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2021 FELLOWS MASTERCARD FOUNDATION – EARTH UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Godwell Manda

Country: Malawi

Track: Employment

Position: Research Assistant

Host company/organization: IITA Malawi



About position: Godwell prepares materials for the establishment of field trials and assists in data collection, entry, and analysis. He also contributes to the preparation of quarterly and technical reports.

Bio: Godwell completed a graduation project called *A New Approach to Predict Nutrient Content in Soil using NIR Spectroscopy and Machine Learning*. “This project was a combination of Geographic Information System (GIS) and soil science, where I was developing a digital soil map and giving recommendations in one of the academic farms within the campus with the idea of reducing the costs and maximizing production.” In his third year at EARTH, he did a fifteen-week internship at Fertileva, a company based in Puglia, Italy, specializing in organic fertilizers. *“Communication was a daily challenge because I do not speak Italian and my supervisor does not speak English. But we understood each other with the help of a translator app. During this internship I enhanced my industrial technical skills as well as my leadership skills through community work. It exceeded my expectations.”*

Regarding his experience at the University, Godwell says, *“EARTH University has strengthened both my professional development as well as personal development. I am very enthusiastic about precision and organic farming. My interests in precision stem from acquiring necessary skills that can be used to implement in my home country-Malawi among the rural farmers.”* Godwell has also enjoyed working at the Soil and Water Science Lab since his second year, where he has cemented his skills in soil analysis interpretation. As a Fellow for the Mastercard Foundation – EARTH University Fellowship Program, he is gaining professional experience with a host partner for one year in Malawi, his home country. Godwell works as a Research Assistant at IITA-Lilongwe station in Chiredze, Malawi.

To his donors at Mastercard Foundation, Godwell would like to say: *“Thank you for the best opportunity that I have ever had in my life. I am able to narrate my experiences which are in line of my passion because of your help through EARTH University.”*



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Jireh Mwamukonda

Country: Malawi

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: Together We Can

Business incubator affiliated: Mhub Malawi

About position: Along with her cofounder Yamikani, Jireh will help train unemployed youth and women to sustainably and innovatively cultivate oyster mushrooms of high quality from low-cost materials that will be sold at the local markets.



Bio: Jireh has always loved agriculture, although before joining EARTH she was unsure how her professional trajectory would further her passion. At EARTH, she completed her internship back home in Malawi at Tradeline Corporation Group Limited (TLC), a private company that offers business consulting services. Their mission is to empower small and medium enterprises in agriculture to improve their competitiveness in the commercial sector. Jireh chose this internship because she wanted to learn how microfinance companies operate while collaborating with rural communities from her own country. She has been in charge of data entry in quick books, loan records keeping, and updating the loan database for the past two years.

Describing her experience, she said: *“My experience was really positive. I felt like I was one of the staff members in the organization. The field visits, data entry, filing, and labeling were no easy jobs. With endurance, patience, and hard work, we managed to submit the work in perfect condition. I practiced communication and teamwork skills and worked well under pressure. I learned about understanding other cultures without judgement. I knew this company was small, but to my surprise it was always busy doing great things in my country.”*

Along with a fellow classmate from Malawi, Jireh won prizes from both the EARTH-managed Mastercard Foundation Entrepreneurship Fund and the Mastercard Foundation 2019 Social Venture Challenge to support a mushroom farm project. MUSHECO Farm is training unemployed youth and women in Mzuzu, Malawi to cultivate high-quality oyster mushrooms at a low cost. MUSHECO Farm utilizes corn stover biomass, which is an abundant resource often disposed of following maize harvests, as fertilizer to ensure that cultivation is sustainable and accessible to community members. This project will also teach members how to bring the oyster mushrooms to markets to better sustain themselves economically.

Jireh's passion is working with people, especially young people and farmers. Her dream is to go back to Malawi and work with Young Life Africa, a faith-based organization in her country that works with youth. She would like to teach them to incorporate smart



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agricultural techniques into their farming practices. She feels that youth are facing great challenges that Young Life helps them to address and overcome.

Jireh's post-graduation internship was in cheese production at Meadow Creek Dairy in Virginia, USA, through the Ohio State Program. She has returned to Malawi to work on her mushroom production project for her Fellowship year.

Yamikani Maya Ng'ona

Country: Malawi

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: Together We Can

Business incubator affiliated: Mhub Malawi

About position: Along with her cofounder Jireh, Yamikani will help train unemployed youth and women to sustainably and innovatively cultivate oyster mushrooms of high quality from low-cost materials that will be sold at the local markets.



Bio: Yamikani is the fourth of five children. Although she grew up in the city, she was never far from agriculture, often visiting her grandparent's farm. As she explains, *"In my country, if you have lots of maize you are considered wealthy because our food staple nsima is made from maize flour. Knowing my grandparents had maize made me feel comfortable knowing I wasn't going to die of hunger."* With three older sisters also studying, finances were very tight and she had to find ways to support herself and pay tuition fees. She negotiated a job as a classroom assistant in an effort to reduce her debts to her school and enable her to take the end-of-year exams. She held leadership roles as Chairperson of the Student Christian Organization and Vice President of the Wildlife Club. She also coordinated a community tree-planting project, sourcing native seeds and planting nearly 500 trees.

Yamikani found out about EARTH and knew right away that was where she wanted to study. *"I knew that at EARTH I'd get the kind of education and experience I need to make a difference back home. When I was young, I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, and as I grew up, I realized that I don't want to be someone who works for the benefit of only themselves. With agriculture, I believe I can help others in my community and my country."*

After graduating from high school, Yamikani moved to northern Malawi and volunteered with International Citizenship Services, working with at-risk girls to encourage them to continue their education and informing them about the risks of teen pregnancy, which has been a significant issue in the region.

For Yamikani, the entrepreneurial project program at EARTH was one of her most memorable experiences. *"I worked with students from many other cultures and*



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backgrounds. It was not always easy.” She describes it as an intense process when sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, which she believes will serve her well in the future. She says that when she first came to EARTH, she wasn’t exactly sure what she wanted the focus of her studies to be, but she now knows that she wants to return to Malawi to help create sustainable farming practices that are also profitable.

With agriculture, I believe I can help others in my community and my country. – Yamikani

Yamikani completed her third-year internship in Malawi at Project Concern International (PCI), on a project that focused on improved agricultural practices to strengthen control of the Fall Army Worm (FAW). She was in charge of data collection and developed a tool to gather information about the demonstration plots. During her fourth year, she completed her graduation project titled *Evaluation of a Push-pull Strategy using Pennisetum purpureum and Brachiaria brizantha cv Mulato II (trap crops), and Melinis minutiflora (repellent crop) to manage Spodoptera frugiperda (worm) in Maize in the Humid Tropics of Central America*. She chose this topic because this worm is prevalent in the maize in Malawi. *“It is in our staple food, and it is hurting us.”*

Yamikani won a prize from the Mastercard Foundation 2019 Social Venture Challenge and funding from the Social Enterprise fund to support her mushroom farm project, which she is working on together with a fellow EARTH alumn. MUSHECO Farm will train unemployed youth and women in Mzuzu, Malawi to cultivate high-quality oyster mushrooms.

Jean Claude Nsengiyumva

Country: Rwanda

Track: Innovation Science & Research

Position: Agricultural Research Stations Coordinator

Host company/organization: One Acre Fund Rwanda

About position: Jean Claude is responsible for staff management, setting and following up trials, equipment inventory, and more. He will be supporting other teams on sweet potato and soybean production.



Bio: Jean Claude received an Honor Student Award at the 2019 graduation. Honor students are chosen because of their excellent academic achievements, and overall outstanding achievement in other areas throughout their time at EARTH. Students are selected by the Dean, the Academic Coordinators in each level, and the Director of Student Affairs.

Jean Claude also received a Distinguished Student Award at the 2019 graduation. They recognize students that have demonstrated academic excellence and adherence to



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EARTH values, and who have shown progressive improvement over the year. The faculty and a representative from Student Affairs select the awardees.

Jean Claude presented a graduation project titled *Evaluation of the Effects of Different Rhizobium Bioinoculants on Growth of Phaseolus vulgaris in the Tropics*. After graduation, he started his fellowship at Alexandre Family Farm in Crescent City, California for one year as part of a post-graduate internship in dairy production. He is planning on applying to a Master's program in environmental sciences or soil management after his fellowship.

Jean Claude asserts that EARTH changed his perspective, both personally and professionally. *"EARTH taught me to think about sustainability and humanity before looking for a profit. I've learned that taking care of people and the environment comes first. My dream is to return to Rwanda and have my enterprise based on these principles. When I was in second year, I was taught to create my own company, and we developed a cattle breeding venture. I was the financial manager. We learned how to create and run our own business. I will never forget this experience because it will help me build my enterprise one day. Our student project was successful, and we were able to have a profit of \$3,000."*

"People here are very open-minded and respect everyone's differences. You can be yourself. I know that is not how the world works necessarily, but it should be. EARTH has taught me to be more confident and how to be an ethical professional."

When Jean leaves, he says he will miss the environment at EARTH. *"People here are very open-minded and respect everyone's differences. You can be yourself. I know that is not how the world works necessarily, but it should be. EARTH has taught me to be more confident and how to be an ethical professional. I would recommend other people to attend EARTH. I am thankful to the Buffett Foundation for their support these last years. I hope we can continue working together in the future."*

Norman Mugisha

Country: Rwanda

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: Young African Business Booster

Host company/organization: LEAPR

Website: yabb.org.rw

About position: At YABB, Norman will help rural youth across Sub-Saharan Africa to overcome unemployment and poverty. Due to the pandemic, he created an E-Commerce platform called Afri-Farmers Market which aims at helping local farmers access stable market and fair prices.





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Bio: Following graduation, Norman relocated to California to complete a post-graduate internship for six months in animal production and the commercialization of agricultural products. In 2019, he was a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University in China, where he studied economics and business. After his graduate studies and Fellowship, he plans to return to Rwanda to start his own entrepreneurial food processing company. *“Two other EARTH students from Rwanda will start this business with me. We will call it ‘I Feed the World.’ We want to train local farmers to help them increase their productivity. Then we will buy what they harvest and use their products for our business. We plan to start with peanut butter and chips. I really want to create jobs, share what I have learned, and improve people’s lives.”*

Norman learned about entrepreneurship when he opened a sorghum business during his second year at EARTH. Though his team faced unexpected challenges due to climate conditions, his team found innovative solutions, offering farm tours to EARTH visitors to raise funds and pay back their loans. With innovative thinking, their team was even able to make a profit at the business’s end.

Norman’s business experience gave him the tools he needed to design his graduation project, Design of a Capacity-building Program for Promoting the Creation of Businesses by Young People in Rwanda. He wants to implement this project back home to help youth in sub-Saharan Africa create their own jobs and overcome poverty. *“I am doing this project with another EARTH student from Zambia. We want to offer a training program for entrepreneurial skills. We plan to interview and select youth, teach them about practical business, help them design business ideas, look for potential partners and funds, then follow up. Our idea is to start with a prototype in Rwanda, and then expand to other countries.”*

Norman is a born leader. He believes that people should have the initiative to act and the courage to take risks. He led the Scholar’s Council when he was in first year, and then became President of the student government the following year. *“I was the first African candidate for student government at EARTH. People told me I would not get the votes, but I wanted to try and prove them wrong. I won, and this has motivated other African students to form their parties and participate in student politics.”*

Norman’s professional experience in his fourth year was very rewarding: he chose to work in community development and volunteer in a nearby community in Guácimo every week.

“My passion is helping people to achieve their dreams. I have had the opportunity to interact with eight local farmers to help them start their own business. I am teaching them about adding value to their products by showing them how to process chips, find a market, give a name to their business, and form associations.”

To his sponsors at Mastercard Foundation, he says, *“I am very grateful for your support throughout this journey of shaping my career. Your scholarship has helped me earn credentials and skills in agriculture and enhanced my passion for being an agent of*



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change to contribute and give back to my community for a better and prosperous world. Thank you, Mastercard Foundation! Thank you, EARTH University!"

Umuraza Noella Rutayisire

Country: Rwanda

Track: Employment

Position: Horticulture Assistant

Host company/organization: One Acre Fund Rwanda



About position: Umuraza works with the Rwanda-Israel Horticulture Center of Excellence. She provides technical assistance to farmers for horticulture development.

Bio: Noella's graduation project, *Production of Pleurotus ostreatus (Agaricales: Pleurotaceae) using Agro-industrial Wastes as Substrates*, uses agro-industrial organic wastes such as pineapple waste, coffee husks, and coconut waste to grow and cultivate mushrooms. *"I chose this topic because agro-industries are increasing rapidly, but leftovers or wastes are not well managed."*

Noella completed her internship in the East Hamptons, New York on a small farm that produced various vegetables. Noella recalls, *"My interest was in horticulture and to see different techniques that are being used. I was a leader at an ornamental plant nursery. I had a wonderful experience: I made friends, and I learned a lot."*

Regarding her experience at EARTH, she says that there were people in the University who always made sure she had what she needed. *"The most important thing EARTH taught me was living with many people, adjusting to a new environment. I grew so much. I did not know that I could do so many things, so I have become a more self-confident person after these four years."* Though Noella was unsure at first about her abilities as she entered EARTH, the people she met along the way supported her both socially and professionally.

"I would say that my passion is to transform or develop rural community areas, especially those of local farmers in Rwanda."

She was selected to participate in the Fellowship Program for its inaugural cycle. As a Fellow, Noella is gaining professional experience with the One Acre Fund Rwanda in her home country. She looks forward to encouraging change in the perspectives of her fellow community members, especially in their views on nature, agriculture, and ways of taking care of the world and others.

Noella is deeply grateful for her time at EARTH and is ready for wherever the coming years may take her. To her donors at Mastercard Foundation, she would like to say,



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“Thank you for this great life opportunity, for making me grow in a privileged place, and for my degree. I promise you that I will pay forward the kindness you all showed me; I am sure somewhere there is someone who will need my help, and when that time comes I will not hesitate. God bless you!”

Khaalid Ahmed Awali

Country: Somaliland

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: Aqua Calaaf

Business incubator affiliated: Harhub

About position: Khaalid’s project involves the highly nutritious production of silage in Somaliland to feed cattle. He wants to start an ‘agriboom’ in the yogurt business and extension services provided in the dairy sector.



Bio: Khaalid’s graduation project was called Evaluation of the Draught Tolerance of Three Brachiaria Grass Cultivars. He worked on this project with his classmate and fellow Somalilander, Saeed Mohamud Farah. Khaalid and Saeed want to return to Somaliland to replicate their graduation project in their community. *“Unemployment in Somaliland is about 65-70% and most of those are women. I want to help educate these girls so they can have a better future. Most of them come from urban areas so in the future, I want to incorporate urban farming as part of the curriculum.”*

Regarding his time at EARTH he recalls, *“In the beginning, I was really homesick, so I wanted to go back home during my first trimester. But then, slowly I learned the language and received a lot of support. I am glad I decided to stay.”*

For Khaalid, the entrepreneurial program was one of the most valuable courses he took at the University. *“EARTH has helped me mature and become an entrepreneur. At first, I thought this class was a punishment! But then, when I realized the potential, it had and how it could change my life, I changed my mind and saw it as an opportunity to grow and create my own future. I learned teamwork, leadership, and how to treat others with respect. I also learned to listen to other people’s ideas and to delegate.”*

He is passionate about sustainable banana production and would like to develop this further back home. To his donors, he wants to say:

“Thanks so much for your support you’ve provided so that I could study here. I want to go back home, to make positive changes and give back because you’ve invested so much in me. I can’t express how thankful I am for this opportunity.”



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Yusuf Yasin Abdirahman

Country: Somaliland

Track: Employment

Position: Agricultural Technical Advisor

Host company/organization: Agribridge Somalia

About position: Yusuf provides agriculture technical consulting services. He supports banana farmers with technical assistance as part of an effort to redevelop the Somali banana industry.



Bio:

Yusuf believes that the third-year internship was perhaps the most impactful experience he had as a student at EARTH. He had always had a general interest in agriculture, but it was not until his internship that he discovered his professional trajectory in banana crops, which has become his passion. Yusuf completed his internship at Agribridges, a leading agricultural consulting company that supports a project focused on the revival of Somalia's banana exports. He worked closely with the lead consultant in 20 farms, training commercial banana farmers to adapt modern banana production techniques. He provided assistance on water management, irrigation systems, fertilization practices, and harvesting and packaging for export. He also wrote a guidebook for banana producers. Yusuf describes this as "an experience that makes you realize what is outside of EARTH." He entered his internship thinking he knew a lot, but at the end, learned that he needed to continue to do research and ask questions.

This experience led him to choose his graduation project, which was a study titled *Evaluating Basic Infrastructure, Agricultural Practices, and Markets to Assist the Revival of the Somali Banana Industry*. Yusuf says, "Banana exportation stopped after the Civil War in 1991. All infrastructure was destroyed. Nowadays, bananas are growing again but they are poor quality, therefore they are not competitive." He has returned to Somalia and plans to share the results of his research to improve the industry. This in return will help not only his community but also his country. After he gains professional experience, he will apply to a Master's program.

He describes EARTH, "*as a good experience, especially being with students from so many different countries. It feels good to come from so far away.*" He is very grateful for the knowledge he gained and for the opportunity he was given to study at EARTH."

Post-graduation plan: Yusuf will to Somalia to work in the banana sector, and later apply to a Master's program.



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Alex Kyeyune

Country: Uganda

Track: Employment

Position: Technical Advisor, Animal Feed Formulation

Host company/organization: Conversion Feeds Limited

About position: Alex provides technical support and customized nutrition ratio mixing of pig feeds on clients' farms.

Bio: Alex's graduation project was called Development and Evaluation of Activated Clay Products as Mycotoxin Adsorbent in Livestock Feeds. After graduation, he completed the Watson Institute's Semester Incubator in Colorado, a 4-month program preparing next-generation innovators and social entrepreneurs to launch social ventures and unleash a lifetime of impact.

Alex returned to Uganda, where he had been hired as the principal of a new primary and secondary school in the town of Lutembe, the Phillips International Careers School. Alex resigned from this position to focus on his involvement in the Fellowship Program.

About his time at EARTH, he mentions that the most important skills he obtained while he was a student were those of entrepreneurship, and he plans to replicate EARTH's educational model in his new school. He believes that EARTH has helped him think like a businessman and has helped him see challenges as opportunities.

"Since I've made so many friends from all over the world, I've learned to change my perspective on things. I have especially learned to listen to others. When we are young we feel like we know everything, but we need to learn from others and listen to one another." To his sponsors, he would like to say: "I want to thank Mastercard Foundation for believing in me and trusting me with such great investment for four years. My life has been transformed. Thank you so much!"

Precious Akampurira

Country: Uganda

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: VASCAPE (Value Addition as Seed for Community Advancement and Poverty Eradication)

Business incubator affiliated: Department of Food Science & Technology, Makerere University Kampala

About the position: Precious works in adding value to food products to tackle malnutrition, and wants to use Moringa as a primary product. Her responsibilities include farmer partnerships, food processing and value addition, technology, and distribution.





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Bio: Precious's graduation project was called, *Coagulation using Moringa oleifera Lamarck, 1783 (Moringaceae) and Solar Radiation Disinfection for River Water Treatment*. She chose this topic after becoming more familiar with water treatment during her internship. *"Using moringa seeds to filter water is a simple solution that can be implemented back in Uganda. Even though the results of my research did not show that it is 100% effective, it is a way to significantly reduce contamination in water. I hope to go back home and continue collaborating with Water4Girls, an organization that creates awareness of the disproportionate burden faced by girls and women in relation to water scarcity."*

About her EARTH experience, Precious says that the University helped her grow in many important ways. *"I have learned to face challenges, to stay focused on my dreams, even when things don't go the way I expect them. I feel that I am ready to conquer everything now, and that I am prepared for life. I know that it is not an easy road, but I am proud to say that I now see wealth and potential instead of poverty; everything is an opportunity!"*

After graduation, Precious wants to take some time to decide her next steps. She hopes to eventually go to graduate school to study environmental protection or social entrepreneurship and wants to open her own business someday. *"I have a personal project back home, empowering women in a cooperative, giving them the tools for microfinance. We will make disposable sanitary pads made out of banana fiber. I want to create employment and share what I have learned in order to have social and environmental impact in my community. I want to invest in Uganda. I know how it operates; I want my impact to be in Uganda. I have been and continue to be supported...Growing professionally comes with building your experience and it's exactly what the Fellowship Program has done for me. You gave me an opportunity and platform where I am able to accomplish this."*

To Mastercard Foundation, she would like to say, *"I am so grateful! My educational journey has been funded by different organizations. After high school, I had to take a gap year because I did not have funding. I dreamed of going to study abroad, and Mastercard Foundation made it possible. I give you credit for my intellectual and personal growth, and I thank you very much for your support"*.

Post-graduation plan: Upon returning to Uganda, Precious will work on personal projects and seek employment.



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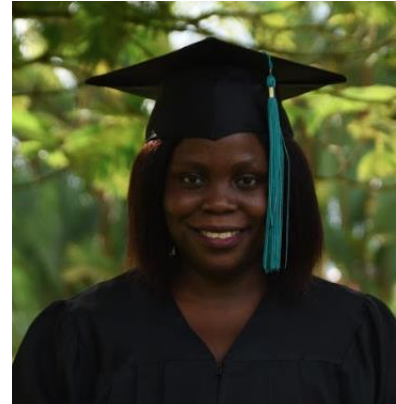
Harriet Cheelo

Country: Zambia

Track: Employment

Position: Climate Smart Agriculture Guide Programme Fellow

Host company/organization: CAMFED Zambia



About position: Harriet is working with CAMFED's first climate-smart demonstration farm. She is training 40 young women to be Agricultural Guides and implement sustainable agricultural practices across Zambia.

Bio: Harriet completed a graduation project called Collaborative Design for Food Security Alternatives with Women in Kaoma, Zambia. Her project found sustainable ways of food production for small-scale farmers who rely solely on agriculture as their source of income. Harriet hopes to help them with sustainable agricultural practices that will improve the quality and quantity of food.

Harriet completed her internship at the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI). She wanted to acquire experience about how agricultural institutions work in her country, and learn which practices seen and learned at EARTH are applicable in Zambia. *"My experience was amazing as I was able to put what I have been learning into practice, and I grew so much while working at an actual institution."*

Her professional work experience in fourth year offered training on soft skills to small-scale farms from nearby communities, and she discovered the importance of nurturing these skills as well as developing professional skills. This was close to her heart, as community development is her passion. She reflects on suddenly finding herself in the perfect place because of all the opportunities to work with people from nearby communities. *"EARTH teaches us not only about environmental issues but also about social impact. As a team, we must find opportunities to give back to them."* Harriet has strengthened her teamwork skills at EARTH. *"I have learned to listen to different ideas and understand different ways of seeing life. This is one of the best lessons I have had. Effective communication is key in teamwork, tolerance, and patience with others."*

EARTH teaches us not only about environmental issues but also about social impact. As a team, we must find opportunities to give back to them.– Harriet

Her happiest moments at EARTH are countless, but she mentioned her first four months in Costa Rica – during her Spanish program – as some of the most memorable days. She was introduced to a very loving and caring family and had the opportunity to live with them and truly immerse herself in Costa Rican culture. *"I called them 'Mom' and 'Dad', and that helped me to ease the stress of coming from far away and not knowing how to speak the language or what to expect. They really made me enjoy the experience of learning the names of different objects, listening to music and movies in Spanish, and visiting different*



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places in Costa Rica.” Harriet describes having a Costa Rican family as the best gift EARTH has given her. The multicultural environment and her peers have also been a highlight in her journey: “Tears of joy, tears of sadness. It has all been worth it.” Moving forward, Harriet plans on giving back by focusing on gender empowerment programs and finding ways to involve women in the agricultural industry. “I hope to start a sustainable agricultural practice training center for women to build access to markets, maybe a platform to really sell themselves out by supplying practices for continuous production of food and clients to change their standards of living.”

As a Fellow, Harriet is gaining professional experience with her host partner, CAMFED Zambia, working in community outreach and building relationships with key stakeholders. Harriet’s professional dream came true, and as she puts it, *“It’s a big ‘wow’ for me and my family. Please continue doing this. You are changing many lives.”* She now truly believes that everything is achievable if one works for it, and if one is dedicated and willing to make that change. *“Success is a daily achievement, and dedication and perseverance are something we should carry in our hearts no matter how difficult life may get. Thank you, Mastercard Foundation, it’s been a great journey!”*

Nyasha Fidelis Shumbayarerwa

Country: Zimbabwe

Track: Employment

Position: Junior Project Coordinator: Agriculture & Soil Mitigation Projects.

Host company/organization: Climate Neutral Group

About position: Nyasha supports the sourcing and management of CNG’s project development activities in South Africa. He also assists in evaluating suitable Agriculture Land Management and Improved Land Management carbon credit methodologies.



Bio: Nyasha’s graduation project was called A Study of Endophyte Fungi Populations in Three Different Banana Production Systems. After his Fellowship, he hopes to complete a Master’s in climate change and sustainable development at the University of Cape Town. He wants to specialize in environmental sciences.

Nyasha reflects that EARTH has made a very positive impact on his life. *“I was able to meet so many different cultures, that otherwise I would’ve never met. It has taught me to face and meet challenges and to be respectful of the opinions of others. I think EARTH has opened many doors for me and helped me see agriculture in a different way.”*

Nyasha returned to his home country Somalia and intends to work in community development with small-scale farmers in the banana sector. He wants to teach them about resilience in agriculture and how to combat and mitigate climate change. He would also like to train them to improve water management and the preservation of biodiversity.



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To his donors, he would like to say: *“I greatly appreciate your support through my four years of undergraduate studies. I want to influence young people to become future agronomists like me. Thank you because all of this is thanks to your help.”*

Precious Nemutenzi

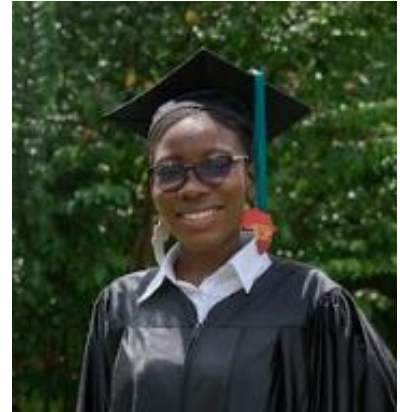
Country: Zimbabwe

Track: Employment

Position: Graduate Fellow for Agriculture

Host company/organization: Welthungerhilfe

About position: Precious empowers rural families to achieve sustainable food and nutrition through training in agriculture, resource management, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), alternative incomes, and nutrition.



Bio: Precious comes from the semi-urban area of Mutare in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. She developed an interest in agriculture at a young age, when she helped her mother with their home garden. Precious excelled in school and proved herself a leader. In 2013, she won a national essay contest on how to improve education in secondary schools in her region. She was also a leader in GEM, the Girl Empowerment Movement, and acted as vice president of her school's branch of the international charity program LEO, Leadership Experience Opportunity.

When someone first recommended EARTH to Precious in high school, she knew it was the place for her. *“I have always been interested in renewable energies. I would like to modernize my community so that we can generate a nation that is clean. In agriculture, I would love to learn how to revolutionize our systems in Zimbabwe so that we are not completely dependent on the rainy season. I want to help small farmers be able to produce all year.”*

Precious shares that the multicultural environment catalyzed her personal growth during these four years, and that she now sees the world in a different way. *“Before, I was just confined to my own little community, but coming here has opened my mind. EARTH's academic model encourages teamwork and interaction in terms of personal relationships, which also helped me to grow and develop some essential soft skills.”*

Professionally, Precious has gained knowledge and understanding in agriculture and community development, environmental studies, and sustainability. Because the agricultural science degree is very diverse, it provides her with many opportunities in her country and abroad. *“Upon returning home, I can occupy diverse spaces, not just in agriculture but also in community development, environmental sciences, and many industries, even business.”* She carried out her second-year internship in 2019 at Grasslands Research Institute and the Horticulture Research Institute in Zimbabwe, which provided her with practical skills in animal production as well as laboratory and



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research skills in sweet potato breeding, respectively. As part of her work experience, Precious then provided farmers in the nearby community of Nuevo Horizonte with technical support in sustainable Integrated Pest Management to boost their yields while conserving biodiversity.

Her graduation project A Business Model on Food Products Derived from Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes to Enhance Nutrition Security, aimed to develop value-added products (chips and flour) from orange-fleshed sweet potatoes and evaluate the technical, financial, and market feasibility of these products while comparing them to the primary production of the sweet potatoes. The proof of concept was used as a basis to select the most viable business model to commercialize the products in Zimbabwe in order to enhance nutrition security and create economic opportunities for youth.

She has already taken the first steps to kick-start her business. She worked on a business project, which involves primary sweet potato production and sustainable value addition, particularly for the orange varieties. “I began working on feasibility study as part of my graduation project, so now it is implementation time.” Precious is now part of the Mastercard Foundation – EARTH University Fellowship Program in Zimbabwe.

I think each person you meet has something special you wish to bring back with you.– Precious

She reminisces on the many transformative experiences attained during these last four years at EARTH: the people and their diverse backgrounds, the farms she had the chance to visit, her classmates from her own promotion, the helpful professors, the “madrinas/godmothers” (the Food & Beverage staff). *“I think each person you meet has something special you wish to bring back with you.”*

Precious is passionate about food and nutrition security, especially in sustainable agriculture and rural development spaces. She wants to work with smallholder farmers on implementing good agricultural practices to increase farm production and achieve food security, enhance climate change adaptation and resilience, and add value to farmers’ produce to access fair markets and improve their livelihoods. Precious is also devoted to crop value addition and agribusiness development.

She is driven to share the technical knowledge acquired at EARTH with her home community, in particular with local farmers. She eventually plans to train young people in the aspects of business that she is passionate about and, through her growing business, create programs to empower young people. *“An MBA would be something I would really love to do, but it will depend on how things go in the next two to three years. I will really focus on my business and from there if some things come up, I will be planning along those ways.”*

“Thank you so much for this opportunity, it has been a wonderful four years here in Costa Rica. I have learned so much at EARTH and had many opportunities to travel to



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conferences organized by the Mastercard Foundation, so I am grateful for that. I hope to take this and create a positive change in my communities, and I would love to see in the world.”

Respect Rungano Musiyiwa

Country: Zimbabwe

Track: Entrepreneurship

Project: Murerwa Agribusiness Innovation Center

Host company/organization: Udugu Institute

About position: Respect offers innovative agribusiness skills to farmers and facilitates the creation of collaborative, efficient and commercially viable enterprises. This will include a horticultural production system and online incubation platform.



Bio: Respect grew up in a rural environment in the northwest of Zimbabwe, where his parents were unable to complete their educations. His mom was 15 years old when she had him. *“My mom had to leave school to have me and so did my dad. I grew up with my grandparents. I was born in a place of agriculture, which is the best economy of creativity.”* His graduation project, Training School Platform for Rural Development in Murewa, Zimbabwe: Agricultural and Enterprise Skills for Smallholder Farmers, is an online agribusiness innovation and incubation hub meant to empower smallholder farmers with skills, markets, financial literacy, and co-working facilities towards establishing sustainable and viable agribusinesses. Over the course of his project, Respect had to interact with many different fields such as agriculture, business, technology, and entrepreneurship.

“I did my internship at the University of Florida in the Department of Plant Physiology. My professional objective was to study the effect of soil salinity on different varieties of citrus plants, mainly oranges.” Respect’s personal objective was to understand large-scale agricultural production in a developed country and then compare this system to food production systems in developing countries. *“I selected this internship so that I could gain more experience and knowledge on crop production systems as well as in scientific research that will help me work with smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe after graduation.”*

During his time at EARTH, Respect has gained more confidence in his ability to build a business. EARTH gave him the opportunity to become a global student.

It has been a good experience to meet people in Africa, Latin America, and learn new languages. At first, it was difficult to open my mind. I will always remember learning by doing at EARTH.– Respect

Respect is appreciative of the fact that EARTH gave him opportunities, connections, and above all, the experience of working with a larger community. Though he struggled with



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his health and with learning Spanish over the years, he says that those four years exposed him to the real world and equipped him with business skills and agricultural knowledge to start a venture on his own.

As a Fellow, Respect is gaining professional experience and receiving mentorship at the Udugu Institute in Zimbabwe, his home country.

To his donors at the Mastercard Foundation, Respect says, *“Thank you so much for the great support towards my academic and professional development for the past four years. It has been four years of great transformation; I have developed into a complete person as I gained a lot of skills that range from agricultural scientific skills, entrepreneurship competencies, rural innovation skills, communication skills, global citizenship, and multiculturalism amongst a host of other life skills. I am very grateful.”*

Rufaro Chokera

Country: Zimbabwe

Track: Employment

Position: Climate Smart Agriculture Guide Programme Fellow

Host company/organization: CAMFED Zimbabwe



About position: Rufaro is working to expand CAMFED Zimbabwe’s Agricultural Guide Program. She helps boost the productivity and livelihoods of ‘forgotten’ women farmers, and has already trained 160 women agripreneurs.

Bio: Rufaro Chokera comes from a rural area of Zimbabwe, where she is the only daughter in her family. From a young age, she dreamed of making a name for herself as a leader.

For Rufaro, coming to EARTH was the opportunity of a lifetime because of her long-standing dream to learn about entrepreneurship. *“Being an entrepreneur is one of the most demanding skills needed in Africa for the young generation. Learning at EARTH University has cultivated my passion for agriculture, and I have participated in projects to help local farmers in designing the best sustainable practices in their farms, giving added value to their products in order to commercialize them.”* EARTH has changed Rufaro’s way of thinking. *“I try to carry all the values that EARTH taught me. I always try to remember work ethics, respect, punctuality, accepting other people as they are, being adaptable. EARTH taught me to get out of my comfort zone, and I now have the power to achieve any goal.”*

Rufaro completed her internship at the University of Florida, working at the Citrus Research and Education Centre. She chose this internship to further her knowledge and learning about soil, fertility, and nutrient management. *“This internship was a milestone*



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towards my future career plans. In my country, the soil is degraded, and farmers are not capable of producing. They need to learn about fertilizers to treat citrus diseases. As an intern, I had the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with great researchers who are tackling the citrus greening disease problem through irrigation and fertilization schemes. It was a golden chance to follow my passion, which is soil management.”

Rufaro completed her graduation project called Effects of Deposited Bovine Urine, Nitrogen Fertilizers and Nitrification Inhibitors on Nitrate Leaching in a Grazed Pasture System of Humid Tropics. *“I chose this project because I hope to help my community with nutrient management and other sustainable methods of developing fertilizers for their farms, including pellets made from animal waste.”*

Rufaro has returned to Zimbabwe to help her community: *My goals are to help women and girls, particularly with economic empowerment. – Rufaro*

She aims to help girls in difficult situations and motivate them to support themselves financially and finish studying, while supporting the growth of women-owned small businesses. *“I am also working on a project meant to feed 25 families in my community. I want to help them establish a community garden with solar-powered water. Lack of enough clean water due to recurring droughts has limited agricultural activities as well as sanitation protocols in my community. With all the skills I have learned at EARTH, I believe that this project will be a reality once I graduate.”*

As a Fellow, she is gaining professional experience with CAMFED Zimbabwe, working in outreach and developing professional relationships and networks with stakeholders. To her donors at the Mastercard Foundation, she would like to say, *“I have a lot that I have managed to accomplish through your generosity. Summing up, I would just like to thank you for making my dreams come true. This is a baton that you passed to me and I believe that I will be able to help my community and my country at large through this experience. I pray that you keep extending your hands, reaching out to other youths for them to also realize their potential.”*

Talent Vharachumu

Country: Zimbabwe

Track: Employment

Position: Climate Smart Agriculture Guide Programme Fellow

Host company/organization: CAMFED Zimbabwe

About position: Talent is working to expand CAMFED Zimbabwe’s Agricultural Guide Program. She helps boost the productivity and livelihoods of ‘forgotten’ women farmers, and has already trained 160 women agripreneurs.





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Bio: Talent was raised in a rural area in west Zimbabwe. She has nurtured her passion for agriculture from a very young age and. During high school, she volunteered as a peer educator for primary and secondary schools in her community, where she led workshops to promote education, especially for young women.

Talent knew that EARTH provided the kind of education she needed to make a real change in her country. *“You must employ yourself through agriculture. It is a life skill. I think that’s why I’ve always liked agriculture. Our education in most African countries is very theoretical. The problem is that after graduation, the person is only looking for an employer. But if one learns practical skills, they can employ themselves. It is for that reason that I wanted to come to EARTH.”* Throughout her four years at EARTH, Talent learned how to work with a variety of people, cultures, and beliefs.

In her third year, Talent completed her 15-week internship at the University of Florida, working at the Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC). *“I am passionate about plant science, so I applied for an internship in plant physiology to gain more experience in research and see how plants adapt to the changing environment. I also wanted to learn the use of the technical equipment that is used in this field of study.”* Talent completed a graduation project called Effects of Greenhouse Plastic Colors on Growth and Chlorophyll Content of Corn and Tomato, which proposes a method to help plants adapt to the changing climatic conditions.

“Now I know what I really want to be in the future: an entrepreneur.”

Talent wants to teach people in her community everything she has learned at EARTH. *“Now I know what I really want to be in the future: an entrepreneur. After learning about value addition on agricultural products, I have many ideas for projects that I would want to implement in my country after graduation. I know that I can help my country to reduce food wastages by ensuring better preservation of their local products. I hope to employ myself and other local youths in my community. It’s a nice strategy to eradicate poverty and a way of plowing back what I learned to my local community.”*

As a Fellow, Talent is gaining professional experience with CAMFED Zimbabwe, working in youth outreach and developing professional relationships with stakeholders.

To her donors at the Mastercard Foundation, Talent says, *“I feel forever grateful for the opportunity provided to come down to Costa Rica and be part of a unique academic program in the world. Being at this school has opened my mind. I want to create my own employment, that’s my dream. I want to work hard so that my dream can come true.”*