

# AlumniNews

## Africa Newsletter

## Levelling the playing field: Social inclusion in Australia Awards

As 2015 approaches and progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is measured, the importance of inclusive development is in the spotlight.

**Writers:** Fiona Pakoa and Nancy Biwott  
**Photography:** The University of Newcastle

\* Ibrahim Sama of Nigeria, receiving his Master of Special Education certificate from Professor Caroline McMillen, Vice Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, during the University's International Farewell Ceremony held on 1 November 2013.

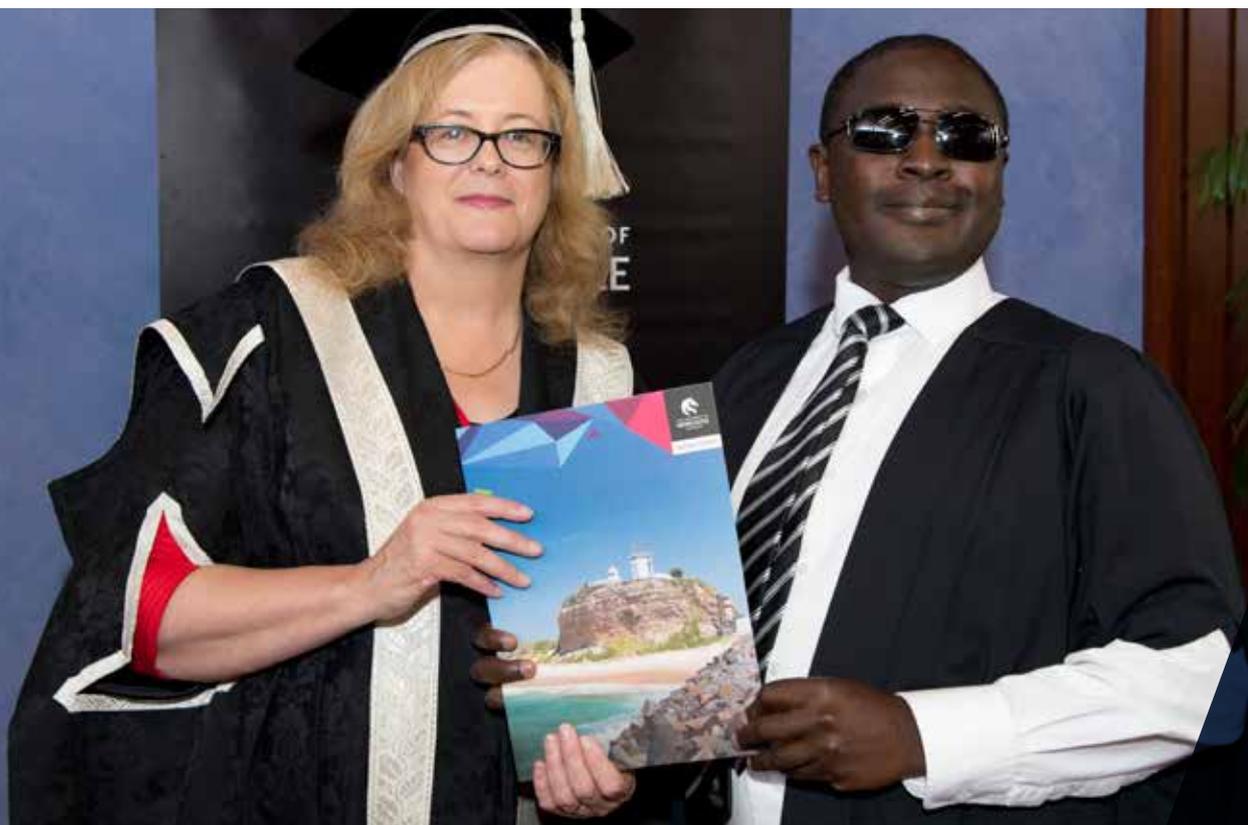
People with disability, women and persons living with HIV are among the developing world's most disadvantaged groups; hence the Australian government's strong commitment to equitable development across all of its aid programs.

Australia Awards holds that social inclusion is not only vital for achieving positive development changes, but is also a human rights concern. Australia Awards (Africa) focuses on three specific areas for strategic social inclusion: gender, disability and HIV.

"While it is important for political will and commitment to be in existence in order for inclusive development to happen, there needs to be a strong drive from the partnering development agency and civil society to ensure that [the] political commitment is translated into a change in peoples' lives in real terms," noted Sebenzile Matsebula, a disability rights advocate, and once the Director of the Office on the Status of Disabled Persons in the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, at the inaugural Australia Awards (Africa) Disability Inclusion Roundtable in Pretoria in June 2013.

Australia Awards has taken up this challenge and has implemented social inclusion holistically throughout all aspects of the Awards cycle.

*Continued on page 2*



*Continued from page 1*

In promoting equity, Australia Awards facilitates women's participation at every stage of the program cycle, by supporting them to overcome barriers which their male counterparts may not face.

Promotion of Australia Awards attracts eligible women applicants through African women's organisations and networks. The Australia Awards African Women in Leadership Network, launched in March 2013, offers female Alumni the opportunity to establish professional networks, promote the Awards to other women in their home countries, and provide support to female recipients as they embark on their Awards. Partly as an outcome of this initiative, 53% of Australia Awards Masters-level Scholarships for 2014 have been given to women.

The availability of opportunities for people with disability is an important element of Australia's development cooperation. Since 2011, 55 people with disability have undertaken Awards, and the completion success rate has been 100% to date. A dedicated Disability Equity and Access Fund has been instrumental to supporting recipients with disability to participate equitably in the program. The provision of assistive devices and specialised technology such as hearing aids, computer software and wheelchairs has helped to decrease barriers to participation. It has facilitated a number of people with disability to acquire knowledge and skills required to make sound contributions to their countries' development on their return in line with opportunities available to the broader population.

## Australia Awards supporting Australia's HIV engagement in Africa

**Writers:** Sally Foreman and Stephanie Carter  
**Photography:** The University of Sydney

The Australian Government is an active participant in the global effort to reverse the spread of HIV by 2015 and promote and strengthen HIV prevention and response.

With the launch of its international development strategy for HIV in 2009, Australia has provided funding for major bilateral, regional and multilateral HIV programs including \$25.5 million to UNAIDS. In Africa, Australia partners with the Global Fund and UNAIDS to sustain efforts in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6. This goal aims to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV by 2015. Recognising that HIV is a high priority health issue across Africa, Australia plays a strategic global leadership role through its position on the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, its partnership agreement with UNAIDS, and the appointment of an HIV Ambassador.

Australia's commitment to HIV engagement in Africa is also reflected in Australia Awards (Africa). Masters-level Scholarships have been offered in subject areas that firmly align with the Australian aid program's sectoral priorities. This has included a focus on the health sector, with partner tertiary institutions in Australia offering recipients course options in public health.

In the case of the University of Sydney, a unique Masters course in HIV, STIs and Sexual Health has drawn on an extensive network of content experts to develop Australia Awards recipients' skills in HIV/STI prevention and management in a multidisciplinary learning environment.

The University of Sydney also manages DFAT-funded Australia Awards Fellowships specifically related to HIV/AIDS. Between 2010 and 2014, partner organisations across seven African countries - Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe - nominated approximately 50 mid-career professionals to undertake HIV-related training at the University of Sydney. This year, 14 Fellows are in residence. Specific HIV/AIDS activities carried out by the Fellows include observation of clinical practice, research training, conference attendance, and leadership

Mr Ibrahim Sama, an Alumnus from Nigeria with a visual impairment, who undertook a Master of Special Education at the University of Newcastle, reflects, "I received the support I needed, and the Award boosted my technical know-how and experience and expanded my network as I was able to connect with senior Australian government officials and professionals".

Award recipients who have disclosed being HIV-positive are provided with specialist advice to enable them to manage their condition and undertake their studies without fear of discrimination. Each situation is different, and support is focused on individual needs.

and governance training. Strong African partnerships are also a feature of the program, with the department working closely with Zambia and Tanzania to fight HIV seroprevalence rates, which are at 12.5% and 5.6% respectively. The program is a clear reflection of Australia's strong support for bilateral and multilateral HIV initiatives throughout Africa, including efforts to help build African leaders in the HIV health sector.

Dr Joel Negin, Director of Research at the University of Sydney's School of Public Health, speaking about his experiences working with Australia Awards (Africa) scholars undertaking the Masters of HIV, described the impact experienced by Australia Awards Alumni and efforts sustained by the University of Sydney to further enhance Australia's support for HIV initiatives in Africa.

"We are creating a community of consensus, which is highly important in the HIV/AIDS community. We're staying in touch with students from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana, helping them and providing advice. The people that we're speaking to are really on the front line back home. These are the sorts of people that are being trained in this program," he says.

In 2013 alone, 48 Australia Awards (Africa) Alumni graduated with a Masters degree in the field of Health. Of those, 11 stated that once they have returned home, their objective is to address HIV/AIDS related concerns. Their Work Plans on Return have indicated that these Alumni are seeking to improve the capacity of health workers and hospitals; increase awareness and strengthen community response; reduce HIV/AIDS and associated adverse effects; increase interventions for at-risk populations; and improve access to services and the monitoring of people living with the condition.

The current policy environment in Africa is evolving, and Australia Awards Alumni are challenged to consider inclusive development and to champion progress in the field within their work and community engagement.

Australia is looked upon as a global leader in disability inclusion. A highlight for Australia Awards has been being awarded a 2013 Disability-Inclusive Development Award from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for pioneering work in disability inclusion.



\* / Dr Joel Negin (centre), Director of Research at the University of Sydney's School of Public Health

\* / Emmanuel Kanjunju of Malawi, Master of International Public Health, The University of Sydney

# Alumni putting their skills to good use: Improving the lives of HIV infected people

**Writers:** Sally Foreman and Stephanie Carter  
**Photography:** GRM International

Joy Lubinda Chisompola from Zambia and Anne Wangechi Mwangi from Kenya are prime examples of how an Australia Award can help African health professionals fight HIV/AIDS through policy amendments and changes to community practices.

While Joy studied a Master of Public Health at Queensland University of Technology, Anne is a graduate of the University of Sydney's specialised Master of HIV, STIs and Sexual Health.

Upon returning home to Kenya, Anne was appointed to the position of Paediatric HIV Programme Manager in the Kenyan National AIDS and STIs Control Programme (NASCOP), an organisation founded in 1987 and dedicated to HIV/AIDS program coordination throughout Kenya.

Anne's focus on the inclusion of children in HIV/AIDS response planning has seen her take on many health challenges in Kenya, including the lack of HIV testing for children. In order to effectively include children and adolescents in national HIV/AIDS programming, Anne is supporting 50 facilities to become best practice centres in paediatric and adolescent HIV care, treatment and support, and assisting health workers in setting up adolescent-friendly clinics and services.

Anne is also working on policy and program design, aiming to design a new and more inclusive national HIV training curriculum. Her knowledge of the HIV and health sector has seen her represent Kenya at conferences in Botswana and the United States.

In Zambia, Joy is working to combat HIV/AIDS through her work on changing policy and practice for HIV widows. Highlighting the inclusion issues they confront, Joy explains that, "HIV widows are often faced with the illegal acquisition of property without compensation." After graduating from her Masters course in Australia, Joy conducted a study which identified the regulations

and laws relating to property rights in Zambia, examining issues of law, social inclusion, and health. She hopes that this will improve practices and HIV policy in the country.

Joy also works as an Aftercare Specialist, working with vulnerable HIV widows to encourage life skills training and encouraging them to undergo preventative HIV testing. In these activities, she partners with a local organisation, the "Circle of Hope" clinic, which provides voluntary counselling and free antiretroviral therapy for HIV-affected individuals and families in the country.



★ / Far Left: Joy Lubinda Chisompola of Zambia, Master of Public Health, Queensland University of Technology

★ / Left: Dr Anne Mangepchi Mwangi of Kenya, Master of Medicine (Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV), The University of Sydney

# Women empowering women in Nigeria

**Writer:** Adriana Abreu-Combs  
**Photography:** GRM International

By creating opportunities for women to drive change in their community, Eni Ayeni is a voice and force for women's empowerment in Nigeria.



\* / Harvest of maize by Sidikat Oyesoro, one of the women beneficiaries in Isale-Osun community

In 2009, Eni founded a non-governmental organisation, Community Action Against Injustice (CAAI). Through CAAI, she champions initiatives that promote human rights and provide socio-economic support to women, children and people with disabilities.

In 2012, she was the recipient of an Australia Awards Africa Fellowship to study Organisational and Employee Development at the University of Queensland.

After her return to Nigeria, Eni's organisation was awarded an Australia Awards Small Grant of AUD 8,000 to implement a micro-finance project targeting disadvantaged women – in particular widows – in three poor communities of Osun State.

This 10-month project built the capacity of 65 women in entrepreneurial skills for effective business management, thereby assisting small business owners to improve income generation. The project also provided interest-free micro-credit through a revolving fund to 25 women to establish and consolidate viable income generating businesses for self-reliance. Seven of the 25 beneficiaries of the micro-loans established new businesses, while others strengthened or expanded existing ventures. High re-payment rates of 95% within the group have put them in a good position to make available the funds a second time to benefit other women.

The positive outcomes of the project are being felt by those who directly benefited from the intervention: "After the training, I can now manage my proceeds and my personal money. In fact, I got the idea on how to invest money in maize farming after the training, which has yielded tremendous results," says Sidikat Oyesoro, a small business owner.

With the business training provided to the beneficiaries and the current high re-payment rates, the project will continue to be sustainable and benefit more women.

\* / Eni Ayeni, Australia Awards Alumna and founder of Community Action Against Injustice (CAAI)



# Helping women prepare for study in Australia

**Writer:** Temana Mabula  
**Photography:** GRM International

Travelling to a new country can be quite stressful, particularly if you are going to spend up to two years of your life there, leaving behind family and all that is familiar.

★ / Gugu Mona, one of the 2014 Awardees from South Africa, who received assistance from the Australia Awards African Women in Leadership Network



Prior to embarking on their journey to Australia, recipients of an Australia Award worry about a range of issues – from things to pack, finding accommodation, dress code, cultural differences to who will receive them upon arrival or how they will get around in Australia – the list is endless. Fortunately, these worries were mitigated for some female recipients who departed for Australia in 2014, having been taken under the wing of Australia Awards African Women in Leadership (AWIL) Network members.

AWIL was established to promote Australia Awards to potential female applicants in Africa and support scholarship recipients going to Australia. Members of the Network are also encouraged to engage in and provide leadership for gender and development initiatives in their home countries.

Nompumelelo Radebe, an active member of AWIL and an Alumni Ambassador for Australia Awards in South Africa, has taken up the role of providing support, advice and mentorship to both existing and new female recipients.

“I had numerous engagements with Australia Awards recipients for the 2014 intake round via telephone, email and in person. Generally, they were all pleased to hear from someone who had been through this experience before,” says Nompumelelo.

Nompumelelo recalls how, in liaison with the South African Coordinating Authority, she addressed some of the challenges that the recipients faced.

“Working together with the South African Coordinating Authority, we found that some recipients had sent through their study leave applications to their line managers, but these had not been escalated to the relevant authorities for sign off. We then set up a meeting with the recipients in question to establish how the office of the Coordinating Authority could be of assistance. With this intervention, the recipients were granted study leave and were able to mobilise to Australia,” she explains.

Gugu Mona is a recipient who benefitted from Nompumelelo’s support and advice. Gugu describes the excitement she felt when Nompumelelo contacted her:

“I was very excited to receive my first email from Nompumelelo. She introduced herself to me and other recipients and explained her role and responsibilities towards us. She provided us with information and answered most of the questions we had regarding our travel and studies in Australia,” says Gugu.

“Fortunately, this happened at a time when I was getting more and more nervous about leaving my country to go to Australia for the first time. Her patience in answering my queries and her ability to do so with understanding of the mixed feelings that I was going through, assisted in calming my nerves. This enabled me to feel more prepared to commence my studies in Australia.”

Elizabeth Mueni Kimulu is another active member of the Women's Network based in Kenya. Like Nompumelelo, Elizabeth prides herself on having provided valuable information and orientation to recipients mobilising to Australia.

"I prepared a presentation, from a personal perspective, which included information about studying and living in Australia, and sent it to the award recipients via email," says Elizabeth.

Elizabeth not only assists departing scholars, but also promotes Australia Awards at her work place, and encourages female colleagues to apply.

"Elizabeth directed me to the Australia Awards website and encouraged me to apply for a Fellowship in Organisational and Employee Development, since the organisation we work for is a policy advisory body. I applied for the course and was selected," says Sarah Yamo.

"Elizabeth always provided me with support, guiding me through the entire process until I finally departed to Australia," she continues.

Both Gugu and Sarah agree that the support they received from Nompumelelo and Elizabeth was very helpful, complementing the information they received during the Pre-departure Briefings (PDBs).

To further assist the recipients with their preparation for travel to Australia, members of the Women's Network put them in touch with Alumni who had either studied at the same university they were planning to attend, had lived in the same city in Australia, or had studied the same course.

"After the PDBs, Nompumelelo connected me with an Australia Awards scholar at the University of Newcastle. This enabled me to make prior arrangements for accommodation. It also enabled me to ask specific questions directly from someone who had studied at my university," says Gugu.

According to Sarah, "It was good to read and understand the information received from the PDBs, but it was even better to receive firsthand information from a recipient."

Nompumelelo and Elizabeth agree that, having been in the same 'shoes' as Gugu and Sarah, they wish they had themselves benefitted from the same support they are providing.

"As women, we have to do a whole lot more planning than our male counterparts. Mothers taking children to Australia, for example, need to consider nursing arrangements if they have a baby or day care if their child is older," says Nompumelelo.

\* / Elizabeth Mueni Kimulu (right), member of Australia Awards African Women in Leadership Network and Sarah Yamo (left), Australia Awards Alumna



# From pain to triumph: Foundation for Women Affected by Conflicts proves a cathartic endeavour for war survivor

**Writer:** Abi Badejo

**Photography:** Grace Arach

Grace Arach has lived a life few people can imagine. A child of war-torn Northern Uganda, she grew up impoverished, with her future prospects bleak.

★ / Grace Arach, Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Women Affected by Conflicts (FOWAC)



Fast forward to the present day, and Grace is the Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Women Affected by Conflicts (FOWAC), an NGO dedicated to resettling women affected by conflict in Northern Uganda.

Grace, a recipient of an Australia Award Scholarship to study for a Master of International Social Development at the University of New South Wales, is also the co-producer of a documentary called *Lost Children*, which won a UNICEF award in Germany in 2006.

“My experience growing up in a war zone is what really motivated me to set up this Foundation,” she says.

“The Foundation has helped wipe away my tears and war wounds. I can relate to these women and girls because I have been there. I was one of them.”

Established in 2007, the Foundation initially focused on reintegrating returnee mothers who were abducted by rebels, but has now expanded to support vulnerable girls and women between the ages of 14 and 30 who have suffered the extreme effects of war.

“We now focus on vulnerability level when selecting our beneficiaries, who are mainly in the 14-24 age group, as these are the most neglected members of the community,” says Grace.

“They are more vulnerable, as there is no system in place dedicated to providing them with adequate protection. They cannot sit in meetings with adults for fear of being stigmatised on account of their experiences as well as their inability to communicate on the same level with adults.”

Grace explains that the core programs of the Foundation centre on three thematic areas, namely livelihood, psycho-social support for victims of war, and advocacy so that those affected by conflict can become self-reliant and hopeful and regain their dignity.

“With respect to livelihood, our goal is to empower women through agricultural activity and provide vocational skills training for young girls who did not get a chance to go to school and for those who can’t go back to school because they feel too old to return to formal education.”

“In terms of psychosocial support for the victims, we primarily provide counselling and guidance. We also provide shelter to settle children and homeless households that cannot go back to their village,” she explains.

Grace adds that young girls often return from captivity with health complications, including physical injuries from gunshots and reproductive health problems. On return to their community, these girls are confronted with sexual violence, abuse and exclusion from access to family resources. They are unable to seek legal advice because they are not financially equipped to do so. Thus, the Foundation provides legal referrals for vulnerable young women and girls who are the subject of gender and community bias and land ownership disputes.

“Through our advocacy work, we facilitate community and family discussions and dialogue that enable acceptance of victims and their children born in captivity in their home of origin. We also build the capacity of local authorities and volunteer counsellors to be able to support vulnerable women.”

Grace acknowledges that there are structural challenges to consider, including operating in an environment that has been ravaged by war, high poverty levels, human rights abuses, violence against women and inadequate infrastructure, as well as managing the expectations of those that are being assisted.

Despite these challenges, Grace is not daunted. “Uganda is one of the countries in Africa with the best policies, but putting the policies

into practice so that they work for the poor is a challenge. The situation cannot be changed in a day, but we will continue to effect changes at the grassroots level,” she says.

Grace’s self-assurance, she admits, can be attributed to her time in Australia.

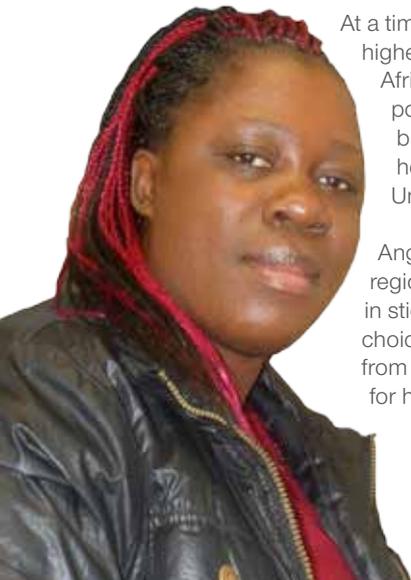
“My studies in Australia helped develop my thinking,” says Grace. “I used to look at the situation within our community and couldn’t understand how things had become the way they are. Now I think broader, and I’m able to problem-solve on a wider scale.”

Email [fowacwomen@gmail.com](mailto:fowacwomen@gmail.com); Website: [www.fowac.org](http://www.fowac.org)

# On a mission to break stigma of mental illness in Liberia

**Writer:** Abi Badejo  
**Photography:** Angie Tarr

On her journey through postgraduate studies in Australia, Angie Tarr of Liberia took the road less travelled.



At a time when her peers were opting for higher profile programs pertinent to African development, such as public policy and public health, Angie broke the mould by undertaking her Masters in Mental Health at the University of Queensland.

Angie’s choice of study is a rarity in a region where mental health is cloaked in stigma and prejudice. She says her choice to study mental health emerged from a personal conviction to do more for her people.

“What really encouraged me to do mental health is that Liberia has been a war-torn country for the past 14 years,” explains Angie.

“We’ve had lots of post-traumatic stress disorder, lots of depression and other kinds of mental health issues. Seeing my Liberian brothers and sisters struggling with mental illness and no one wanting to care for them, I decided to be there for them.”

“We all know that health is a major priority of the Millennium Development Goals, and mental health in Liberia is an important aspect of that, and yet it seems to have been forgotten by health professionals,” adds Angie.

As Angie took it upon herself to lead by example, her decision to study mental health was predictably met with scepticism from friends at home.

It wasn’t an easy journey, admits Angie, who also confesses with an ironic chuckle that at certain points during her studies she fell prey to stress as her course workload became more intense and time-consuming. Fortunately, she was armed with the right coping mechanisms.

“My mission now is to educate people at home about mental health. I want to break the stigma and help people understand that it can happen to you, your brother, your family.”

“Mental illness doesn’t discriminate; just as you can be physically ill and have the support of your family, why can’t we develop the same attitude towards someone with depression or other mental health issues? Why should these people be neglected and ostracised?”

“My biggest challenge and the question I keep asking myself is: How am I going to educate people and change such deep-rooted beliefs about mental health?”

\* / Angie Tarr, Master of Mental Health, University of Queensland

# Australian Government promotes social inclusion, increases opportunities for persons with disability

**Writers:** Adriana Abreu-Combs & Nancy Biwott  
**Photography:** GRM International

Ensuring individuals have a fair go at reaching their full potential is at the core of the Australian Government's strategy to promote development in Africa through education and training. This strategy includes support for Australia Awards recipients with a disability.

Measuring the effect of such policy goes beyond the support provided for access and completion to the actual impact such opportunities have on the lives of scholarship recipients and their country through the application of Award-gained skills on return.

George Ombua from Kenya and Mike Chivumo from Zambia, both living with a disability, are good examples of such impact.

George, who walks with the aid of a prosthetic limb, completed an Australia Awards Africa Fellowship in Organisational and Employee Development in 2012. Soon after completing his Fellowship, George led a team in developing a Systems Management Audit Manual, to document audit processes at the Efficiency Monitoring Unit within the Office of the Prime Minister in Kenya. This manual serves as a reference and training tool for 42 Efficiency Monitoring Officers, by harmonizing audit processes and by clearly articulating the responsibilities of the various cadres. To develop the manual, George applied the participatory strategies he learned on the Fellowship, thus ensuring buy-in at all levels and broad-based support for the initiative.

"The Fellowship training gave me the confidence and knowledge to spearhead such an undertaking," explains George.



★ / Mike Chivumo of Zambia, Australia Awards Africa Fellowship in Trade Policy, Analysis and Negotiation

Four months after his return, George was seconded to the Nairobi City Council as an Information, Communication and Telecommunications (ICT) Manager. In this role, George is in charge of a team whose role entails setting up ICT systems based on best practices to ensure that both human and physical resources run smoothly.

Further south, Mike Chivumo, who lives with a mobility disability, completed an Australia Awards Africa Fellowship in Trade Policy, Analysis and Negotiation in 2012. Mike works as an Economist based at the Department of Planning and Information in Zambia's Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.

With the enhanced knowledge and skills in trade obtained on the Fellowship course, Mike has effectively contributed to the development of the commerce and trade chapter for Zambia's Sixth National Development Plan, which stipulates the programs and activities the government will undertake for the next five years. In November 2012, he was involved in trade negotiations with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in meetings that took place in Johannesburg, South Africa.

"The course helped me broaden my understanding of trade policy. I was able to utilise the skills I learned to formulate good project proposals and trade concepts. I hope to use the skills acquired to eventually influence trade policy in a direction that benefits not only Zambians, but the rest of the African community," adds Mike.

# Australia Awards wins Disability-Inclusive Development Award

**Photography:** Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australia Awards has been recognised in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) inaugural Disability-Inclusive Development Awards.

The Africa program was commended, on 2 December 2013, for the innovation that is evident throughout its operations. This includes promotion through Disabled People's Organisations, inclusive practices and the use of accessible venues, and the management of a Disability Access and Equity Fund to encourage participation.

"The involvement of people with disability is evident throughout, including the hosting of an annual roundtable," said Graeme Innes, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, speaking at a networking event held in Canberra to commemorate International Day of People with Disability.

Australia Awards aims to ensure that people with a disability are given fair and equal opportunity to compete for and obtain an Award. Applications from people with disability are strongly encouraged and mechanisms are in place to support applicants and Awardees requiring specific assistance.

\* / Graeme Innes (left), Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission presents award to the Africa Scholarships Program



# Promoting inclusive education in Malawi

**Writer:** Adriana Abreu-Combs

**Photography:** Betty Chipiliro Moses



*Australia Awards Alumna Betty Chipiliro Moses has played a catalytic role in the expansion of primary-level inclusive education in Malawi's Chiradzulu district.*

"I am thankful to the Australian Government for the scholarship. My achievements in the field of inclusive education have been possible because of the skills and knowledge I attained in my studies in Australia under Australia Awards," says Betty.

Among efforts to ensure access to quality primary-level education for all children in Malawi are initiatives aimed at ensuring children with disabilities are given a fair chance to achieve their full potential. Inclusive education ensures children with special educational needs and disabilities are appropriately attended to and integrated into mainstream schools.

Betty completed a Master of Special Education at the University of Newcastle in 2010. She had been a mainstream teacher trainer for four years before going to Australia, and on return her dream came true when she was posted to Montfort Special Needs Education College, where she has become a highly respected lecturer in Special Education.

The college seeks to promote accessible, equitable and relevant education to all learners with special educational needs in Malawi. Training primary-level teachers in inclusive education is one way in which the college seeks to achieve these goals. Catalysing an inclusive education project being implemented by the college, Betty requested and was awarded seed funding of over AUD 9,000 from the Australia Awards Small Grants Scheme to expand the initiative to the entire district in 2013.

The project provided specialised materials and trained mainstream primary school teachers on inclusive education to develop their skills in managing and teaching learners with special education needs alongside other children.

★ / Betty Chipiliro Moses, Master of Special Education,  
The University of Newcastle

"I am going to enrol learners with any kind of disabilities as this training has really given us the skills to teach them," says Emelina Perete, a teacher who benefited directly from the inclusive education training provided by the project.

"I thank the college for documenting inclusive education strategies into a booklet and for training teachers in its use; the booklet is very handy to teachers," adds James Khuku, a head teacher in a participating school.

The project benefited a large number of teachers in the district. Through them, the children attending the schools at which these teachers teach. A total of 500 primary school teachers from 87

schools were trained, 750 inclusive education booklets have been printed and distributed, with 450 made available to teachers and the remainder going to Zone Educational Officers and district education offices. Braille booklets and posters were also produced and distributed.

The college has received requests from other districts interested in the project and is seeking additional funding to expand the effort.

\* / Teachers benefiting from inclusive education training at Chiradzulu district in Malawi



# Coming to terms with hearing impairment as an adult, Australia Awards scholar proves disability no obstacle to success

**Writers:** Abi Badejo and Nancy Biwott  
**Photography:** The University of Sydney

★ / Maureen Udodeme, Master of International Public Health,  
The University of Sydney





# Events: Opening of Applications

**Applications for Scholarships to study in Australia in 2016  
open on 1 September 2014.**

**Applications for Fellowships for 2015  
open on 1 September 2014.**

**From a recluse to guest speaker at a disability inclusion event attended by Members of Parliament in Canberra, Dr Maureen Udodeme has come a long way since developing a hearing impairment in her final years of medical school in Nigeria.**

Speaking to the Australian news channel ABC's *Ramp Up*, Maureen says adjusting to the sudden change in her circumstances was challenging in more ways than one. She not only had to come to terms with losing her hearing as an adult, but has also had to deal with the psychological toll it took on her.

"My initial response to the new problem was withdrawal from public life, group discussions with friends were a problem," recalls Maureen.

"You have to live with the fact that some activities you enjoyed in the absence of an impairment would now become difficult."

"In my last years in medical school there were just two of us with a hearing impairment and there were no assistive technologies. Teachers did most of their teaching by talking. The university did not have a disability services section and we had zero support." In spite of these hurdles, a determined Maureen graduated as a medical doctor in Nigeria and later received an Australia Awards Scholarship to undertake a Master of International Public Health at the University of Sydney.

Maureen admits securing work in the saturated Nigerian job market after medical school is no easy feat, more so for someone with a hearing impairment, but she was undeterred.

"I was turned down several times but I did not give up," she explains.

Maureen's perseverance was rewarded when she landed a job as a specialist trainee in Paediatrics at the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at Delta State University Teaching Hospital, although the job was not without its challenges.

"It was difficult initially getting on well with colleagues because most haven't lived with deaf people and there was a communication problem, but now we are like a family," says Maureen.

"I have learnt new ways to communicate better, using sign language and social media, and the deaf community have been quite helpful so I am happier now."

# Australia Awards' approach to HIV

**Writer:** Fiona Pakoa and Nancy Biwott

With an estimated one in every 20 adults in Sub-Saharan Africa living with HIV, it is critical that development programs in Africa embed consideration of HIV in all their processes. Australia Awards supports the principle of equal opportunity for all applicants and recipients and accordingly does not discriminate against HIV-positive applicants.

Since 2011, six recipients have disclosed their HIV-positive status and have successfully mobilised to Australia to undertake their studies. Australia Awards strongly encourages recipients to disclose in order that appropriate support measures can be put in place. Confidentiality is strictly observed.

Upon disclosure, a range of support is available to recipients, from advice on travelling and treatment management in Australia to linkages with counselling services (if requested) and to support networks in Australia.

- **Treatment in Australia for HIV-positive recipients**  
The standard Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) provided for recipients while they are on award does not cover pre-existing conditions. Those with HIV are considered as having a pre-existing medical condition. In most cases, there is a one year waiting period during which OSHC withholds benefits related to pre-existing conditions.

Recipients who disclose their HIV-positive status are encouraged and supported to identify a registered doctor in Australia who is trained in HIV management and care. The National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) and the Australian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) are able to assist in providing a list of trained prescribers.

- **Medication in Australia**  
Recipients who are on Antiretroviral Therapy are advised to travel with a doctor's prescription and a three-month supply of medication initially. Thereafter, further supplies can be imported under the Personal Importation Scheme<sup>1</sup>, either from the home country or through a reputable company like AIDS Drugs Online ([www.aidsdrugsonline.net](http://www.aidsdrugsonline.net)).

- **HIV and the law**  
The Australian law protects HIV-positive individuals from discrimination. At the same time, it is considered a criminal offence if an HIV-positive individual negligently or deliberately transmits HIV or exposes other people to HIV.
- **Support networks in Australia**  
NAPWHA is the main non-governmental organisation representing people living with HIV/AIDS in Australia. NAPWHA has several member organisations with offices in different states ([www.napwa.org.au/members](http://www.napwa.org.au/members)). The organisation offers support in terms of referrals to and examination by specialists, counselling services, and advice on affordable pharmacies among other services.

## Common concerns expressed by applicants who have disclosed their HIV-positive status

- i. Confidentiality: applicants have indicated that disclosing their condition to Australia Awards staff was a big step. Their main fear is of stigma and discrimination, if their status is widely shared. Applicants and recipients are informed of the program's confidentiality policy, which does not allow personal information of any kind to be shared without consent. With the recipients written consent, this information can only be shared on a 'need to know' basis with relevant individuals to help develop a support plan for living in Australia.
- ii. The requirement for all recipients to undertake medical examinations by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) has caused some recipients to be concerned about the possibility of discrimination once their status is known. However, visa applicants with HIV are assessed in the same manner as other applicants and can visit Australia. The decision to issue a visa is at DIBP's discretion and is based on overall health status rather than the HIV status alone.

At the heart of the Australian Government's commitment to equitable access is the understanding that recipients, regardless of their medical status, are expected to take personal responsibility for the management of their health. For those who are HIV-positive, appropriate behaviour and proper management of the condition will ensure a healthy and normal life while studying on their Australia Award.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.tga.gov.au/consumers/personal-importation-scheme.htm#.UudZ9tLfQM8>

## Contact Details

[enquiries@australiaawardsafrica.org](mailto:enquiries@australiaawardsafrica.org) | [www.australiaawardsafrica.org](http://www.australiaawardsafrica.org)

