient Management, photosynthesis, value chains approach
	Mungbean	Nutritional value- processing-sensorial and sociocultural acceptability

Kenya	African nightshade (Solanum scabrum & villosum)	Nutrient and anti-nutrient characteristics of African nightshade varieties
	Finger millet	Amino acid content in registered varieties
	Jute mallow (Corchorus olitorius)	Nutrition and Health benefits of Jute mallow varieties
	Vine spinach (Basella alba & rubrum)	Nutritional contents and anti-oxidant activity of red and green stemmed varieties
Nigeria	Yam	Flower synchronization, phenology and pollen fertility; Photosynthesis; nutritional properties.
	Bambara Groundnut	Genotype x environment interaction analysis for yield and quality traits; Nutrient profiling; Photosynthesis; flower phenology and pollen fertility
	Sesame	Exploration, utilization and etymology; Agro-morphological diversity; Photosynthesis; flower phenology and pollen fertility; Functional foods and Value chains;
	Amaranth	Exploration, utilization and etymology; Genetic diversity assessment, stability and adaptability; Photosynthesis; flower phenology and pollen fertility; Nutrient profiling; value chain approach.
Zimbabwe	Finger millet	Characterization, Genotype x environment interaction analysis for yield and quality traits
	Taro	Genotype x environment interaction analysis for yield and quality traits.
	Bambara Groundnuts/ Cowpeas/Sesame	Marker assisted selection; and Pre-breeding
	Grain amaranth	Genetic diversity assessment, stability and adaptability

P.S. The hosting university reserves the right to change the crop and/or modify the subject depending on the gap in the literature.

2.2 Profile of the academic/Administrative staff position

The academic/Administrative staff are the employed person in one of the Higher Education Institution involved in ORPHAN project (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebonyi State University, University of Zimbabwe).

They will be selected based on the needs expressed in their motivation letter, their background, and the importance of the capacity-building activity (requested mobility) for their home institution.

They will be asked to provide a plan to share the acquired knowledge from the mobility with other staff of their home country institution who would not benefit from the mobility.

2.3 Profile of Trainees position

Trainees are students enrolled in a bachelor/master/PhD programme in one of the African beneficiaries HEIs (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebonyi State University, University of Zimbabwe). The objective is to improve their entrepreneurship in Plant breeding, Biotechnology or Nutrition, Food Technology by building the capacity of young African trainees applied to crops. Trainees will be selected to build their capacity in entrepreneurship, and soft skills and will broaden their knowledge in climate-smart agriculture practices and hands-on skills in enterprise. They will also broaden their network during the mobility and will have chance to interact with experts in their domain.

They will be asked to provide a plan on the knowledge they would like to acquire in the selected enterprise in the host country which will turn around:

- development of business and management skills
- increased potential for innovation, creation of agribusinesses, and entrepreneurial ventures

Note that the host University will select the enterprise in which the trainees will conduct the internship based on the student's needs and perspective.

3- Scholarship: duration and financial support

- For MSc students, the maximum duration of the scholarship is 12 months for **credit seeking mobility**,
- For academic/Administrative staff, the maximum duration of the scholarship is 2 months
- For Trainees, the maximum duration of the scholarship is 3 months

The scholarship includes subsistence allowances, participation costs, contribution to research costs and insurance in line with EACEA procedures. Please note that under the current EU scheme, scholarships holder will have to bear the cost of their flight ticket (round-trip) to the host institution. The monthly stipend has been revised by the EU commission to allow students to cover their travel ticket.

- **MSc students will receive a monthly stipend of 890 Euros.**
- **Staff member will receive a monthly stipend of 2370 Euros.**
- **Trainees will receive a monthly stipend of 1230 Euros.**

Research costs, tuitions fees, costs related to training, participation to conferences and insurance costs are covered by the host institution following EACEA guidelines. Note that participation to conferences and special training has to be approved by the supervision team in the host institution.

PS. There are no research and participation cost attached to the Trainees

4- Eligibility

4.1-Eligibility of MSc

To apply to this call, students should have proficiency in **Plant breeding, Biotechnology, Human Nutrition and Food Technologies or related fields. Students showing interest of applying digital technologies to above mentioned fields are encouraged to apply.** In addition, to be eligible for a scholarship “students” must comply with the below criteria at the time of the application for a scholarship:

- a) **at the time they apply for a scholarship, candidates must be national of and resident in an African country.**
- b) **be registered/admitted in or having obtained a degree in a HEI from:**
 - b-1) one of the HEIs included in the ORPHAN consortium (**Target group 1**). This target group includes students from all partner universities as follows:
 - University of Nangui Abrogoua, Côte d'Ivoire
 - University of Abomey-Calavi, Republic of Benin
 - Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya
 - Ebonyi State University, Nigeria
 - University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
 - b-2) HEI not included in the ORPHAN consortium but established in an EACEA eligible country (**Target group 2**). This target group includes students registered/admitted in or having obtained a degree from another HEI other than University of Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebonyi State University, University of Zimbabwe, but established in Africa.
- c) **have sufficient knowledge of the language of the courses in the host countries.**
- d) **Should also meet the enrolment criteria of the university he/she would want to apply to.**

4-2 Eligibility for Trainees and academic/administrative Staff

- a) Trainees must be a student enrolled in a bachelor/master/PhD programme in one of the African beneficiaries HEIs (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebony State University, University of Zimbabwe) and proficient in Plant breeding, Biotechnology

or Nutrition, Food Technology.

- b)** Academic/Administrative staff must be working in one of the beneficiaries HEIs (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebony State University, University of Zimbabwe) or be resident or staff of the technical partner country or institution.

The consortium involves Francophone and Anglophone countries and will promote bilingual aptitude in students throughout the implementation of the project. Language courses will be offered to help students improve their skills.

Students having benefited from scholarship(s) under the previous intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme are eligible to receive scholarship under this current call.

Nationals are **not eligible** to apply to the scholarships to be taken in their home university.

5- Number of available scholarships for this first call

The ORPHAN project is opened to all students from the partner universities (**Target Group 1**) and those from other African universities (**Target Group 2**) depending on the position. Master's students can come from Target Group 1 and 2. Staff and Trainees can only come from Target Group 1. **Currently, sixteen (18) MSc, six (08) Trainees and six (03) Staff positions are available.**

6- Submission

The Scholarship application form together with other required documents should be sent **as a unique PDF attachment** to emails indicated below. Other required documents are listed in the application form and include:

1. Cover letter
2. Scholarship Application form ([available here](#))
3. Student research proposal (for MSc)
4. Study work plan in the selected host university (Only for Staff)
5. Clear motivation on the learning outcome from the internship (only for trainees)
6. National ID or Copy of Passport Data page

7. Certificate of previous degree /or a Proof that the degree has been completed (for Staff applicants)
8. First year MSc transcript records (for MSc applicants)
9. Proof of enrolment in second year MSc degree course (or proof of eligibility to register) from home institution (for MSc applicants)
10. Proof of enrolment in bachelor/master/PhD programme in one of the African beneficiaries HEIs (University Nangui Abrogoua, University of Abomey-Calavi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Ebonyi State University, University of Zimbabwe) (only for Trainees)
11. Previous transcript record for Staff and Trainees
12. A support letter from home HEIs (from an authority of the University, Vice chancellor or Dean or Vice Dean or Head of Department/School)
13. Two recommendation letters
14. Detailed curriculum Vitae.
15. Certificate of English or French language skills if any
16. Employment certificate (only for staff)
17. Proof of socio-economic vulnerability attested by an authority of the home HEI for those vulnerable. The letter should have the HEI letter header and email and contact of the signatory person.
18. Any other supporting documents

In order to meet the general selection requirements for MSc Mobility Grant (maximum 12 months' scholarship mainly for research), the applicant must have completed the first two semesters of a Master of Science course in Plant breeding, Biotechnology, Nutrition and Food Technology or related fields in his home country. It is important that the students have their first year MSc recognition and academic transcripts and **a proof that he/she has completed the course work of the MSc before proceeding on the scholarship. However, students who are still attending coursework scheduled for the last semester should finish the course work before their departure date to the host country (if selected) (check the timeline below, section 9).**

For the choice of the host university, the MSc students and Trainees are allowed to only apply for the University of Nangui Abrogoua (Côte d'Ivoire), University of Abomey-Calavi (Republic of Benin), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya), Ebonyi State University (Nigeria), University of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe).

For the choice of the host university, the Trainees are allowed to only apply for the University of Nangui Abrogoua (Côte d'Ivoire), University of Abomey-Calavi (Republic of Benin), Ebonyi State University (Nigeria), University of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe).

The staff applicants are allowed to only apply for the University of Abomey-Calavi (Republic of Benin), Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya), Ebonyi State University (Nigeria).

7- Contact

Due to difference in the partners higher education system, specific academic arrangements will be performed to assure that scholars are admitted in the right program and can make benefit of the mobility. These arrangements will be fixed on a case-by-case basis between the host HEI and Coordinating Institution.

For more information, please contact

Table 3. Contact of the local coordinators

Countries	Universities	Contact Person
Côte d'Ivoire	Nangui Abrogoua University	Prof. Kévin Kouamé Koffi, kevinkouamekoffi@gmail.com
Republic of Benin	University of Abomey-Calavi	Prof. Nadia Fanou Fogny, nadia.fanou@uac.bj Prof. Nicodème Fassinou Hotègni, nicodemef@gmail.com
Kenya	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	Prof. Mary Abukutsa, abukutsa.mary@gmail.com
Nigeria	Ebonyi State University	Prof. Happiness Oselebe, h.oselebe@ebsu.edu.ng Prof. Catherine V. Nnamani, nnamanicatherine@ebsu.edu.ng
Zimbabwe	University of Zimbabwe	Prof. Edmore Gasura, gasurae@yahoo.com

8- Deadline

The deadlines vary according the selected position

Applications should be submitted no later than **March 10, 2026**

to orphan2427@gmail.com and copied Prof Nadia Fanou Fogny, nadia.fanou@uac.bj and Mr. Christel Azon, christelferreolazon@gmail.com

ORPHAN fosters diversity and gender equity at the work place. Therefore, female candidates and persons from socio-economic vulnerable groups are strongly encouraged to apply.

9- Tentative timeline

Activity	Tentative Timeline
Applications open	January 16, 2026– March 10, 2026
Applications screening for eligibility	March 12 – 16, 2026
Applications assessment	April 20 – 30, 2026
Interviews	May 1st – 15, 2026
Outcome of the selection	May 20, 2026
Tentative month for selected applicants to travel to host country	June/July 2026

Selected MSc students should then provide proof that they have completed the course work no later than May 20, 2026. A letter from the student HEI or supervisor stating that he/ she has completed the coursework can also be accepted.

The list of academic programmes offered by different host can be found below.

List of the academic program at the HEIs

Beneficiary name	Country	Type of programme	Name of the programme	Thematic field of study
University Nangui Abrogoua	Côte d'Ivoire	Master	MSc in Genetics and Bioresources Improvement	Agricultural science and Food security
University Nangui Abrogoua	Côte d'Ivoire	Master	MSc in Biochemistry and Food Technology	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Abomey-Calavi	Benin	Master	MSc in Biotechnology and Plant Breeding	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Abomey-Calavi	Benin	Master	MSc in Human Nutrition and Food Security	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Abomey-Calavi	Benin	Master	MSc in Agricultural and Food Sciences and Technologies	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Abomey-Calavi	Benin	Doctorate	PhD in Human Nutrition and Food Security	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Abomey-Calavi	Benin	Doctorate	PhD in Food Sciences and Technologies	Agricultural science and Food security
Ebonyi State University	Nigeria	Master	MSc in Plant Breeding & Genetics	Agricultural science and Food security
Ebonyi State University	Nigeria	Master	MSc in Food Science & Technology	Agricultural science and Food security
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	Kenya	Master	MSc in Plant Breeding	Agricultural science and Food security
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	Kenya	Master	MSc in Horticulture	Agricultural science and Food security
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology	Kenya	Master	MSc Food Science and Nutrition	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Master	MSc. in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Master	MSc. In Horticulture	Agricultural science and Food security
University of Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Master	MSc. In Food Science and Nutrition	Agricultural science and Food security