



In partnership with



2024 Fellows

Mastercard Foundation – EARTH University Foundation
Fellowship Program



In partnership with



Dorcas B. Sossa



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agriculture Innovation through Science and Research
- **Host organization:** International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) - Benin

Bio:

Dorcas Sossa studied Animal Health and Production at the University of Abomey-Calavi, where she gained expertise in both plant and animal production as well as veterinary parasitology. She complemented her academic studies with practical internships at the Agro Veterinary Center Aikpé in Zè and the National Laboratory of Veterinary Parasitology in Benin. These experiences fueled her passion for sustainable agriculture and research and inspired Dorcas to pursue the Fellowship Program in the Science and Research Track.

During her Fellowship, Dorcas worked with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Benin, focused on identifying and studying a newly emerging pest, *Apion*, that is currently affecting cowpea fields. She reared the insect on different cowpea varieties, tested existing and newly developed biopesticides, and gained partial knowledge of its life cycle, feeding habits, and reproduction. Dorcas also mastered biopesticide efficacy testing and took initiative to collect fresh specimens from other regions when field availability was limited. Her research represents an important step in developing practical, environmentally friendly solutions for farmers who depend on cowpea as a staple crop.

For Dorcas, the Fellowship was not only an introduction to high-level agricultural research but also a lesson in perseverance and scientific rigor. She learned that meaningful solutions in science demand time, patience, and precision, and she grew more confident in sharing her ideas and collaborating across diverse teams. Although her findings are still being finalized, she is committed to continuing the research until results can be published and tested with farmers in Benin. Looking ahead, she plans to pursue graduate training to further her expertise in pest management. Her long-term vision is clear: to help farmers in West Africa protect their harvests from pests through sustainable, science-based innovations.



In partnership with



Cornel M. Dominik



- **Country:** Tanzania
- **University:** EARTH University
Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agriculture Innovation through Science and Research
- **Host organization:** International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) - Tanzania

Bio:

A 2023 graduate of EARTH University, Cornel Dominick brings a strong foundation in agronomy, food processing, and environmental management to his research career. While at EARTH in 2022, he completed an internship at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Tanzania, where he gained experience in soil and water analysis, waste management, and resource efficiency. This early exposure to agricultural research inspired his commitment to sustainable agriculture and sparked his interest in microbial innovations.

Cornel returned to IITA for his Fellowship, where he conducted a project on the persistence of the bacteria *Rhizobium* in soil. His work involved collecting and processing soil samples, isolating and characterizing *Rhizobium* strains, and testing their viability over time using microbiological techniques such as Gram staining, colony identification, and Congo Red dye. Cornel also assessed locally available carrier materials for potential use in biofertilizer production. These efforts contributed to identifying nitrogen-fixing strains with long-term potential to improve soil fertility, laying the groundwork for affordable, environmentally friendly alternatives to synthetic inputs. He is currently preparing his research findings.

Reflecting on his Fellowship, Cornel notes that it strengthened both his technical and professional identity. He is especially proud of successfully isolating *Rhizobium* strains, which deepened his belief in science as a tool for practical solutions in African agriculture. He now feels more confident and precise in his microbiological techniques and is excited about the immense potential of biofertilizers in reducing dependency on synthetic inputs. Looking forward, Cornel is preparing to publish his findings while hoping to pursue graduate studies. His long-term vision is to bridge the gap between agricultural research and community impact by building a company that transforms laboratory innovations into solutions that directly support smallholder farmers.



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Dometilla A. Ndebugri



• **Country:** Ghana

• **University:** University for Development Studies Class of 2023

• **Track:** Agriculture Innovation through Science and Research

• **Host organization:** Fisheries Commission of Ghana

Bio:

Dometilla Ndebugri graduated in 2023 from the University of Development Studies (UDS) in Ghana with a degree in Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology. Growing up with a passion for aquaculture, environmental sustainability, and resource management, her interests culminated in her thesis on the effect of local filtrate materials on water turbidity and an internship at Vicalex Fish Farms. These experiences deepened her commitment to advancing sustainable aquaculture and addressing the challenges faced by farmers and fishers in her country.

During her Fellowship, Dometilla worked with the Fisheries Commission of Ghana, where she supported the Fish Health Unit by assisting farmers with biosecurity and disease prevention strategies. Her responsibilities included monitoring weekly fingerling movements, ensuring farmers submitted health reports, and conducting research on biosecurity compliance across aquaculture farms in 12 regions of Ghana. She successfully analyzed a four-year dataset that revealed regional disparities in compliance and identified systemic gaps in infrastructure and training, providing the first comprehensive breakdown of farm-level biosecurity practices. Her findings have the potential to inform targeted interventions and policy measures to strengthen Ghana's smallholder farm sector and benefit thousands of people.

Through the Fellowship, Dometilla enhanced her expertise in aquaculture biosecurity, understanding how biosecurity serves not only as the backbone of sustainable aquaculture, but also as a matter of public health—affecting environmental and economic issues. Beyond gaining technical expertise, she discovered the importance of data-driven decision-making for shaping aquaculture policy and protecting rural livelihoods. Building on this momentum, Dometilla is seeking graduate school opportunities to strengthen her expertise in this field while channeling her savings and experience into establishing a fish farm that models strong biosecurity practices. By integrating aquaponics and training opportunities for youth and women, she hopes to demonstrate that aquaculture can be both a sustainable business and a tool for community development.



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Mutinta Mubita



• **Country:** Zambia

• **University:** EARTH University Class of 2023

• **Track:** Agriculture Innovation through Science and Research

• **Host organization:** International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) - Zambia

Bio:

Mutinta Mubita's journey in agriculture began at EARTH University, where she graduated in 2023 with a degree in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Management. During her studies, she gained practical experience managing crops and producing organic fertilizer on a banana farm and later deepened her expertise through an internship at the Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (GART) in Zambia. These experiences cemented her interest in crop management and sustainable farming, and she was eager to bring that knowledge back to her home country.

During her Fellowship, Mutinta worked on projects that advanced soybean research and strengthened food systems. She collaborated with the soybean research team on germination tests and crossbreeding trials, and she helped secure phytosanitary certification for seed exports to meet international standards. Mutinta also supported the Youth Agripreneurs program, distributing soybean seeds to young farmers in southern and western provinces, empowering them with resources and training in sustainable agribusiness. Her contributions extended to the launch of *Aflasafe* in Zambia, a milestone intervention reducing aflatoxin contamination in staple crops by over 80%, improving food safety, farmer incomes, and market access. She estimates her work with IITA will reach between 80,000 to 200,000 smallholder farmers in rural areas of Zambia.

Throughout the Fellowship, Mutinta was proud to have contributed to practical solutions for aflatoxin control while also advancing weed resistance research through herbicide inhibition studies. She leaves the Fellowship with sharpened technical expertise, emotional resilience, and a vision to specialize further in weed science or data science. Having secured an internship offer with IITA while also exploring graduate school opportunities, she envisions working on interdisciplinary projects that merge scientific research and data-driven tools to build sustainable agricultural systems. Over the next five years, she hopes to mentor youth, strengthen farmer networks, and help position Zambia as a leader in climate-smart agriculture.



In partnership with



Sharon G. Nalubega



- **Country:** Uganda
- **University:** Makerere University Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agriculture Innovation through Science and Research
- **Host organization:** International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) - Kenya

Bio:

Motivated by her desire to bridge the gap between agricultural science and the challenges faced by rural farmers in Uganda, Sharon Grace Nalubega pursued a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Science at Makerere University, graduating in 2025. Her commitment to sustainable agricultural practices was honed through internships and volunteer placements, which sharpened her practical skills and deepened her understanding of community-based solutions. Coupled with her undergraduate research on the assessment of double haploid maize inbred lines for forage traits at the National Livestock Resources Research Institute in Uganda, her experience cultivated a deep-seated passion for forage breeding, motivating her to make a lasting impact in her community.

During her Fellowship under the Livestock Genetics, Nutrition, and Feed Resources Program, Sharon Grace played a central role in evaluating Buffel grass accessions for adaptation, biomass yield, and feed nutritional quality at the Kapiti Research Centre in Kenya's semi-arid lands. Her responsibilities ranged from experimental plot set up and field data collection to molecular lab work, including molecular studies. Sharon Grace also applied her bioinformatics training to analyze large datasets with R software to identify promising forage accessions. Through this work, she is directly contributing to the development of superior, drought-tolerant forage options that can boost food security and livestock productivity for arid environments.

Through the Fellowship, Sharon Grace took fulfillment in mastering molecular laboratory techniques, a field where her hands-on experience was initially limited, and emerged as the second overall winner of ILRI's CapDev Grand Challenge, where she pitched her research to an international panel. As a result, she is excited to attend the 10-in-10 training and become a more resourceful professional dedicated to addressing global issues. Driven by her passion for research and impact, she aims to continue refining her work on the "Never thirsty" green Buffel grass, with the goal of publishing her findings. Sharon Grace envisions advancing her studies to gain more knowledge in the research field and establishing a forage demonstration farm that integrates improved forage varieties with farmer training, creating a practical bridge between cutting-edge research and community development in Uganda.



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Antoinette Gbedouhou



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agricultural Employment
- **Host organization:** Société pour le Développement du Coton (SODECO) - Benin

Bio:

Antoinette Gbedouhou graduated in 2023 from the University of Abomey-Calavi with a degree in Science and Technical Plant Production. Growing up in rural Benin, she developed a strong interest in farming and rural development, which she deepened at an agricultural high school. As a student, she completed internships in crop production, conducted field research, and honed her ability to communicate with rural communities. These experiences motivated her to pursue a career where agriculture can serve as a driver of both sustainability and community development.

During her Fellowship, Antoinette joined the Société pour le Développement du Coton (SODECO) in Bembéréké, a company specializing in cotton, where she worked as a technical supervisor in the Agricultural Inputs Department. Working with 25 laborers and 10 security staff, her responsibilities included overseeing experimental plots for cotton and maize, identifying pests and diseases, and testing new phytosanitary products to improve yields. She mastered the full technical itinerary for cotton production, from land preparation and sowing to biweekly pest treatments and harvesting, while also experimenting with different maize varieties and comparing their performance to local varieties. In addition to her contributions at SODECO, Antoinette volunteered in local communities, leading menstrual hygiene education sessions for youth and training 20 women in liquid soap production. These initiatives helped strengthen local livelihoods and reinforced Antoinette's belief in linking agriculture with community empowerment.

Antoinette believes the Fellowship experience allowed her to reflect more deeply on her future and recognize the interrelated relationship between employment and entrepreneurship. This past year, she strengthened her ability to collaborate, plan, and manage time while being pushed to seek out new skills and work alongside others toward the common goal of creating impact. In the future, Antoinette plans to launch her own poultry farming business and integrated agricultural enterprise.



In partnership with



Bridget Mpairwe



- **Country:** Uganda
- **University:** Makerere University Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agricultural Employment
- **Host organization:** SNV Netherlands

Bio:

Bridget Mpairwe's interest in agriculture grew out of seeing firsthand the challenges rural farmers face in Uganda, particularly their limited access to extension information and services. She pursued a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at Makerere University, specializing in Agricultural Extension and Education, and strengthened her skills through internships and volunteer work in farm management. These experiences nurtured her commitment to improving farmer livelihoods through extension services and sustainable agricultural practices.

During her Fellowship, Bridget worked with SNV Netherlands, where she contributed to the Livestock Development for Smallholder Farmers (INCLUDE) Project. The Project uses a participatory integrating planning approach to empower smallholder farmers to achieve resilient livelihoods through sustainable practices. Bridget supported the preparation of concept notes, budgets, and reports, and assisted local service provider partners with planning and implementation. She also trained farmer groups to develop action plans for improving their farms, guided communities to rehabilitate roads and water sources, and helped consolidate data for project monitoring. Her contributions helped impact approximately 810 households and 500 schoolchildren by encouraging self-reliance, collective action, and better farm management practices.

Bridget considers the opportunity to work with an international NGO on an agricultural project as one of her biggest accomplishments. For her, the Fellowship was both a learning curve and a confidence-building journey. She gained practical skills in project planning, budgeting, and recordkeeping, while also mastering the PIP extension model now being adopted by organizations across Uganda. Perhaps most importantly, she overcame her fears and strengthened her own intrinsic motivation, drawing inspiration from smallholder farmers who are thriving against the odds.

As a result of her Fellowship, Bridget has secured employment to continue working on the INCLUDE project as a Field Supervisor with SNV's partner organization, Albertine Interventions for Development. Bridget will have an important role in project coordination, technical leadership, and stakeholder engagement. In the future, she hopes to attend graduate school and establish a rural learning center focused on small ruminants, piggery, and local poultry, an initiative she hopes will give back to her community by blending knowledge, practice, and empowerment.



In partnership with



Daniella M. Adjagba



• **Country:** Benin

• **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2024

• **Track:** Agricultural Employment

• **Host organization:** Societe des Transformations Industrielles du Benin (SOTIBE)

Bio:

Daniella Adjagba graduated in 2024 from the University of Abomey-Calavi with a degree in Agronomy, specializing in Nutrition, Food Science, and Technology. Through internships at the INAPEC Coated and Confectionery Production Industry and the Food Safety Laboratory, she gained experience in nutrition, food processing, quality control, and consumer health. These opportunities introduced her to research methods and project management while also sparking her passion for strengthening the agri-food network in Benin.

In her Fellowship with the Société des Transformations Industrielles du Bénin (SOTIBE), a company specializing in dairy products, fruit juices, and tomato concentrate in Benin, Daniella worked in the quality control laboratory to ensure the safety of food products and combat dietary deficiencies. She supervised and actively contributed to product packaging operations to maintain hygiene standards, conducted physicochemical and microbiological analyses to verify compliance with industry regulations, and monitored the quality of products already on the market. Daniella also trained and mentored seven interns, equipping them with practical skills in quality control and laboratory work. Beyond her direct contributions to SOTIBE, her efforts supported community-wide consumer health by ensuring that widely consumed products like yogurts, juices, and tomato pastes remained safe and nutritious.

Through her Fellowship, Daniella strengthened her technical and professional identity in the agri-food sector. She gained expertise in microbiological analyses of raw materials, in-process products, and finished goods, learning to work with microorganisms such as Salmonella, Shigella, Staphylococcus aureus, and Clostridium while ensuring reliability through strict adherence to international standards. Daniella expects to continue her employment with SOTIBE working as a laboratory technician focused on microbiological analyses. In the future, she hopes to pursue a Master's degree in Food Technology or Food Science and pursue professional opportunities with organizations such as UNICEF or Plan International. Further, she is planning to create an agro-pastoral farm to train young high school students in animal and plant production.



In partnership with



Godfrey Okello



- **Country:** Uganda
- **University:** Makerere University Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agricultural Employment
- **Host organization:** Omia Agribusiness Development Group

Bio:

Godfrey Okello graduated from Makerere University in Uganda with a Bachelor's degree in Science of Food Science and Technology, where he developed a strong academic foundation in agriculture and food systems, and a passion for using education to strengthen communities. Believing that agriculture is central to community development and economic growth, he joined the Fellowship Program in the Employment Track with Omia Agribusiness Development Group LTD (OADG Ltd) to gain experience, support farmers, and promote sustainable agricultural practices to improve food systems in Uganda.

At OADG Ltd, Okello applied his training in food science and technology to strengthen agricultural value chains and improve rural livelihoods. He led more than 60 training sessions for over 1,000 smallholder farmers across Northern Uganda on climate-smart agriculture, postharvest handling, pest and disease management, and humane poultry slaughter. His sessions contributed to measurable income and livelihood improvements, including a 15% revenue increase among small holder farmers in the Amuru District after adopting new practices. Okello also led the design of low-cost underground storage units that reduced perishability in vegetables by 30% and supported the development of a modern chicken processing facility aligned with Uganda National Bureau of Standards hygiene requirements. In addition, he promoted solar-powered hybrid drying technologies and coordinated procurement and quality assurance for more than 1,500 kilograms of fresh produce and poultry, ensuring both farmer profitability and market efficiency. Okello's impact extended beyond fieldwork as he digitized over 2,500 farmer profiles to improve monitoring and tracking systems.

Okello also has launched his own business, Kitara Agribusiness, a grain-processing social enterprise in Gulu that addresses challenges such as malnutrition, income insecurity, and low value addition. Recognized for his innovation and leadership, Okello won the 2024 Baobab Resolution Venture Challenge. Okello is now advancing his social impacts in Northern Uganda as he led Kitara Agribusiness as a CEO with plans to serve over 20,000 farmers by 2028. In the future, he hopes to become a leading practitioner and advocate for sustainable food systems, community nutrition, and agricultural innovation in Uganda and the broader East African region.



In partnership with



Victoire Oussa



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2022
- **Track:** Agricultural Employment
- **Host organization:** Cenadis Agro

Bio:

A 2022 graduate of the University of Abomey-Calavi with a degree in Rural Engineering, Agricultural Mechanization, Fisheries, and Aquaculture, Victoire Oussa discovered her passion for working alongside producers during her studies and internships with fisheries. These experiences in laboratory research, aquaculture, and data analysis prepared her to contribute meaningfully to one of Benin's largest farms and agribusinesses, CENADIS AGRO, which specializes in cashew nuts as well as livestock, fish farming, agroforestry, agrifood processing, and more.

During her Fellowship at CENADIS AGRO, Victoire gained hands-on experience across nearly every aspect of the farm's operations. In the first three months, she supervised workers in crop production, including maize and cashew fields, and contributed to aquaculture activities such as fish harvesting, sales, and reporting. She also supported agro-processing through cashew juice and nut production, while in horticulture she assisted with plot maintenance, seeding, and onion harvesting. In the logistics and machinery department, she learned to maintain and operate tractors, performing tasks like brush cutting, harrowing, and leveling. Her leadership was evident as she guided interns, managed teams, and interacted with local farmers to ensure quality services.

Victoire describes her Fellowship as exceptional due to the professional and personal growth she experienced. She takes pride in having acquired diverse technical skills, from driving tractors to mastering aquaculture techniques. Beyond her work on the farm, she completed her final research project on evaluating the effectiveness of a local moringa-based biostimulant on tilapia growth, providing another opportunity to engage with rural farmers. Next year, Victoire will pursue an English immersion training through Arizona State University to prepare for graduate studies in aquaculture, while continuing to volunteer as the General Secretary for an association that supports disabled individuals.



In partnership with



Sebio Gaspard



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2022
- **Track:** Agricultural Employment
- **Host organization:** VEGOLA Benin

Bio:

Gaspard Sebio graduated in 2022 from the University of Abomey-Calavi with a degree in Technical Plant Production. As a student, he gained experience working with agricultural businesses and horticultural farms, where he supported farm operations and pest management. Motivated by a passion for teaching and convinced that education can drive sustainability and community development, he worked with the company VEGOLA Benin, which produces snacks, condiments, and salads, as a Fellow in the Employment Track.

During his Fellowship, Gaspard worked as a field technician supporting contracted gherkin producers in the region of Abomey-Calavi. He oversaw technical monitoring of cultivated plots, including sowing schedules, pest management, and harvesting practices, ensuring high-quality production aligned with VEGOLA's standards. He also trained producers in sustainable agricultural techniques such as integrated crop management, responsible input use, and soil conservation. His close technical guidance helped increase yields from an average of 4 to 6 tons per hectare, significantly improving farmers' incomes and strengthening the resilience of the local vegetable value chain. Gaspard's efforts impacted about 200 people, including 80 contracted farmers and 120 agricultural laborers, by enhancing skills, improving production quality, and securing stable market outlets.

Gaspard will continue to be employed with VEGOLA-Bénin as a contracted agricultural technician, reflecting the confidence his host organization has in his contributions. Thanks to the Fellowship Program, he feels that he was able to gain employment with VEGOLA and has even acquired a plot of land for his future endeavors of setting up a production farm for horticulture. He appreciated the technical rigor of his experience and feels that he has learned how to handle pressure, make decisions in the field, and take on important responsibilities independently. Looking ahead, he plans to pursue a Master's degree in agriculture to expand his expertise while developing innovative solutions for sustainable food systems. He further envisions developing sustainable solutions for agriculture to build resilient rural communities in Benin and across Africa.



In partnership with



Joseph Tchetan



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2022
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** UniPod Benin

Bio:

A 2022 graduate of the University of Abomey-Calavi with a background in Renewable Energy and Energy Systems, Joseph Tchetan is passionate about innovation and sustainable development in agricultural machinery. Motivated by the need for environmentally friendly and cost-effective milling solutions, he founded CLEAN ENERGY4ALL BENIN, a company that produces silent solar-powered mills for cereal processing. These solar mills aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and noise pollution while increasing productivity, positioning them as an important innovation for sustainable agricultural production. His company was awarded the Best Innovative Project Award in 2023 by the Mastercard Foundation, demonstrating the strong potential of his entrepreneurial vision.

During his Fellowship, Joseph worked to strengthen and scale his enterprise, leading the technical design of prototypes, coordinating team activities, and developing strategies for introducing solar milling technologies to the market. He improved the prototype of a silent solar grain mill through testing, carried out a market study to validate commercial demand, and began installing pilot units in local communities. He also organized awareness sessions for 35 women cereal processors, trained 25 young artisans in technical fabrication skills, and engaged more than 60 stakeholders through outreach activities.

Joseph reflects on his Fellowship as a transformative step in his entrepreneurial journey, helping him refine his leadership, project management, and capital mobilization skills. He secured grants, including support from the Mastercard Foundation FAST program, to advance his prototype toward commercialization. Looking ahead, he was awarded a scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Côte d'Ivoire and an internship in Germany through the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL), while continuing to expand CLEAN ENERGY4ALL BENIN. Over the next five years, Joseph envisions deploying 100 solar mills across Benin, training 200 artisans, empowering over 1,000 women processors, and scaling his enterprise to other West African countries, positioning it as a leader in sustainable agro-industrial innovation.



In partnership with



Achille C.J. Tchidehou



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** Entrepreneurial Development Component of University of Abomey-Calavi

Bio:

A recent graduate of the University of Abomey-Calavi, Achille Tchidehou has a degree in Agronomy, specializing in Nutrition and Food Technology Sciences. Alongside his academic studies, he cultivated a strong interest in entrepreneurship and founded Agro Reference Ltd, a social agrifood enterprise that produces natural fruit wines and juices from pineapples and hibiscus supplied by low-income women farmers in the communes of Allada, Zè, and Tori in Benin. His goal is to reduce postharvest losses, provide dignified livelihoods for women in rural areas, and promote healthier, chemical-free alternatives to imported beverages.

During his Fellowship, Achille focused on scaling his business from prototype to market-ready product. Serving as both CEO and head of production, he oversaw business strategy, production processes, and market testing. With the support of the incubation hub, he developed his Minimum Viable Product (100% natural organic wine), tested it with consumers, refined his business model, and successfully registered Agro Reference as a limited liability company. He received positive feedback from consumers regarding the high quality and authentic flavor of his product. He also gained access to mentorship, international networks, and entrepreneurial training that helped him sharpen his leadership, project management, and financial planning skills.

Achille describes the Fellowship as a defining step that shifted his business from an idea to a functioning enterprise with real social impact. By purchasing directly from over 250 rural women farmers, his company is supporting dignified livelihoods, creating secure markets, reducing food waste, and producing wines appreciated for their nutritional benefits. Looking ahead, he plans to build a semi-industrial production facility, expand to regional and international markets, and hopes to pursue a Master's degree in Food Science and Biotechnology. Achille envisions Agro Reference producing over 1,000 bottles monthly within five years and employing more than 100 youth and women, demonstrating how entrepreneurship rooted in local resources can transform rural communities in Benin.



In partnership with



Adeleke Ogoutchemi



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** Entrepreneurial Development Component of University of Abomey-Calavi

Bio:

Growing up in a rural community in Benin, Adéléké Ogoutchemi witnessed firsthand how poor soil fertility and unsustainable practices weakened harvests and limited opportunities for farmers. Determined to change this, he pursued a degree in Technical Plant Production at the University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC) and later co-founded BIO PLANET TMC Ltd, a company that recycles biodegradable waste into organic, pest-repellent fertilizer.

During his Fellowship, Adéléké strengthened BIO PLANET's operations with the support of the Entrepreneurial Development Component at UAC. Beginning as Waste Collection Manager, he coordinated community campaigns to collect biodegradable waste from markets, households, and women's cooperatives. Over the course of his Fellowship, the company recycled more than 100 tons of waste, produced over 50 tons of pest-repellent organic fertilizer, and distributed it to 500 smallholder farmers, including vegetable growers, rice producers, and women cooperatives. In fact, 70% of the smallholder farmers were women, and they reported increased yields of 35% and reduced chemical fertilizer use by 60%. Adéléké's leadership and dedication were recognized as he was promoted to Chief Operations Officer, overseeing the company's restructuring, quality control, marketing, and farmer engagement.

Adéléké describes his Fellowship as a transformative period that helped him grow from a reserved and uncertain student into a confident leader and entrepreneur. Under his guidance, BIO PLANET restored more than 100 hectares of degraded farmland, created over 60 green jobs, and indirectly impacted over 50,000 rural residents in Pobe. His efforts earned him recognition as one of Forbes Africa's 30 Under 30 and as a recipient of the ANZISHA Prize. Looking ahead, he plans to pursue a Master's in Plant Biotechnology and Seed Production at the National University of Agriculture of Benin while scaling BIO PLANET to serve two million smallholder farmers across West Africa. For him, entrepreneurship is not only about business growth but also about ensuring clean air, healthy food, and sustainable agricultural futures for millions.



In partnership with



Akiola Fatolou



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** Entrepreneurial Development Component of University of Abomey-Calavi

Bio:

Akiola Fatolou's interest in sustainable livestock production began during his studies in Animal Production and Health at the University of Abomey-Calavi, where internships at poultry farms and a veterinary clinic exposed him to the challenges facing the livestock sector in Benin. Determined to address these issues, he launched ECO-POULTRY FARM, an enterprise dedicated to producing organic table eggs enriched with medicinal plants. His vision is to provide healthier food alternatives while reducing reliance on chemical inputs and promoting environmentally sustainable poultry farming.

During his Fellowship, Akiola focused on structuring and advancing ECO-POULTRY FARM from concept to implementation. He participated in capacity-building workshops and calls for project funding, winning support through the Mastercard Foundation FAST program, which enabled him to acquire land for his farm. He also formalized his business by validating key deliverables such as his business plan, pitch deck, and business model canvas. Under the mentorship of experienced advisors, Akiola built strategic partnerships, including with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries in Benin. Alongside his mentor, he co-facilitated training for 100 youth aspiring to launch poultry farms, an initiative financed by the Ministry to strengthen local poultry production.

Through his Fellowship, Akiola is proud of securing partnerships and funding that laid the foundation for ECO-POULTRY FARM but also recognizes his growth confronting challenges such as selecting land and balancing startup costs. These experiences taught him resilience, responsibility, and the importance of making informed decisions as an entrepreneur. Looking forward, Akiola intends to expand ECO-POULTRY FARM in his home community, creating jobs and reducing food insecurity, and scaling his enterprise into a model for sustainable poultry production that empowers rural communities across Benin.



In partnership with



Christian Adoh



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** Entrepreneurial Development Component of University of Abomey-Calavi

Bio:

With a background in Agricultural Engineering and Environmental Management from the University of Abomey-Calavi, Christian Adoh has combined technical training with an entrepreneurial drive to transform agricultural systems in Benin. He is the co-founder and CEO of BIO PLANET TMC Ltd, a social enterprise that recycles biodegradable waste into pest-control granulated organic fertilizer to promote organic farming and restore degraded farmland. His leadership and innovation have earned recognition from the Resolution Project, the Mastercard Foundation Entrepreneurship Fund, and the African Centre of Excellence for Water and Sanitation, as well as invitations to represent youth voices at global summits in Washington, Kenya, and Bangladesh.

During his Fellowship, Christian dedicated his efforts to scaling BIO PLANET TMC Ltd with the support of the Entrepreneurial Development Component at the University of Abomey-Calavi. Under Christian's leadership, the enterprise collected and recycled over 100 tons of waste in Pobe, producing more than 50 tons of organic fertilizer distributed to over 500 smallholder farmers—70% of whom were women. These farmers reported yield increases of up to 35% and reduced reliance on chemical fertilizers by more than 60%. His team also organized 20 awareness sessions reaching 1,200 people, created more than 60 jobs, and restored over 100 hectares of degraded farmland. He estimates the company's efforts minimized the emission of 70 tons of CO₂ and reached more than 10,000 end consumers from harvests obtained.

Christian describes the Fellowship as the moment when BIO PLANET moved from promise to proof of concept. By acquiring two hectares of land for a semi-industrial production site, his business now has the foundation to scale sustainably. Looking ahead, he envisions expanding BIO PLANET's reach to serve over two million smallholder farmers across West Africa within the next five years, while pursuing graduate studies in Environmental Science or Agricultural Entrepreneurship. For Christian, the Fellowship reinforced that entrepreneurship is not only about building a business, but also about restoring soils, protecting ecosystems, and ensuring clean air and healthy food for millions.



In partnership with



Dossiya Dakou



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2024
- **Track:** Agricultural Entrepreneurship
- **Host organization:** l'Envolve Incubator

Bio:

A 2024 graduate of the University of Abomey-Calavi with a degree in Renewable Energy and Energy Systems, Dossiya Dakou grew up in a small village in Benin where he witnessed the struggles of farmers facing food waste due to a lack of electricity and storage. These experiences inspired him to found GEFE2, an energy company providing rural electrification solutions through mini-installations, off-grid systems, and air conditioning units. One of his most notable innovations is E-Cold, designed to preserve food longer and reduce postharvest losses in areas without access to electricity.

During his Fellowship, Dossiya advanced both his entrepreneurial venture and his leadership in climate-smart innovation, reaching more than 800 individuals, directly and indirectly, through his business and volunteer work. Dossiya refined his solar-powered cold storage business, E-Cold, by testing prototypes, conducting market studies, and engaging stakeholders. He also launched a large smart farm in his home village, integrating climate-smart techniques and digital tools to cultivate maize, cassava, and yams. The farm has directly employed over 30 workers, benefited more than 400 community members, and become a source of hope and inspiration locally. Dossiya also volunteered at L'Envol Incubator as a Facilitator and Climate Specialist Mentor, guiding over 100 young women and designing workshops on sustainability, climate resilience, and green entrepreneurship.

Dossiya considers the Fellowship a turning point that reshaped both his career and community outlook. Having earned recognition from the Resolution Project to acceptance at the Sèmè City Innovation Lab, he will next pursue graduate studies in Sustainable Engineering at Arizona State University with the support of a scholarship from the Mastercard Foundation. Looking forward, he hopes to apply his conviction that rural development is not just about increasing production, but also about restoring dignity, creating jobs, and building hope in communities that have long been overlooked.



In partnership with



Barthelemy K. N'serma



- **Country:** Benin
- **University:** University of Abomey-Calavi Class of 2023
- **Track:** Agricultural Education
- **Host organization:** Lycée Technique Agricole de Natitingou

Bio:

A 2023 graduate of the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin with a degree in Animal Production Science and Technology, Barthelemy N'serma has combined academic training with entrepreneurial experience to strengthen agricultural education in his community. Before his Fellowship, he started the business AgroDream Solutions TCM, facilitating farmer trainings and gaining insight into the importance of practical agricultural education. Motivated by his belief that agricultural knowledge is central to Africa's development, he joined the Fellowship Program in the Education Track to inspire the next generation of agricultural professionals.

During his Fellowship at the Lycée Technique Agricole de Natitingou, Barthelemy served as a teaching assistant in animal production. He taught courses such as advanced animal husbandry and agrostology, while also leading practical farmwork and clinical sessions. In addition to preparing lesson plans and supervising student internships, he organized more than 60 training workshops across four communes in northern Benin, which trained over 200 young people as agricultural extension agents and technical advisors. These efforts not only strengthened the school's curriculum but also expanded opportunities for youth to see agriculture as a viable and sustainable career. His work further included mentoring students on soft skills, entrepreneurship, and career planning, as well as forging partnerships that connected the school with technical and financial networks.

Barthelemy reflects on his Fellowship as both professionally transformative and personally rewarding. He gained skills in teaching, leadership, and communication while overcoming challenges of workload management. He plans to establish an agricultural incubator at the Lycée Technique Agricole de Natitingou to support graduates in launching projects with technical and entrepreneurial guidance. He also intends to expand AgroDream Solutions TCM while pursuing English immersion at Arizona State University's Global Launch program. Over the next five years, Barthelemy envisions scaling his enterprise internationally as a leading player in sustainable agriculture and mentoring young people to advance sustainable agriculture across Africa.