

ADRAS research theme: Africa

Total funding available: Up to AUD 8 million over two years

Australia cannot help tackle global poverty without increasing our aid to Africa. The poorest continent in the world, Africa has 33 of the world's 48 least developed countries (LDCs) and almost half the continent, more than half a billion people, lives in extreme poverty. Australia's increased aid to Africa is supporting efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in sectors where Australia has experience and expertise and where Australia is best able to make a difference.

The principal objectives in the Africa theme, in accordance with *Looking West: Australia's strategic approach to aid in Africa 2011-2015*, are to:

1. Promote research which addresses critical development issues, as articulated through Australia's existing aid program in key sectors and following African agendas and priorities.
2. Support research activities which have strong policy and user relevance, and are likely to result in demonstrable development impact.
3. Extend knowledge in areas relevant to the effectiveness of AusAID's existing work in Africa.
4. Contribute to capacity building in the African research sector, and to the capacity of Australian and international researchers to work in and with Africa.

Consistent with AusAID's development activities in Africa, research proposals will be considered in five thematic areas:

1. Agriculture and Food Security
2. Mining for development
3. Peace, conflict and security
4. Maternal and child health
5. Water and sanitation

Within these themes, research proposals will need to demonstrate that they respond to African priorities and agendas, and address issues of importance to African governments, researchers and communities. Proposals that reflect partnerships between African and international researchers will be well regarded.

Please see the AusAID Africa and Middle East webpage for further information:

[Middle East and North Africa Web page](#)

Eligibility criteria

Applications for funding for up to two years will be considered. Applicants are eligible to receive between AUD 100,000 and AUD 400,000 in funding per year.

Applicants must address one of the sub-themes below. Applicants must clearly articulate the relevance of their proposal to the selected theme.

Research must be applicable to Africa.

It is also desirable that Applicants and their research partners have a strategy for sharing their findings within Africa and with the development community.

Sub-Themes

Sub-Theme: Agriculture and food security

While agricultural research investments have increased in recent years, these have been concentrated in relatively few countries, with many others stagnating or slipping back. AusAID has developed a program of support in Africa through the Africa Food Security Initiative, managed in conjunction with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). Its three pillars (lifting agricultural productivity; improving rural livelihoods through trade; building the resilience of rural communities) are aligned with the African Union's (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). While pillar one specifically emphasises research, researchable issues run throughout the three pillars.

AusAID's existing activity includes a partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) (Building Agriculture Research in West, East and Central Africa) which includes within it support for the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WE CARD), focusing on farming systems and animal health, and Biosciences Eastern and Southern Africa (BecA), focusing on the development of biosciences expertise and research capacity. In addition, ACIAR runs the SIMLESA program (sustainable maize-legume cropping systems), and a smallholder cattle project in Botswana. The ACIAR-AusAID Agriculture Research & Development Implementation Partnership provides a framework for Australian technical assistance to African countries. The newly-established Australian International Centre for Food Security (AICFS) will also commence research activities in African shortly.

While more bioscientific research (in the areas described above) is clearly needed, so too is work that focuses of economic and social aspects of food security, and which looks at the impact of and relationships with other sectors.

Some examples of issues within this sub-theme include but are not limited to:

- The structure and functioning of markets and value chains, such as an examination of the kinds of infrastructure investments that will result in improvements of market access for small holder farmers and communities to access food.
- The socio-economic aspects of food security, particularly with reference to marginalised communities; pastoralists and women and incentives for youth to remain on farms.
- The impacts of (large and/or small-scale) mining on agricultural production, in terms of environmental impact, transport corridors, labour market dynamics, etc.

- The processes and consequences of the introduction of large scale and commercial agricultural systems (with particular reference to Kenya).
- Drivers and constraints on building agricultural innovation and uptake in West Africa.
- Opportunities to build resilience in South Sudan and Somalia.

Sub-Theme: Mining for Development

The mining industry in Africa conducts a large amount of research and data analysis for commercial purposes, with a high proportion of the outputs of this work remaining within the companies concerned. Industry initiatives facilitate linkages between industry and researchers in geoscience and related fields, including significant projects in Africa. The International Mining for Development Centre (IM4DC), established by AusAID in late 2011 as a component of the Mining for Development Initiative, also commissions some research alongside its advisory, educational and training services.

While acknowledging the need for a better knowledge of Africa's geological resources, the focus of research commissioned under the ADRAS will be on mining governance – work that is expected to help African governments and communities better understand and manage their resource wealth in ways that contribute to sustainable development.

Some examples of issues within this sub-theme include but are not limited to:

- Mining and economic development, particularly the features contributing to or impeding broadly-based and pro-poor development outcomes.
- Mining and sub-national government functioning, including relationships with national governments, land use planning, infrastructure and industrial development, local supply and business impacts.
- Industry-community relations, including the effects of Corporate Social Responsibility projects, the roles of NGOs, community understanding and utilisation of mining-related information.
- Environmental research including the effectiveness of attempts to mitigate negative impacts across a range of environmental variables, including water, interactions with agriculture, mine closure.
- The use of Public-Private Partnership models in infrastructure planning for wider community and national needs.
- The role and contribution of public policy support in assisting governments to manage their resource sectors to promote positive economic and social outcomes

Sub-Theme: Peace, conflict and security

AusAID's existing work in this area has concentrated primarily on support through the UN system, through the UN Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund, for targeted initiatives in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi, and support to the AU's development of its 'protection of civilians' guidelines. Research commissioned through ADRAS will identify opportunities for further peacebuilding assistance in Africa, as well as strengthening understanding of the drivers of conflict.

Some examples of issues within this sub-theme include but are not limited to:

- The drivers of piracy in Somalia and the Gulf of Guinea, and the effectiveness of counter piracy activities (e.g. livelihood support).
- The contributions of improved mining governance to peacebuilding.
- The role of women in African peacebuilding, and in regional security architecture.
- Peacebuilding and youth, including youth employment - challenges, opportunities, risks

- The role of informal justice mechanisms in conflict resolution in Africa.
- Drivers of conflict and instability (including non-state actors, transnational factors, and the impact of structural change) and of conflict resolution (eg state building, political settlements and social cohesion).
- Transnational organised crime and its impact on the legitimacy of African governments.
- The effectiveness of different approaches to assessment and early recovery following conflict.

Sub-Theme: Maternal and child health

Health is one the most heavily funded areas of development research, with many large scale initiatives. Nevertheless, research has not always supported policy priorities and decisions, and implementation of existing health knowledge is often weak. AusAID's Australia-Africa Maternal and Child Health Initiative operates in East Africa, and has identified three broad potential areas of focus:

- Health workforce development, especially midwifery; obstetric and newborn care.
- Sexual and reproductive health.
- Improving access to MCH health services to pastoralist communities.

Some examples of issues within this sub-theme include but are not limited to:

- Health systems - while there is considerable existing knowledge about how to improve health in the form of treatments and interventions, there are major gaps in knowledge about how to ensure this is effectively scaled up to reach patients, particularly in fragile states. Research at a system level might contribute to improved understanding of such topics as :
 - the effectiveness of current health interventions and services
 - healthcare system efficiency and finance
 - the strengths and weaknesses of centralised and decentralised systems
 - the most appropriate roles for public and private health services.
- The social determinants of health in African societies is also a priority requiring further study:
 - for maternal and child health, the factors influencing post-birth survival rates or the adoption of health-promoting personal and social behaviours
 - barriers to the policy influence of existing MCH research and the translation of existing knowledge from science into policy and between countries.

Sub-Theme: Water and sanitation*

AusAID's 2011-2016 Water and Sanitation Program targets Southern Africa and operates in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, complemented with some broader regional work. It targets services in small towns and peri-urban areas, including informal settlements, and focuses on a number of themes:

- water supply
- sanitation, health and hygiene
- local government capacity (to support sustainable governance of systems and resources)
- the governance of transboundary water resources (covering local capacity, water resource management and climate change adaptation).

Preference will be given to work that complements AusAID's existing water and sanitation program, particularly focusing on Southern Africa (and the four focus countries).

Some examples of issues within this sub-theme include but are not limited to:

- Water and sanitation services, looking particularly at service delivery issues in small towns and peri-urban areas and the impacts of:
 - rapid urbanisation, population and economic growth;
 - climate change on water security and water quality;
 - local capacity levels;
 - operations and maintenance requirements.
- The impact on health outcomes of sanitation service provision and hygiene behaviour in small towns and peri-urban areas, as well as approaches to implement service provision 'at scale'.
- Integrated Transboundary Water Resource Management in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) especially on issues pertaining to water quality (such research might link to the Regional Strategic Action Plan, which would contribute to policy relevance). Research organised around a particular river basin may be particularly useful.
- Broader water resource management issues, including research to assist countries and regional organisations develop regulatory and policy frameworks to manage growing water resource demands in Africa.
- Research that includes the social and economic dimensions of water supply and access (including gender) would be well-regarded.

Cross-Cutting issues

Applicants are invited to consider the relevance of cross-cutting issues to their work. Cross-cutting issues that may apply to all or most of the themes are:

- a) Climate change and environment
- b) Public policy development and strengthening
- c) Gender equality and women's empowerment

Cross-cutting issue: Climate change and environment

Climate change and environment are issues which apply to many other areas of research, but particularly agriculture and water, and it may be useful to consider climate change as a strand around which work in other themes could be undertaken.

Cross-cutting issue: Public policy

There are clear public policy dimensions to all of the thematic areas identified as priorities. AusAID encourages collaborative policy-driven research between think-tanks and universities that draw on the strengths of each institution (the broad policy responsiveness of the former and the methodological rigour, quality and detail provided by the latter) where this might contribute to policy implementation.

Cross-cutting issue: Gender

The Africa program's work on gender is organised around the four thematic pillars of the AusAID Gender Thematic Strategy - *Promoting opportunities for all: Gender equality and women's empowerment*:

- Advancing equal access to gender-responsive health and education services in Africa.
- Increasing women's voice in decision-making, leadership, and peace-building.
- Empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security.
- Ending violence against women and girls at home, in their communities, and in disaster and conflict situations.

Research might address topics such as specific regional barriers and constraints to gender equality in a particular sector; specific priority issues where mainstream systems may not be the most effective way of reaching women and girls, for example in fragile and conflict-affected countries; or the different impacts that policies have on women and men, girls and boys. Robust evidence on the experiences of women and men, and solid documentation of good practices that can lead to improvements in policies and outcomes would also be valuable.

***Note:**

The Water and Sanitation sub-theme specifically refers to AusAID's Southern Africa program. Researchers are advised to also look at the wider WASH theme