



PUBLIC FINANCE FOR WASH MASTERS RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS 2017

The Public Finance for WASH initiative (www.publicfinanceforwash.com) announces three scholarships each of GBP 1500 (or €1700) to support masters-level research around public finance for pro-poor sanitation or pro-poor WASH in low-income contexts.

Public Finance for WASH is a knowledge platform run by IRC and [Water & Sanitation for the Urban Poor](#) (WSUP). Public Finance for WASH aims to increase sector awareness and understanding of domestic public finance solutions for WASH, primarily through making documentation accessible and disseminating existing knowledge, but also through some support for relevant research.

These scholarships are offered jointly by IRC and WSUP (the latter under wider funding from UKAid). WSUP and/or IRC headquarters or country offices will also provide research design and research logistics support to successful applicants, in liaison with academic tutors.

These scholarships are primarily intended to support overseas fieldwork trips (return flight, accommodation, etc.): but travel is not a requirement, and successful applicants will be free to use the award as they see fit. Neither IRC nor WSUP will support any costs incurred over and above the GBP 1500.

Application deadline: Monday 22nd May 2017.

A) Formal conditions

All conditions should be considered definitive and non-negotiable: with limited staffing, we are regrettably not able to enter into prior correspondence on eligibility, or respond to any other query. In this regard, we stress the importance of carefully reading the Public Finance for WASH website to understand our vision and areas of interest; see B1 below.

1) Research projects must be in fulfilment of the requirements of an accredited masters programme, of which the applicant must be a current enrolled student.

2) Applications must be accompanied by a signed statement from a masters programme tutor (included in the application form), confirming **a)** that the student is expected to graduate within the top 1/3 of students on the masters programme, and **b)** that the tutor approves the research project and takes responsibility for its academic direction.

3) Research projects must be carried out and completed (with write-up) before 31st October 2017.

4) Each research project must relate to one of the following countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda or Burkina Faso.

5) Physical presence of the research student in the selected country is not an absolute requirement, but we expect that projects with in-country presence are likely to be stronger.

6) Applicants may be attending a masters programme in any part of the world. Applicants attending a masters programme in the selected country, or who are citizens of the selected country, may have certain advantages (e.g. language, long-term presence, easier access to local information), but proposals will be judged on merit, not on national origin.

7) Payment of the scholarship will be 50% on award, and 50% on delivery to Public Finance for WASH of a final report of acceptable quality, as judged by the IRC or WSUP allocated mentor. Successful awardees will also be required to produce a short (2 page) publication based on their work and findings, which will be published on the Public Finance for WASH website.

8) Application process: completion of the application form and tutor statement. No other documentation should be submitted. Applications will be judged primarily on the basis of research interest/value, intellectual quality and practical viability of the proposed research objective/s and methodology.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a Letter of Agreement with WSUP or IRC (depending on which organisation provides the mentor), detailing their commitments and deliverables under this scholarship.

Decisions on scholarship recipients will be made by Catarina Fonseca (IRC) and Guy Norman (WSUP), and will be final. Successful applicants will be informed on or before Friday 2nd June.

B) Research design guidance

- 1) Applicants should carefully read the Public Finance for WASH website and publications, to get a good understanding of exactly what we mean by “public finance”, and why we consider it important.
- 2) Research projects may consider public finance for sanitation alone, or public finance for WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) more broadly; we will not consider projects focused wholly or primarily on water or hygiene alone.
- 3) Applicants are expected to generate, in outline form, their own research objective/s and proposed methodology. These scholarships will be awarded essentially on the basis of the research interest/value, intellectual quality and practical viability of the applicant's proposal. We are unable to enter into prior correspondence on this or any other matter.
- 4) An ideal research project will meet the following criteria: **a)** it will closely align with the interests of Public Finance for WASH, with a clear focus on redistributive taxes or tariffs [this should not be taken to imply that the *findings* should support our vision; rather, the objectives and design should align with our vision]; **b)** it will generate new *empirical* data, ideally quantitative data or rigorously collected and analysed qualitative data; **c)** it will be of scope that is plausible within the short research period of a masters research project, but sufficient to provide the basis for publication in a peer-reviewed journal; **d)** it will demonstrate strong understanding of any data collection challenges, and propose plausible approaches for overcoming any such challenges; **e)** it will help in identifying solutions and ways forward, rather than simply identifying barriers. We certainly do not require applicants to be native speakers of English, but successful applicants will demonstrate an ability to write clearly in English.
- 5) Possible research areas include the following: **a)** detailed analysis of current public finance allocation ("finance tracking") within a particular context, considering source of finance and/or nature of allocation/disbursement, and/or other features of allocation/disbursement (e.g. "pro-poorness"); **b)** detailed case study of a particular public finance investment or recurrent allocation, with focus on some finance-related angle; **c)** analysis of the willingness of a defined citizen group to pay some sort of pro-poor sanitation tax/levy, and of factors affecting willingness to pay; **d)** single-country or multi-country analysis of particular mechanisms for raising or allocating redistributive public finance; **e)** review of social accountability mechanisms and their (potential) impact on public finance allocations; **f)** analysis of one or more public-private partnerships focusing on the role of public finance within the partnership; **g)** analysis or grounded modelling of appropriate ways of targeting public finance (e.g. direct subsidy to householders, support to pit-emptying businesses, investment in treatment infrastructures, payments to pit emptiers in order to dump sludge, etc. etc.). We would primarily expect empirical studies with primary data collection, but other types of study (e.g. modelling studies, structured reviews) will also be considered; such studies would need to demonstrate strong justification and quality in order to compete with studies involving primary data collection. This is not an exhaustive list of possible areas of research, and we invite any proposal which aligns with the vision and interests of Public Finance for WASH.
- 6) We stress that research around public finance in developing contexts faces diverse methodological challenges, notably including lack of clearly categorised records of public finance sources, allocations and disbursements; and challenges in accessing such records even where they exist. We are likely to favour applications which propose a methodology that can overcome such challenges, or that is not dependent on data of this type. WSUP and IRC may be able to help researchers access information (e.g. by providing introductions to municipal officers in charge of budget records), but accessing some types of data may still be challenging.

C) IRC/WSUP support to successful researchers

- 1) Following identification of the three successful applicants, a WASH research specialist from Public Finance for WASH (i.e. from WSUP or IRC) will work closely with the student and with their academic tutor to support development of a more detailed study methodology. We will fully respect academic independence and the final authority of the academic tutor; but we consider that this approach will be useful to the student in developing a workable and effective research plan. This is particularly important given the data collection challenges faced in many areas of research around public finance (see section B6).
- 2) Depending on the nature and location of the research, WSUP and/or IRC will provide limited research logistics support, for example introduction to key in-country informants. However, we will tend to prefer research proposals which demonstrate independent capacity (and where appropriate existing contacts) to deliver the research; our country teams are very busy people!
- 3) Neither IRC nor WSUP will take any responsibility for the awardees' personal logistics: this includes all travel arrangements including flights, in-country accommodation, travel insurance, vaccinations and visa arrangements. These will all be the responsibility of the awardee and/or their university. All liability for accident/injury to the student in the course of research work carried out under this award, or for harm caused by the student, will lie with the student and/or their academic institution, in line with that institution's standard policies for overseas study by its students: neither WSUP nor IRC will bear any responsibility for student accident or injury, or harm caused by the student.

4) Neither WSUP nor IRC will bear any responsibility for the successful applicants' personal accident or travel insurance, or for any medical or health-related costs arising during the period of research. It is the responsibility of the successful applicant and/or of their academic institution to ensure that research is carried out in accordance with best practice to avoid damage, loss or injury to persons or property. Neither WSUP nor IRC accept any liability for any accident, injury or loss sustained by any person in connection with the research or the publication of its findings.

D) Public Finance for WASH Masters Research Prize 2017

In December 2017, the Public Finance for WASH Masters Research Prize 2017 will be awarded to the student who has produced the best research, as judged by a panel of WSUP and IRC specialists, with particular attention paid to publication of findings in a peer-reviewed journal. This prize will have no associated monetary award, but will receive extensive publicity on the Public Finance for WASH website, the WSUP website and the IRC website, and other relevant sector channels.

*To apply for a Public Finance for WASH Masters Research Scholarship, please complete the application form and signed tutor statement, and return to pf4wash@gmail.com by **Monday 22nd May 2017**.*