

Call for Applications – PhD or Postdoc Scholarship

A GeoRes4Dev Research Scholarship (2026–2029)

Project: *Geological Resources for Development – GeoRes4Dev*

Partners: Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA–Tervuren), University of Lubumbashi (UNILU)

Funding: Belgian Development Cooperation

Study Level: PhD or Postdoc

Fieldwork in: Manono, Tanganyika Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Background

The *GeoRes4Dev* project (2024–2029) supports research that strengthens the sustainable governance of natural resources in Central Africa. The *Lualaba* section focuses on socio-environmental transformations linked to mining activities in the Copperbelt and emerging lithium corridors. Existing calls highlight research on local perceptions of mining impacts on water around cobalt and gold mines.

The expansion of large-scale mining (LSM) over the last century, the intensification of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), and the emergence of industrial lithium exploration and pre-production in *Manono–Kitotolo* represent a major socio-environmental transition requiring scientific investigation.

This new PhD/postdoc scholarship addresses these evolving dynamics.

2. PhD Research Theme

“Historic socio-environmental impacts of large-scale mining, current effects of artisanal mining, community expectations, and future environmental risks linked to prospective lithium extraction in Manono.”

The research aims to:

1. Reconstruct the historical socio-environmental footprint of large-scale mining in the broader *Katanga–Manono* region (colonial period to present).
2. Assess current environmental and social impacts of artisanal mining, including cassiterite and coltan extraction in surrounding territories.
3. Document social expectations, perceptions, and concerns regarding the transition toward industrial lithium mining in *Manono*.

4. Evaluate potential environmental risks (water, land, biodiversity, waste, tailings) associated with planned lithium extraction projects.
5. Integrate geoscientific analysis with social-science approaches, consistent with mixed-disciplinary profiles encouraged in previous GeoRes4Dev calls.

3. Expected Research Outputs

- A historical socio-environmental map of mining impacts in the region.
- A diagnostic assessment of ASM practices, livelihood systems, & environmental pressures.
- A community expectation & risk perception study using qualitative and participatory methods.
- A scenario analysis of environmental impacts linked to future lithium production.
- PhD/postdoc dissertation + scientific communications.

4. Candidate Profile

- Bachelor's + Master's degree (or DEA) for the PhD and PhD for the postdoc in:
 - Earth science, geology, natural resources, environmental science
- Strong interest in interdisciplinary work combining social sciences and geosciences.
- Ability to work in remote locations (Manono and Mitwaba regions, Tanganyika and Haut-Lomami provinces).
- Knowledge of the regional language of the study area will be a favorable but not exclusive criterion for selection.
- Good spoken, written and analytical skills in English (proposal should be written in English and interview will be conducted in English).
- The candidate must have a professional occupation in a field of earth sciences either with a private employer (e.g. design office, mining company, etc.) or in a (para-)state organization (e.g. ministry, geological survey, research center, university or college, etc.). Have a waiver from the employer certifying that the candidate will remain employed but will be released from professional duties for the duration of the scholarship, that they will keep their salary and any other benefits due to them for the duration of the scholarship, and that they will be reinstated in their duties at the end of the scholarship or after graduation.
- Have the support of an academic staff at the host university (UNILU, Geology Department) is highly recommended but not exclusive.

5. Scholarship Conditions

- **Duration:** 3 years for the PhD / 2 years for the Postdoc
- **Enrollment:** University of Lubumbashi (UNILU) – Geology Department (Doctoral School)
- **Supervision:**
 - 1 or 2 supervisor(s) at UNILU
 - 2 co-supervisors at RMCA (GeoRes4Dev team)
- **Financial support:**
 - Annual budget (5000 €)
 - Travel and research-related expenses
 - Funding for mobility stay of 6 weeks per year, to the RMCA Belgium or in another partner university/center of expertise, for specific training, documentary research, analyses;
 - Supervision support on field by South & North promoters
- **Start date:** July 1st, or as early as possible

6. Application File

Applicants must submit the following documents in English:

1. Cover letter explaining motivation and thematic fit (max. 2 pages)
2. Research proposal (max. 4 pages)
3. Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages)
4. Diplomas & transcripts (scanned copies)
5. Recommendation of an academic staff member at UNILU (highly recommended)
6. Identification document

7. Submission Process

- Send applications to: geores4dev@africamuseum.be
- Email subject line: *Application – PhD/Postdoc Lualaba–Manono – [Applicant Name]*
- **Deadline: June 14, 2026 23:59 (Lubumbashi time)**
- Selection procedure:
 1. Pre-selection by UNILU (Geology Department)
 2. Pre-selection based on documents (RMCA)
 3. Online interview (shortlisted candidates) – in English