

2021

Mandela Washington Fellows



Gideon Aboa-Afo

Ghana

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Gideon Aboa-Afo currently works as an English language lecturer at the Enchi College of Education, a teacher education college in Ghana's Western North Region. He holds a bachelor's degree in English Language and Philosophy from the University of Cape Coast, and a master's degree in Contemporary English Language Studies from the University of Ghana, Legon. He also has a degree in Law from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he hopes to join the Ghana Bar so he can seek justice for the poor and less privileged in his community.



Claire Akwongo

Uganda

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Claire Julie Akwongo has experience in livestock development planning and management, and has led several animal health projects across Uganda, working with international development organizations such as Welthungerhilfe, Mercy Corps, and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Germany. Claire practices the one-health approach. She specializes in infectious disease research for BUILD (Boosting Uganda's Investments in Livestock Development), a program focused on controlling peste des petits ruminants; Rift valley fever; antimicrobial resistance; and promoting veterinary public health at points of slaughter. She actively builds the capacity of animal health practitioners in disease surveillance, outbreak investigation, and rapid response; informs livestock-keeping communities of disease risks; and converts research data into animal health interventions to be integrated into national control strategies. Claire holds a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine from Makerere University and is currently finalizing a Master of Science in Tropical Animal Health at the Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp and the University of Pretoria. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Claire plans to integrate the skills acquired into current work with livestock-keeping communities and to use her new knowledge to engage in multisectoral programming that benefits animals, humans, and the environment.



Yesutor Amedofu

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Yesutor Amedofu is an interventionist in autism and intellectual/developmental disabilities (AIDD). Currently, Yesutor is the founder and head of interventions, training, and outreach at the Autism and Intellectual Developmental Difference Interventions Network (AIDDIN), which promotes the inclusion and active participation of persons with AIDD in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa through individually tailored and community-based interventions. Through AIDDIN, Yesutor leads a multidisciplinary network of professionals who develop and implement holistic programs that address the biopsychosocial needs of people with AIDD while increasing awareness of AIDD in communities and training paraprofessionals. Yesutor has graduate degrees in Global Development Studies and Health Education. She is a West African Genetic Medicine Centre Fellow currently pursuing a Master of Science in Speech and Language Therapy. Yesutor is passionate about local community involvement in the design and delivery of interventions to support the inclusion and participation of persons with AIDD in Ghana and the subregion. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Yesutor wants to continue helping local communities and organizations leverage existing traditional structures to develop protocols for culturally appropriate interventions for persons with AIDD in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa.



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Atija Assane
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Atija Assane is a mentor and volunteer in social projects for girl empowerment. She has been working on social impact projects since her childhood and has participated in associations to fight poverty and to empower vulnerable groups in Mozambique. Atija has worked as the director of planning at the Institute of Social and Economic Studies, a non-governmental organization for Mozambican research, and as project manager with the Mozambican Economic and Social Forum to develop the Soico Foundation. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Atija intends to inspire girls to live their best lives through various projects.



Joaquina Caála
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Joaquina Suzeth Manuela Caála has more than nine years of teaching experience. She is currently a service provider at Anglobal, an Angolan energy and telecommunications company. Joaquina is also a private English teacher, English translator, and interpreter. She is the founder of the Project Between Girls, which helps young women understand their identity and purpose in life and enables them to better serve their community. Joaquina holds a master's degree in Law. She is committed to helping young women fulfill their dreams, develop their skills, and understand who they are. On completion of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Joaquina plans to open an English art school and a language translation company and to work more effectively with young women, offering them mentorship, empowerment, and support.



Willard Chandavengerwa
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Willard Chandavengerwa is a state veterinarian with 11 years of experience in mixed veterinary practice and a passion for rural development. He is the founder and co-director of the Animal2People Foundation, an organization that promotes sustainable livelihoods in two administrative districts in Zimbabwe, Chipinge and Murewa. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in International Development with a focus on Food and Nutrition Security at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. Working as a veterinarian for several years has left him skilled in empathetic communication. On completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he hopes to become a consultant and contribute greatly to research on food and nutrition security.



Jihane Cherif
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Jihane Cherif has more than three years of experience in accounting and finance. She is passionate about using her voice to participate in awareness campaigns on sexual and reproductive health and education issues. She is the 2020 national public speaking champion of a competition organized by JCI Guinea. Jihane is currently coproducing Let's Talk, a talk show that serves as a discussion platform for young people and raises awareness of social issues. She holds a master's degree in Business Administration. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Jihane intends to be very active in the social and political environment in Guinea and to engage in projects that aim to improve the Guinean educational system.



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Ezéchiél Douyon

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Ezéchiél Amagoron Douyon has 10 years of experience as a community development professional in Mali. He works as a safety and security risk management professional in the Sahel region in Mali and helps rural communities enhance the well-being of vulnerable children by facilitating and advocating for their rights to education, health, nutrition, and protection. Ezéchiél is also a co-founder of the Douyon School Complex and the founder of an education initiative that builds youth capacities in citizenship and social accountability. He has a bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Bamako, and has participated in training in project management, communications, and conflict resolution. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Ezéchiél plans to continue helping and advocating for vulnerable populations.



Celmar Fernandes

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Celmar Da Silva Fernandes is an English teacher and the mentor of the English Club at his school in São Tomé and Príncipe. He is the founder of School Social Action, a social program that helps empower disadvantaged students to succeed at school and life. Celmar always tries to uplift his community and often offers free English courses to members of his community. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Celmar plans to create a non-governmental organization to expand his work nationally and to make education a universal right in his country because he believes that education will be the missing piece in the development struggle.



Lusía Immanuel

Namibia

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Lusía Nelago Immanuel has 10 years of teaching experience in Namibia. She is a physics teacher at Noordgrens Secondary School and a renowned gender activist and motivational speaker. She runs an after-school girl's mentoring program, and is involved in collecting and distributing donations of any kind to destitute families and sanitary pads to young girls. She is committed to community service and to promoting gender equality through civic leadership. She holds an advanced diploma in Educational Management and Leadership and a basic education teacher's diploma in Mathematics and Integrated Natural Science. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Lusía plans to pursue a law career.



Samba Jaiteh

Gambia

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Samba Jaiteh has spent all his life as a disability rights advocate. With seven years of experience as a special needs teacher, he teaches the blind and the visually impaired in The Gambia to use information technology (including computers and smartphones) independently. He also volunteers as a radio presenter on disability rights advocacy, and is passionate about the rights of persons with disabilities. He holds a higher teachers' certificate from The Gambia College's School of Education. On completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he hopes to continue his advocacy and to encourage society and the government to engage persons with disabilities in all sectors of national development.



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Khanyisa Mapipa

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Khanyisa Mapipa is an admitted attorney of the High Court in South Africa. Khanyisa currently volunteers as the grade 8 grade head and legal advisor for a youth-run non-profit organization called Fun Learning for Youth (FLY). FLY provides free mathematics, science, and life skills tutoring, food, stationery, and textbooks to its 200+ high school learners in disadvantaged communities across South Africa. Since joining FLY in 2017, Khanyisa has dedicated her time and energy to the provision of quality education to the 40 children under her care. In addition to her role as grade head and legal advisor, she is also heavily involved in the organization's fundraising and recruitment initiatives. In 2020, Khanyisa began working at the South African Human Rights Commission as legal advisor to the entity's CEO. As part of her duties, she organized a number of virtual human rights advocacy events, including a children's webinar which offered high school learners a platform to express their concerns regarding their education under the government regulations put in place to help the country curb the spread of COVID-19. Khanyisa has a passion for children's rights, particularly the right to education. Upon completion of Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, she intends to continue positively influencing the lives of the children under her care and to share the new skills she acquires through the program with her colleagues at FLY.



Aaron Mapupa

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Aaron Mapupa has more than eight years of experience in agribusiness development and financial inclusion. Currently, Aaron is an agribusiness adviser consultant for TechnoServe Southern Africa Coffee Program, where he focuses on strengthening farmer-owned businesses along the coffee value chain. Aaron holds a master's degree in Agribusiness from Africa University, a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics and Management from Bindura University of Science Education, an executive certificate in Program and Project Monitoring and Evaluation from the University of Zimbabwe, and a certificate in Digital Money from the Digital Frontiers Institute. Aaron is committed to helping poor African communities move out of poverty and build sustainable incomes through commercialization of agriculture value chains. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Aaron plans to continue leading smallholder farming business development by promoting access to finance, market development, and partnership building for sustainable business links through development programs and private sector engagement.

Merina Masawa

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Merina Masawa is passionate about the well-being, growth, and success of women in society. She is the founder of Jamii Huru Initiative, a non-governmental organization that supports sexual and reproductive health for teenage girls and improves maternity health for women. Merina also volunteers with Petro & Sons Industries, working to improve the financial status of women with small businesses, particularly fish vendors. She holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Public Administration from the University of Dar es Salaam. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Merina plans to apply her new skills and network to expand the impact of her organization.



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Timothy Mweemba

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Timothy Kago Mweemba has more than eight years of experience designing, implementing, and evaluating community engagement, skills development, and advocacy programs. Timothy is a business development officer and project manager at Young Africa Botswana, a non-governmental organization that provides skills development in entrepreneurship and the creative industry. He is also the founder of Young Minds Africa, an initiative that provides youth with opportunities in education, entrepreneurship, and employment through various programs. Timothy is committed to improving productivity in Botswana's workforce, reshaping the economy by leveraging and enhancing the skills and talents of youth, and advocating for legislative changes and implementation. He is passionate about learning, exploring new possibilities, and creating opportunities for youth so that they can change the world. Timothy is a Young African Leaders Initiative Regional Leadership Center Alumnus. He holds degrees in Psychology and Economics. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he intends to scale up his interventions in Young Minds Africa and Young Africa Botswana to create better opportunities for young Africans.



Lindiwe Ngcobo

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Lindiwe Ngcobo is an economic researcher at the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent in South Africa. In September 2019, she presented a paper at the International Conference of the African Agricultural Economists Association in Abuja, Nigeria, and subsequently published the paper in the African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation, and Development. Lindiwe is active in her community and has founded the local chapter of Junior Chambers International, a worldwide leadership development organization that supports young people in learning the skills and characteristics to create positive change in society. She also enjoys volunteering and has helped military veterans with agricultural business plan lessons. Lindiwe holds a master's degree in Agricultural Economics and is pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Fort Hare. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Lindiwe plans to further her work in her community and field of study.

Hilary Okoeguale

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Hilary Okoeguale has more than 12 years of experience in the human rights and criminal justice sectors in Nigeria. Hilary has successfully defended and secured the release of at least 40 indigent inmates, sensitized over 1,000 secondary school students about their rights, and co-drafted Ondo state's Administration of Criminal Justice Law. Hilary holds a Ph.D. in Law and is currently director of the College of Law Clinic at Afe Babalola University, where he also lectures. Hilary enjoys contributing to Nigeria's sociopolitical development through his work promoting human rights. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, he plans to sensitize at least 5,000 students about their rights and engage the Ekiti state government in developing more productive ways to deliver high-quality education.



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**Soni Osazee
Omontese**
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Soni Osazee Omontese has eight years of experience in land, soil, and water management. Soni is an agricultural geologist for the International Economic Community of West African States Volunteer Program, where he conducts land suitability studies, soil mapping and testing, and irrigation water monitoring and assists the Land and Water Resources Management Division of Liberia's Ministry of Agriculture. Soni founded Save Our Nation Initiative Network to help farmers test soil fertility, and is also the co-founder and program manager at Cocopod Commodities, where he conducts soil tests and trains farmers on UTZ Good Agricultural Practices. Soni holds a doctoral degree in Geology from the University of Benin, a program diploma in Project Management from the International Business Management Institute, and certificates in Local Water Solutions and Integrated Planning from the United Nations Institute for Research and Training. Soni is committed to addressing Sustainable Development Goals: Poverty, hunger, health, and inequality, and to promoting youth civic participation in agricultural policy formulation. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Soni plans to provide farmers with the skills needed to cultivate the right crops for the right soils and to develop programs that will improve the sustainable use of resources.



Clarisa Regede
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Clarisa has worked on projects funded by the World Bank, United Nations, U.S. Agency for International Development, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. She is skilled in engaging governments, policymakers, marginalized groups, and traditional and religious leaders as stakeholders in policy and law processes. Clarisa previously handled grant implementation for Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. She was a Youth Fellow with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation and a youth adviser to the Global Fund's the Point Seven Constituency. Clarisa received a Master of Science in Public Policy and Management from the University of London. She is passionate about renewable and sustainable solutions to community problems and is particularly interested in solar-powered systems. As a Mandela Washington Fellow, she looks forward to learning more about renewable energy solutions and to sharing her experience in Zimbabwe.

Viola Sang has more than five years of experience in women's empowerment and peacebuilding projects in rural Kenya. Viola is a project coordinator at Keymar, a community-based organization that empowers women and girls who face violence, female genital mutilation, and extreme poverty. Through the Chama Initiative, she has helped women save money to secure loans for projects. Viola volunteers with the Kenya Ministry of Education by helping struggling primary school learners improve their English and Kiswahili skills. She has also worked as a brand activator for M-Kopa Kenya and as a constituency monitor during the Kenyan general election. Viola is committed to elevating the voices of girls and women by working with like-minded people to eliminate illiteracy, poverty, and violence. Viola has a bachelor's degree in Disaster Mitigation and Sustainable Development from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and is pursuing a master's degree in Public Health from Moi University. On completion of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Viola plans to continue her work in gender equity with a focus on Chama advocacy and capacity-building to improve the lives of the rural poor. She hopes to see Africa achieve gender equity and social inclusion.

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Jean Paul Seka

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Jean Paul Seka has more than five years of experience as a grant officer with the National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda. In this role, he focuses on developing, managing, and delivering grant programs. Jean Paul also enjoys volunteering with the Paralympic Committee of Rwanda. He speaks Kinyarwanda, English, and French, as well as some Italian and German. He has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a specialty in Finance from the former National University of Rwanda. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Jean Paul plans to help all people enjoy equal rights and opportunities.



Diana Sididi

Mali

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Diana Sididi is an advocate for diversity and inclusion. Following an uprising against her ethnicity in Mali in 2012, she became a refugee along with her whole family, and has lived with a disability since childhood. Diana used this experience to create the first vlog in Mali that promotes inclusion and diversity by giving voice to marginalized people and minorities. Passionate about communication, Diana is also a communications consultant for the United Nations. She is currently writing her first book on her refugee story, and wants to make Derhane part of the solution to bring peace to her country, as she strongly believes that peace will only occur through the acceptance of the other. Upon completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Diana plans to apply her new skills and network to continue advocating for an inclusive and effective peacebuilding process.



Simon Wanjiru

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Simon Wanjiru has more than five years of experience in community development. Currently, he is the founder and senior project manager at Leap Empowerment Development Initiative Kenya, a grassroots community-based organization focusing on interventions in food and nutrition security; community health and sanitation; empowerment of youth, women, and children; business training (including agribusiness); and environmental conservation. Simon also has more than two years of experience as a policy and advocacy officer focusing on the development, review, and implementation of agricultural policies, regulations, and standards. He has been involved in volunteer work for more than 10 years in the areas of women's and girls' empowerment, environmental conservation, and sports. Simon has a bachelor's degree in Community Resource Management and Extension. He is committed to representing the voice of the voiceless in agriculture policy and partnering with communities to help them lead highly dignified lives. On completion of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Simon plans to continue helping communities, especially those in marginalized areas, achieve food and nutrition security; helping women and girls access healthcare; educating farmers on the policymaking process, and expanding his organization into a national non-governmental organization so its solutions can reach more people.



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**Marie Paule
Yao Edia**
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Marie Paule Yao Edia is an advocacy officer who pushes for more accountability in Côte d'Ivoire. Currently, she works to present the collective voice of women in the country and to ensure their participation in the decision-making process. Marie Paule is deeply concerned about the lack of community involvement in the governance system, and aims to empower communities through information. After completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, she would like to become part of the decision-making process in her country at either the local or national level.



Valentin Zanmenou
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Valentin Zanmenou has more than five years of experience in English language training and youth empowerment. Valentin is the co-founder and current national coordinator of BeninBee, the national spelling bee organization in Benin, where he works to improve young students' literacy and digital, communications, and leadership skills through spelling bee competitions. He also volunteers at the Benin National Teachers of English Association, where he works to improve teachers' digital skills. He holds a master's degree in English from the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin, and is committed to helping students develop the skills they need to thrive in their community. On completion of the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, Valentin plans to provide more educational opportunities to marginalized students, students with disabilities, and people living in remote areas.



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