

Call for Proposals - Guidelines

Science and Technology for Humanitarian Action Fellowship (HAF)

1. Background

The challenges faced by humanitarian organisations in general and by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in particular are immense. In 2023, according to UNHCR, more than 110 million people were displaced because of conflict and insecurity, a number not reached since WWII. Extreme climate events, such as floods, storms and droughts, are on the rise, thereby increasing the vulnerability of people already suffering from conflict. The COVID19 pandemic further jeopardised the hard-fought gains in access to healthcare and poverty reduction of the past decades. Therefore, ETH Zurich and EPFL are joining forces with the ICRC to explore innovative solutions to such crises with the Engineering for Humanitarian Action Initiative (EHA), hosted by ETH for Development (ETH4D)/EssentialTech Center (ETC) and the ICRC.

As part of the initiative, the goal of the Science and Technology for Humanitarian Action Fellowship is to explore joint research ideas between ETH Zurich, EPFL and humanitarian actors or to support humanitarian partner organisations to pilot, use or scale research findings.

ETH for Development (ETH4D) is the managing office of this call at ETH Zurich. The aim of ETH4D is to develop innovative solutions that effectively address the challenges of the global population and to educate future change makers, who will work towards decreasing global poverty and inequality, as well as protecting our planet.

2. Definition of Humanitarian Action Fellowship

ETH4D and ETC support matchmaking and provide partial fellowships for PhD students or PostDocs from ETH Zurich or EPFL to be placed at the ICRC offices for a duration of 2-6 months. If the fellowship is part of an accepted [Stream II project](#), the duration can be extended to 1 year. Security protocols from all relevant organisations need to be adhered to. During this time, the fellow can:

- Explore ideas for future research collaborations between ETH/EPFL and ICRC
- Pilot, adapt technologies or support the ICRC to use or scale results or technologies from research.

Priority will be given to projects which support the ICRC in piloting or scaling research results based on a joint research project that took place within the ETH/EPFL/ICRC Humanitarian Action Challenges.

Priority will be given to PostDoc/PhD that will be based at one of the offices of the ICRC to allow for frequent exchange with the ICRC staff time. Each fellow will be assigned a co-supervisor at the ICRC for the duration of the fellowship.

3. Eligibility

The fellow should be either a PhD student, a PostDoc or a scientific staff/assistant with a salary lower or equal to PostDocs from the ETH Zurich and have the endorsement of their professor/supervisor.

PhD students can apply at any time during their PhD.

4. Funding

The project duration is between **2 and 6 months**. If the fellowship is part of an accepted Stream II project, the duration can be extended to 1 year.

For PhDs and PostDocs the fellowship covers 70% of their salary while the remaining 30% needs to be covered by the research group of the applicant. PhDs and PostDocs will be paid according to their ETH/EPFL salaries, while the respective institutions will continue to pay their salaries.

A PhD/PostDoc may conduct the fellowship part time in this case the ratio of the funding does not change. For spending 50% of one's time on the relevant project, ETH4D/ECT covers 35% of their salary, and the research group the remaining 15%. However, the maximum time of the fellowship will not change.

In addition to the applicant salary, funding can cover project related travels or field visits on a case-by-case basis.

Funding from the fellowship programme **cannot be used** to pay any other salaries nor to pay daily transport to the fellowship location and accommodation.

5. Submission Procedure and Deadlines

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis. Applicants send their complete application documents to Salome Räuschel via email (salome.raeuschel@nadel.ethz.ch) at least 10 weeks before the planned start date.

The application file must consist of the following:

- Invitation letter from the ICRC specifying the work location as well as the planned start and end dates
- Support letter from the ETH chair or group leader, including confirmation that 30% of the salary will be covered by the group
- Application proposal using the HAF template that includes the project description, motivation and timeline
- Budget using the HAF template
- CV and list of publications
- Copies of diplomas and grade transcripts

If applicable, relevant ethical, legal, and social considerations must be included in the proposal. The proposed research must comply with the existing ethics regulations.

Applicants need to be compliant with residence/work permit requirements.

6. Evaluation and Selection

All proposals will first be evaluated by a committee consisting of one representative from each institution's coordination team (ETH Zurich, EPFL, ICRC). The final decision will be made by the **Steering Committee** of the ETH-EPFL-ICRC partnership, which comprises two members of each organisation.

The evaluation criteria and rating scale will be the following:

Criterion 1: Qualifications of the applicant (weight 0.25)	
The profile, experience and excellence of the applicant will be evaluated. The applicant should be a match to carry out the project at the ICRC unit.	
Criterion 2: Clear and Relevant Goals (weight 0.25)	
The proposal should distinctly outline the objectives and deliverables of the placement, whether they involve (i) initiating a novel research collaboration or (ii) executing or expanding upon a research outcome derived from a prior collaboration. It should be clear from the proposal why a fellow from ETH/EPFL is key.	
Criterion 3: Feasible Goal Attainment Plan (weight 0.25)	
It is essential to assess the feasibility of the outlined goals for the fellow. The proposal should present a pragmatic and actionable plan that illustrates how these objectives will be effectively realised.	
Criterion 4: Potential Impact (weight 0.25)	
Emphasis should be placed on the potential implications of the proposed initiative. This includes considering the prospective influence on both the ICRC and the broader humanitarian sector.	

Rating scale: 0.0 – 5.0 (including decimal points)		
5	Excellent	All relevant aspects of the criterion are successfully addressed
4	Very good	The criterion is very well addressed, but a small number of shortcomings are present
3	Good	The criterion is well addressed, but a number of shortcomings are present
2	Fair	The criterion is broadly addressed, but there are significant weaknesses
1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
0	Very poor	The criterion is not addressed or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information

Applicants will be notified of the funding decision **10 weeks after the submission of the proposal**. Projects must start **at the latest within three months of the notification of the decision**.

7. Deliverables

- Fellows must submit a 2-5 pages report summarising their stay and findings from the Humanitarian Action Fellowship (HAF) within one month after the program ends, using the HAF template.
- Fellows must submit a financial report within one month after the program ends, using a provided template.
- Fellows must share their experience through a blog, social media post, media article, or video to enhance the impact of their participation.

8. Terms of collaboration between partners of granted projects

Data exchanged within ETH4D programmes is generally not considered confidential information. A non-disclosure agreement should be signed before exchanging confidential data. An agreement between the ETHZ grantee and the project partner(s) must be signed before the start of the project. Such an agreement will define the rights and obligations of the partners. It may allow the partners to use the results of the project for commercial and non-commercial purposes and will specify the relevant conditions. As an important note: ETHZ, EPFL and the ICRC have signed a framework contract, which defines the general principles of this collaboration.

If personally identifying information is used, exchanged, or collected in the framework of the research, the involved partners shall comply with applicable data protection laws and regulations, and shall establish a data management plan, including a data protection concept and appropriate data protection agreements in writing.

The projects must comply with the [KFPE principles](#)⁴. All collaborations must follow [the Code of conduct for scientific cooperation of ETH Zurich \(RSETHZ 416\)](#) and the Guidelines concerning [Contracts in the Field of Research at ETH Zurich \(RSETHZ 440.31\)](#).