

Call for Applications – Moses Mapesa Research Grant

Closing date: 31 July 2026

1. The African World Heritage Fund

The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) is an intergovernmental organization created in 2006 by the African Union and UNESCO to support the effective conservation and protection of cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value in Africa. The main objective of the AWHF is to address the challenges faced by African States Parties in the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, specifically, the underrepresentation of African sites on the World Heritage List and the insufficient conservation and management of these sites. The Fund became a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO in 2010 hence, an official partner of UNESCO. The Fund is hosted by the Government of the Republic of South Africa, at the Development Bank of Southern Africa, on behalf of the African continent. For more information about the activities of AWHF, visit the website www.awhf.net.

2. The Moses Mapesa Research Grant

The AWHF is pleased to announce the Moses Mapesa¹ Research Grant, established to support African doctoral and master's students conducting research in the field of natural and cultural heritage. This grant aims to advance scholarly work by providing financial support—particularly for fieldwork-related activities—focused on World Heritage Sites and properties included on national Tentative Lists across Africa. Through this initiative, AWHF seeks to strengthen academic engagement and build a new generation of African experts dedicated to the protection, conservation, and sustainable management of the continent's rich heritage.

3. Eligibility

The call is open to students who are:

- a) Currently or will be registered in 2027 in a Doctoral or Master's programme (Masters 2 for Francophone countries) at an African university and conducting dissertation research in the field of either natural or cultural heritage at an African World Heritage Site, or site listed on a national tentative list,
- b) Fluent in English, French, or Portuguese,
- c) Citizens of an African Union Member State which is party to the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

¹ The late Moses Wafula Mapesa (1965-2016) dedicated his career to wildlife conservation contributing immeasurably to the field of natural resource management in Africa. He served as the IUCN WCPA Regional Vice Chair for East and Southern Africa and was the former Executive Director of the Uganda Wildlife Authority

www.awhf.net

4. Grant Support

Grant amounts will vary depending on research proposals, with a maximum award of USD Five Thousand (5,000.00). The fieldwork research needs to be conducted in no longer than 9 months from the signature of the contract (May 2027 to February 2028). The award will support research projects focused on the following topics related to a World Heritage or a tentative listed site in Africa:

- a) Traditional (custodianship) management systems,
- b) Heritage risk management and preparedness,
- c) Heritage in conflict and post-conflict situations,
- d) Heritage management and conservation,
- e) Heritage and climate change,
- f) Heritage presentation and interpretation,
- g) Heritage and economics/entrepreneurship,
- h) Heritage and sustainable development,
- i) Heritage promotion and awareness,
- j) Heritage, legal/police frameworks, and human rights,
- k) Heritage and digital technologies and artificial intelligence,
- l) Heritage and Authenticity
- m) Heritage, Youth, and Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

Please note that the topic has to be connected to World Heritage (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>) or tentative listed (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/>) sites in Africa. Please view the links above for a list of sites per country.

5. Grant Requirements

If a student is awarded a grant, he/she is required to submit a longer research description at the beginning of the grant (along with proof of registration for the degree) and, at the end, a final report with the research results or dissertation/thesis at the final stage as well as a financial report. All documents must be presented in either French, English or Portuguese. The projects **MUST** be implemented between May 2027 and February 2028 (within **9 months**). Please note that students who do not complete the research within the contractual timeframe will be required to reimburse the grant to the AWHF.

6. Application Package

All applicants should submit the following application package:

- a) The completed application form (co-signed by the supervisor),
- b) A letter of motivation by the applicant (1 page maximum),
- c) Applicant's updated curriculum vitae (2 pages maximum),

www.awhf.net

- d) Proof of course registration and /or letter of acceptance from higher learning institute or University,
- e) Research proposal (2 pages maximum) including the following:
 - i. Full name, affiliated university, country, degree level, title of research and related World Heritage or tentative listed site,
 - ii. Description of research (Goal/objectives, research question/s, relevance, significance, justification, scope, and expected outcomes),
 - iii. Research methodology (approach, timeframe, analysis),
 - iv. Bibliography,
 - v. Budget (indicate funds from all sources, stating specifically the field work items this grant would be for with justifications as to the need).
 - vi. Budget that includes sources and amounts of supportive funds, if any.

Incomplete applications and applications that do not fulfill all requirements stated above will not be considered.

7. Application Procedures

- a) The application form (English, French and Portuguese versions) can be downloaded from the AWHF website www.awhf.net.
- b) Completed applications should be submitted via the [Moses Mapesa Grant 2026/27 Application Link](#) before the deadline. No physical copies will be accepted.

8. Deadline for Submission

The deadline for submission is **Midnight SAST on 31 July 2026**. However, applicants are highly encouraged to submit their proposals prior to the deadline. **Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.**

9. Evaluation and Selection Process

An inter-disciplinary and cross-regional selection committee will review the applications. The following items will be strongly considered during selection:

- a) Eligibility of applicant,
- b) Completed application package (application form, CV, motivation letter, transcript of qualification or current enrolment & complete research proposal),
- c) Quality and relevance of the research proposed,
- d) Gender, language, and geographic balance.

www.awhf.net

10. Final Decision and Notification

All applicants shall be notified of the outcome by **29 January 2027**. For any queries regarding the application process, please contact African World Heritage Fund, 1258 Lever Road, Headway Hill, Midrand 1685 South Africa, Tel: +27 11 313 3523, Email: info@awhf.net (with copy to lungelod@dbsa.org).



www.awhf.net

