Call for Applications

Academic year 2023-2024

Doctoral or post-doctoral research grant on the theme of the Environmental Education (EE) in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO)

Introduction

The "Coastal Populations and Ecosystems Resilience in the Southwest Indian Ocean" Project (RECOS) is a 10 million euros project implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and co-financed by the *Agence Française pour le Développement* (AFD) and the *Fond Français pour l'Environnement Mondial* (FFEM). Its overall objective is to strengthen the resilience of coastal populations to the effects of climate change by restoring the services provided by coastal ecosystems. One of the main focuses of the RECOS project is to provide a regional scientific platform for consultation and exchange around 4 key topics. On of the topics focuses on Environmental education in the Western Indian Indian Ocean (WIO) region. As part of the RECOS project, a doctoral thesis or postdoctoral contract will be funded to contribute to the scientific research on the topic of environmental education in coastal zones. Collaboration and partnership between regional universities and/or research centres will be strongly encouraged.

Context

In the WIO region, the vulnerabilities of coastal and island communities are largely exacerbated by the combined effects of increasing coastal human pressures and accelerating climate change. In this context, capacity building appears to be a key factor in adaptation and resilience of these communities. Over the last few decades, and in pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), environmental education has gained in visibility and has positioned itself as a vector for behavioural change. Environmental education now plays an essential role in national agendas and is mainstreamed into national curricula.

Considered a fundamental dimension of education, environmental education is "an integral dimension of the development of individuals and social groups, which concerns their relationship with the environment[1]". In recent years, this field of education has been enriched by the diversification of methods and tools used to convey sustainable development messages. A group of regional experts (from IOC Member States) met in February 2023 in Mauritius[2] to take stock of existing approaches and tools in the IOC region. A review of existing programmes in the region helped to identify priority research areas and synergies that could be

[1] SAUVÉ L., Éducation relative à l'environnement -théories et pratiques. Notes de cours. Module 1. Programme d'études supérieures en éducation relative à l'environnement. Université du Québec à Montréal, (2011)

[2] Workshop of the thematic group 4 « environmental education» held at the Pearl Beach hotel in February, the 22rd and 23rd , 2023.

exploited regionally. The discussions also enabled the regional experts to discuss the challenges encountered (cost of materials, lack of assessment tools, lack of calibration of methods, taking account of out-of-school pupils, etc.) and to identify the key success factors (training teachers and stimulating their interest, integrating tools into school curricula, adopting a cross-disciplinary approach, etc.). The research proposal below stems from the discussions held during this regional workshop and draws on the findings and needs expressed by its participants.

Research topic

Environmental education is a global educational project that has recently become a research focus. In the south-west Indian Ocean some environmental education programmes are under implementation and use a wide range of tools and methods. A global and regional state of the art on environmental education programmes will be required to identify the concepts, currents different approaches, procedures and tools deployed. A contextual analysis should be carried out based on a comparative approach of a selection of countries where these programmes are implemented (Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, Réunion and Mauritius). Next the research will focus on identifying local constraints and issues in the light of the political, social, and environmental context. The doctoral/post-doctoral student will have to define the scope of his/her research, starting with the development of a typology and the categorisation of educational programmes. The doctoral student/post-doctoral researcher will have to reflect on the impact of environmental education programmes, in terms of their nature (impact on behaviours, impact on ecosystems, etc.), the assessment methods used and target audience. This research will enable the identification of levers for the integration of environmental education programmes into national education policies and regional strategies to ensure their sustainable implementation.

Eligible graduate schools/host universities

The eligible host universities and graduate schools are those existing in the IOC countries targeted by the RECOS project, i.e. Mauritius, Madagascar and Réunion. Joint supervision is strongly encouraged, involving French universities (Overseas France and mainland France) or other regional/international universities relevant to the proposed research topic.

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants must be nationals of the countries targeted by the project, i.e. Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. In the absence of a graduate school at the University of Seychelles and Comoros, nationals of these two countries will have to enrol with a graduate school in one of the other targeted countries mentioned above. Candidates must hold a Master degree/thesis in geography, ecology, environmental sciences or in any other field addressing the theme described above. This call for applications will be circulated to all the universities in the IOC area.

Duration

The funding comes from the RECOS project, which is scheduled to run until the end of 2026. Thesis/post-doctoral work must begin by the end of 2023 and be completed by October 2026, at the latest, when the thesis will be defended and published.

Resources made available

The PhD. Student /post-doctoral fellow will receive a monthly stipend, as well as some of the costs required to conduct the research (data collection, fieldwork, participation in conferences, publication/communication costs, etc.)

Expected skills

- ✓ Analytical, writing and synthesis skills.
- ✓ Excellent ability to work in French and English. Fluency in a language of one or more of the IOC countries would be a plus.
- ✓ Knowledge of the regional context and the context and issues of coastal areas.

How to apply

Candidates wishing to apply must have identified at least one graduate school/host university and a PhD./post-doctoral supervisor with the skills needed to supervise a thesis on the specific research question as described above. Applicants must provide the following supporting documents:

- ☑ A cover letter from the applicant explaining the applicant's general interest for the project (800 words maximum)
- ☑ The applicant's CV (3 pages maximum)
- ☑ A copy of the applicant's master's degree or doctoral thesis
- ☑ A brief research proposal for the scheduled PhD. thesis explaining how it fits in the line of research presented in this document (limited to 2000 words)
- ☑ Where possible, a letter from the graduate school agreeing in principle to the registration for the 2023-2024 year (unless applying for a for post-doctorate)
- ☑ A letter from the thesis director/postdoctoral supervisor attesting to his/her agreement to supervise the candidate
- ☑ The names, affiliations, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of two persons who can provide references in the academic or professional context, who can be contacted if necessary
- ☑ The CV of the PhD/Postdoc supervisor
- ☑ Copy of passport/identity card

Selection process

The pre-selection procedure for candidates will be subject to the following criteria:

- Applications received after the closing date will be rejected;
- Incomplete applications will be rejected;
- Applications submitted by candidates who are not nationals of the IOC member countries targeted by project will be rejected.

Each application validating the above criteria will be assessed according to the following evaluation grid:

Critère	*Points*
Master/PhD. results	10
Experience on the research topic	10
Experience/knowledge of the IOC context	10
Writing skills	20
Soundness of the 2000 proposal	20
The research project set-up is collaborative in the region (joint supervision, joint tuition, etc.)	30
Total	**100**

Only candidates with a score of 75/100 or higher will be shortlisted for shortlisted for auditions.

Send to RECOS@coi-ioc.org with a copy to anne.lemahieu@coi-ioc.org and christophe.legrand@coi-ioc.org before midnight Mauritius time on 7 July 2023. Shortlisted candidates will be notified mid-July for a hearing at the end of July 2023 by a committee made up of representatives of the university/graduate school, representatives of the RECOS project and regional experts who are members of the thematic group to which the thesis relates.