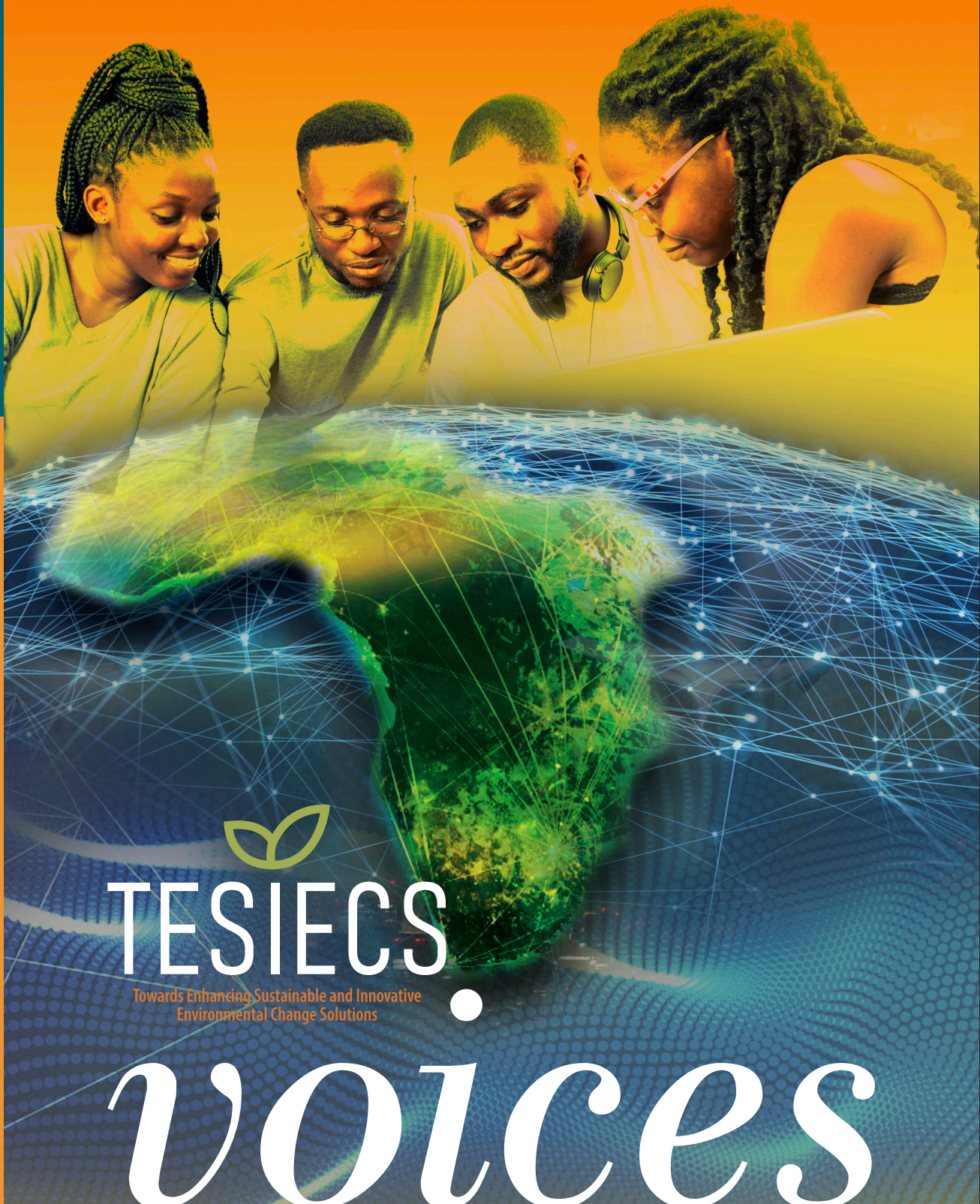


NEWSLETTER EDITION 1
JANUARY 2026




TESIECS

Towards Enhancing Sustainable and Innovative
Environmental Change Solutions

voices

**BUILDING SCHOLARS THROUGH THE
INTRA-AFRICA MOBILITY SCHEME**



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Project Summary

Towards Enhancing Sustainable and Innovative Environmental Change Solutions

Acronym	TESIECS
Project ID	101144292
Period	01/01/2024 - 31/12/2027
Grant Amount	1,797,180 euros
Summary	Climate change adaptation, mitigation, assessment, and solutions-seeking are the pivot core of TESIECS. The project trains students to become future experts with specialised knowledge, critical skills, and know-how in addressing the specifics of climate change mitigation in the various countries of the region. This is done by funding environmental research at Master's and PhD level (Degree Seeking and Credit Seeking), placing students in traineeships (including undergraduate students), and encouraging skills sharing among staff members (Support staff and Academic staff) through short-term staff mobilities.
Number of granted scholarships (2024/25)	<p>Master students: 21 1 credit seeking, 20 degrees seeking</p> <p>Doctoral candidates: 5 1 credit seeking, 4 degrees seeking</p> <p>TOTAL: 26</p>
Thematic areas	Biodiversity and Environment, Climate Change, Water and Oceans, Gender Equality
Project type	Sub-regional
Consortium	<p>Coordinator: University of Johannesburg (South Africa) EU Technical Partner: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (Netherlands)</p> <p>Partners: -Namibia University of Science and Technology (Namibia) -University of Botswana (Botswana) -University of the Western Cape (South Africa) -University of Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe)</p>

Meet the TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Coordinating Team



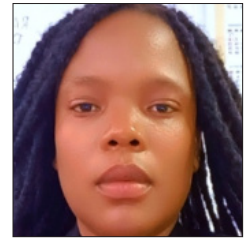
**Prof Kammila
Naidoo**
Executive Dean
Humanities
UJ (SA)



**Dr Sinethemba
Sidloyi (UJ)**



**Ms Colette Gerards
(VU)**



**Ms Gomolemo
Mmolawa (UB)**



**Dr Pearl Lefadola
(UB)**



**Dr Latang Sechele
(UB)**



**Ms Grace Naidoo
(UWC)**



**Dr Laurian Lesch
(UWC)**



**Dr Nyasha
Mutsindikwa (UZ)**



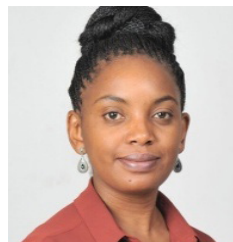
**Dr Wiloughby
Zimunya (UZ)**



**Ms Munageni
Anguwo (NUST)**



**Prof Hilma Amwele
(NUST)**



**Dr Meed Mbidz
(NUST)**



**Ms Rethabile
Mosia (UJ)**





From UJ Humanities Executive Dean's Office

The TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scheme set a goal to train future experts with specialized knowledge and critical skills in addressing climate change mitigation in the Southern African region. This goal contributes specialized skills and expertise towards the EU Green Project goals, which focus on reducing emissions, promoting green technology, and ensuring a just transition for all. To date, 26 students (11 female and 14 male) have been admitted for funding across our partner institutions since the start of the project in July 2024. In pursuing our inclusion commitment, the project has included a student with special needs and continues to look for more female students and students with special needs. The 26 granted scholarships for the 2024-26 period are focused on a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to climate change and environmental solutions within the African context. Dissertation topics collectively emphasize:

- Technological, social, economic, and governance aspects of environmental solutions.
- Local contexts and vulnerable populations, including women in agriculture and rural communities.
- Specific areas like flood mitigation, climate-smart agriculture, livelihood vulnerability, sustainable infrastructure, water resource management, menstrual waste governance, and disaster risk management.

This report offers personal accounts from scholars, which underscore the transformative impact of the TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scholarship at both personal and academic levels. Testimonials of personal and academic growth with scholars highlight experiences that encouraged resilience, adaptability, cross-cultural learning, and a deeper commitment to their research purpose. They also refer to the building of connections and the fostering of a shared vision among African scholars to generate meaningful, locally relevant solutions. We are grateful to the EU, TESIECS Coordinators, and all staff members in our institutions for this Intra-Africa Mobility collaborative initiative. A special thank you to TESIECS students in all our institutions for their enthusiasm and dedication.

TESIECS STUDENTS RESEARCH

The dissertation topics of the TESIECS scholarship recipients collectively offer a comprehensive approach to addressing climate change - promoting innovative environmental solutions, encompassing technological, economic, and governance aspects, with a strong emphasis on local contexts and vulnerable populations. The areas of focus cumulatively tell a story of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and addressing the complex challenges of climate change and implementing innovative environmental solutions, particularly within the African context. In essence, these dissertation topics paint a picture of a region actively grappling with the realities of climate change, not just through scientific and technological innovation, but also through a deep consideration of social equity, effective governance, and community-led initiatives. The story is one of integrated solutions, where environmental challenges require a holistic understanding of their interconnectedness with human well-being, economic development, and social justice.

TESIECS RESEARCH AREAS			
STUDENT NAME	INSTITUTION	LEVEL OF STUDY	DISSERTATION TOPIC
1. Uutoni Israel Josua Shiimi	UJ (2025)	Masters – Full Degree	Harnessing green and grey infrastructure for flood mitigation and prevention in Klipspruit.
2. Enna Bwerinofa	UJ (2025)	PhD – Full Degree	A framework for expanding rural women's agency in climate-smart agricultural technologies to enhance resilience amid adverse effects of climate change. The case of Masvingo province, Zimbabwe.
3. Adamsew Mareign Melese	UJ (2025)	PhD – Full Degree	The dynamics of climate change, livelihood vulnerability, and participatory adaptation in the north Gondar zone, Ethiopia.
4. Tafadzwa Kaunjika	UJ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Assessing the impacts of sustainable infrastructure development projects in emerging economies: a comparative study of Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa.
5. Omagano Nampweya	UJ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Integrating Social Impact Assessment into Development Planning in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Pathway to Sustainable Development in Southern Africa.
6. Lesedi Mosededi	UJ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Evaluating the role of mini grid solar PV projects for accelerating renewable energy and household adoption of small-scale solar systems in Botswana.
7. Koziba Mussi	UJ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Cradle to grave accountability: evaluating lifecycle responsibility in mine closure policies — a case study of Selebi-Phikwe, Botswana.
8. Nyasha Murimbika	UWC (2025)	Masters – Full Degree	The impact of philanthropy on climate change resilience and rural livelihoods: a case of Utariri (stewardship) in Hurungwe district, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe.
9. Samuel Tadesse Adisalem	UWC (2025)	PhD – Full Degree	Dynamics of food security and dietary quality in rural and urban Ethiopia under multiple shocks: evidence from the Ethiopian socio-economic panel survey 2021-2022.
10. Rozalla Mutinhiri	UWC (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Ubuntu reimaged: women-led collective action for climate resilience in Mhondoro Mubaira, Zimbabwe.

11. Abigail Buitumelo Mushendami	UWC (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	The Role of International Environmental Law in Addressing Climate-Induced Drought in Namibia.
12. Kachana Beatrice Ndabeni	UWC (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Exploring Unemployment Rates Among Recent Graduates from the University of Namibia, Namibia University of Science and Technology, and International University of Management: A Comparative Study Across Faculties and Its Potential Impact on the Economy.
13. Sukoluhle Primrose Ncube	UB (2025)	PhD – Full Degree	Assessing the efficacy of institutional frameworks for water resources management in the face of climate change: a case of Bulawayo City Council.
14. Chiedza Maseko	UB (2025)	PhD – Credit Seeking	The politics of governing the unspoken: a case study of menstrual waste management in Senga, Zimbabwe.
15. Tatenda Mabhande	UB (2025)	Masters- Full Degree	An examination of community-based strategies for enhancing resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe.
16. Nzwisisai Vhembo	UB (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Youth-led livelihood diversification as a strategy for climate change adaptation: a case study of Gutu district, Zimbabwe.
17. James Lomax Mukwambo	UB (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Exploring the interplay between poverty and community resilience in disaster management: case study of Muzarabana district, Zimbabwe.
18. Justice Asiedu	UB (2025)	Masters – Credit Seeking	Effect of land fragmentation on farm households' economy in Ghana's transitional zone.
19. Brian Moyo	UB (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Exploring community enterprising as a strategy for building community resilience against climate change. A case study of Chikwelenge village, Venda community in Beitbridge, Zimbabwe.
20. Tawanda Murepa	UB (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Framework for integrating mental health into climate adaptation plans for women in rural communities: a case study of Bangwe rural community in Chipinge.
21. Ahmed Musa	UZ (2025)	Masters – Full Degree	Designing Climate-Resilient Renewable Energy Microgrids for Sustainable Urban Housing in Aldeain, East Darfur, Sudan: A HOMER Pro Simulation Approach.
22. Kimberly G Rantsudu	UZ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Integrating Indigenous Land Management Practices for Sustainable Rangeland Restoration in Semi-Arid Botswana.
23. Masego Ananius	UZ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Adoption Of Low-Carbon Transportation Solutions to Ensure Urban Sustainability in City Contexts: A Case Study of Gaborone, Botswana.
24. Yinebeb Bekele	UZ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Effects Of Integrated Use of Lime, Chemical Fertilizer and Vermicompost on Maize Productivity and Selected Soil Chemical Properties in Asossa District, Western Ethiopia.
25. Denis Musiige	UZ (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Modern Conservation Strategies for Sustainable Watershed Management: A Case Study Approach.

26. Blossom Mudhumo	NUST (2026)	Masters - Full Degree	Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Diversity in the Kuiseb River: Responses to Hydrological Variability, Water Quality and Prosopis Invasion in an Ephemeral Desert Ecosystem.
27. Albert Kwitonda	NUST (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Climate change adaptation strategies for smallholder farmers in semi-arid regions of Burundi: a case study of the Cankuzo and Ruyigi provinces.
28. Raphael Mugenzi	NUST (2026)	Masters – Full Degree	Research topic: adaptive agroecosystem and community-based water management strategies to enhance climate resilience in Ruyigi province, Burundi.
29. Phakamani Sithole	NUST (2026)	Masters- Full Degree	Enhancing Community Resilience through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation: Integrating Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and Climate-Smart Agriculture in Semi-Arid Landscapes.

About our students

TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility currently hosts postgraduate students from eight African nations, including Ethiopia, Sudan, and Burundi. Our goal for the 2026 academic cycle is to broaden this geographic reach, welcoming new applicants from across the entire continent.



FROM OUR STUDENTS



To Building Sustainable Relationships...

By Josua Utoni:
Masters (Degree Seeking
Mobility – University of
Johannesburg)

It's my first morning in South Africa—a moment made possible by the TESIECS Mobility Scholarship. That single opportunity

didn't just bring me here; it cracked open an entirely new chapter of my life. Yesterday I was a name on a flight ticket, and today I'm waking up in a foreign country, lying on a small but comfortable bed. The hum from my mini fridge breaks the silence, as memories from yesterday replay in my mind. "Hi, I'm from Germany", "I'm from Malawi", "I'm from Zimbabwe", "I'm from South Africa", "I'm from France".

I sigh deeply, lifted my head, and sat on the edge of the bed. I asked myself: do I really need to leave my room? I have all I need in my room. What if I bump into "Mr Germany" or "Mr France"? I laugh nervously at the thought. My stomach feels tight, maybe it's hunger, or maybe it's anxiety. Suddenly a loud knock interrupts my thoughts. I freeze. Should I answer? Maybe if I stay quiet, they'll just leave. But then, of course, my phone rings loudly and dramatically, and I cringe, caught. With no option, in a crusty voice, I said, "Come in". It was the housemates, I put on a shaky smile, waved at them, and said hi, in the croakiest voice.

They laughed-not-unkindly- and invited me to join them in the kitchen for games. In total shock, I said, "yes". "See you then", as they walked back. I swear I wished the earth could swallow me, I could have said, "I am tired", I got off my bed, went to the mirror, and practised my lines for the occasion. I looked up a few French, German, Malawian, and Zulu words- just to show off a little. After a countdown of three, two, one- I took a deep breath and headed to the kitchen.

The kitchen smells like bread and instant coffee, with a bit of quietness in it. Everyone smiled at my entrance, leaving me shaky. I tried to show off with the words I picked up, but the pronunciation failed me. However, they were friendly to correct me. I hate to admit I was shy at first, as I only threw a few words here and there. As the evening went on, I grew more comfortable and had the gents laughing their lungs out at my jokes. It got late, and we had to call it a night.

From that day on, we became brothers-study buddies, sharing meals, hanging out, teasing each other endlessly, and swapping a bit of our culture through dance, clothes, and language. I even took Paul, Mr Frech himself to Namibia for a holiday, where he stayed with my family and experienced my world for a change.

Who would've thought that a simple kitchen game could turn strangers into brothers? In that space, laughter became our shared language — and home felt a little closer than before. **Looking back, I realised that the TESIECS Mobility Scholarship didn't just send me on an academic journey-it gave me a story worth telling. It transformed borders into bridges, lessons into friendship, and a simple morning in South Africa into a lifelong memory of how connections begin- one connection at a time.**



An ignited dream!

By: Enna Bwerinofa
(PhD Degree Seeking Mobility-UJ)

For years, I nurtured a deep desire to pursue research on climate change, women, and agriculture. I had already developed a concept note, knowing exactly the impact I wanted to make – but lacked the platform to bring it to life. Growing up under the care of my grandmother, who relied entirely on agriculture to sustain our family, I intimately understood the harsh realities of climate variability. Crop failures, droughts, and food insecurity were not abstract concepts but part of our daily life.

When the TEISEICS-funded PhD scholarship opportunity was announced, it felt like destiny; the moment my long-held dream could finally take flight. Accepting the scholarship, however, came with significant sacrifices: I had to resign from my university job and leave my children

behind in Zimbabwe to study in South Africa. This move, however, is more than a career move; it is a calling.

Arriving for my studies, I was quickly immersed in South Africa's vibrant and diverse cultural landscape, which taught me resilience, adaptability, and the value of cross-cultural learning. It's a personal growth experience - academically, emotionally, and intellectually. South Africa's rich cultural mix was both exciting and eye-opening. I had the opportunity to engage with people from different backgrounds, languages, and traditions, which broadened my worldview and strengthened my intercultural communication skills. The academic structure is highly competitive, and research driven. I am being exposed to cutting-edge resources, knowledgeable supervisors and vibrant seminars that pushed me to think critically and engage deeply with my field of study.

Being away from home means learning to manage on my own emotionally, financially, and socially. I had to adjust to new systems, manage time efficiently, and remain focused despite occasional homesickness. These experiences are collectively shaping my personal growth, academic development, and commitment to returning home with practical solutions rooted in both theory and lived realities.



From the Nile to Harare...

By: Ahmed Musa

(Masters Degree Seeking Mobility – UZ)

I still remember the warm morning I received the email that changed my life: *“Congratulations, you have been accepted into the TESIECS program.”*

For a few moments, I just sat there, reading it again and again. Coming from Sudan, the land of the Nile, that message felt like a new current pulling me toward something bigger than myself. The Nile has always been part of who I am, a symbol of life, con-

tinuity, and connection. And somehow, this opportunity felt like the river extending its reach, guiding me into a new journey of learning and discovery.

Arriving in Harare to begin my Master’s in Sustainable Urban Planning at the University of Zimbabwe was both exciting and humbling. From the moment I stepped into the city, I felt its rhythm, the green hills, the wide streets shaded by jacaranda trees, and the peaceful kindness of its people. Harare has a quiet beauty that fills you with calm. It reminded me of home, yet it also opened my eyes to new ways of seeing the world. Every sunrise here feels like a promise of possibility.

At UZ, my academic journey quickly turned into something deeper. Each lecture, each group discussion, and every field visit pushed me to think beyond theory to see sustainability not only as a subject but as a way of living. I began to understand that cities are not just buildings and roads; they are living systems where people, culture, and nature meet. Planning them requires both vision and heart.

The *Towards Enhancing Sustainable and Innovative Environmental Change Solutions (TESIECS)* program has been one of the greatest gifts of my life. What makes it truly special is the collaboration of universities from across Africa and Europe working together: the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Botswana, the Namibia University of Science and Technology, and our technical partner, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Funded by the European Union, TESIECS brings together brilliant minds who share one goal: to build sustainable futures for our communities.

Through this program, I have met classmates and mentors who have changed the way I think. We come from different places, speak different languages, and have different experiences, but when we sit together, we all speak the same language of hope. That’s what sustainability is about: connection. Just like the Nile flows through countries, uniting lives along its path, TESIECS connects us across borders to create a shared vision of change.

Now, as I complete my second semester, I look back and feel proud of how far I’ve come. This journey has taught me that growth happens when you step beyond what’s familiar, when you open yourself to learning from others and from the world around you. TESIECS has given me more than knowledge; it has given me a purpose to help design cities that are inclusive, green, and full of life.

When I one day return home, I’ll stand by the Nile again not just as Ahmed from Sudan, but as someone who has seen the beauty of Harare, learned from Africa’s brightest, and understood that true change begins in the heart. Like the river, this journey continues to flow, carrying dreams, ideas, and hope toward a better future for us all.





From a Dream to Departure!

By: Samuel Tadess

(PhD Degree Seeking Mobility- UWC)

Working as a lecturer and researcher in rural development for six years in a public university, I was eagerly searching for a PhD scholarship and applied for four scholarship opportunities in 2024. Firstly, I got a full scholarship award in Brazil and a green light from China, both in December 2024. I was in a dilemma, whether to go to Brazil, continue China's scholarship application, or wait for other scholarship opportunities. It was Ethiopia's Christmas, celebrated on January 7, 2025, due to the calendar difference, and I had holiday lunch together with my family. After lunch, I tried to view my phone while drinking traditional holiday drinks with my beloved family. I saw an email notification, and fortunately, it was another scholarship opportunity. Surprisingly, it was the 'TESIECS' scholarship in development studies. I was very excited and attested to the statement, *'for everyone who has will be given more'*. I nicknamed it a Christmas gift for myself, and I accepted the scholarship offer to satisfy my academic financial demand and deal with Africa's issues within the intra-Africa mobility scheme.

Then, I communicated with the TESIECS coordinator at UWC, Prof. F. Fiona Moolla, and Prof. Abdulrazack Karriem, director of ISD. They arranged an orientation session with the responsible offices at the university and facilitated admission and visa undertaking letters. I received the visa after a month and began packing for my trip. Besides, another surprise came that my wife gave birth to a baby boy a few days before my departure, and I was deeply grateful for the blessing that God had done for me. I flew then to the beautiful city of Cape Town on March 18, 2025, where I received my first warm welcome by the TESIECS coordinator, Prof. Moolla, and other stakeholders at UWC on March 19, 2025. Although I faced a delay in receiving the SAQA certificate for a few weeks, I registered and obtained a supervisor soon thereafter. Recently, ISD arranged a welcome ceremony for TESIECS and DAAD students to create rapport among us for African development matters.

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The TESIECS scholarship brought great opportunities for me to satisfy the financial demands of my PhD study and gain deep insight into the global challenge of achieving sustainable development goals and Africa's Agenda 2063 development blueprint pertaining to environmental sustainability and climate change (United Nations, 2022; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2024; and African Union, 2024). Correspondingly, I am working on rural-urban food security and dietary quality dynamics in the face of climate change and other forms of shocks, such as conflict and floods, using a food system perspective. The mobility also created an opportunity to interact with African youth for sustainable innovative solutions, as the future of Africa is determined by youths with a youth bulge scenario of 60% of the African population is below 25 years and 42% of the global youth by 20230 (Isabelle, 2025). I have had many opportunities to participate in various workshops, seminars, and conferences with academia, researchers, and leaders pertaining to Africa's matters such as climate change, food security, energy, water and their nexus, sustainable development, and natural resource governance in my TESIECS mobility so far. Therefore, the **TESIECS intra-Africa mobility scholarship is the cornerstone of my academic journey, and I feel proud to be a TESIECS scholarship awardee.**

Finally, I'm grateful to God, all the stakeholders in the TESIECS consortium, my supervisor Prof. Ameina Bayat, ISD staff, and UWC TESIECS coordinators. I'm also indebted to Dr. Sinethemba Sisdloyi for her continuous follow up through the TESIECS community WhatsApp platform, and all the TESIECS scholarship awardees in the platform for sharing experience. I have strong enthusiasm to achieve better in the remaining mobility periods for the realization of Africa's prosperity and beyond.

To renewed clarity, purpose and a deeper commitment to my research

By: **Chiedza Masek**
(PhD Credit Seeking Mobility –
University of Botswana)

I still remember when I arrived at the University of Botswana, filled with so much anticipation to begin my TESIECS short mobility course in advanced social science research methods.



For the first time in many years, I had been presented with an opportunity for uninterrupted time to focus on myself and my studies, a rare opportunity for me as a mother. I saw this as an opportunity to reflect deeply on my PhD research and aspirations, as well as the broader purpose of my academic journey.

My PhD at the University of Johannesburg examines menstrual waste production in low-income areas of Zimbabwe. This is an area of study that lies at the intersection of climate change discourses on environmental sustainability, environmental governance, and gender justice. The mobility came at the perfect time when I was in the development phase of my research proposal, a process that demands intellectual rigour. The programme provided me with the space (both physically and mentally) to refine my thoughts and strengthen my methodological skills. The advanced social science research methodology module taught at UB has reshaped my understanding of research design and deepened my appreciation for qualitative inquiry and its potential in addressing social problems.

Furthermore, the short-term placement had the effect of enriching the conceptual grounding of my study and refining my research methodological competence. **I have begun to see my PhD as part of a broader African dialogue on climate change and environmental sustainability, one that should value local voices, grounded knowledge, and innovative thinking.** The TESIECS experience continues to shape my academic and career aspirations. I have always been a firm believer that the purpose of academic research should extend beyond providing empirical evidence that graces the shelves of university libraries. However, it should also contribute to changes in the lived realities of communities, particularly for women and girls, in my view. The short mobility course facilitated by TESIECS has strengthened my resolve to connect research, policy, and community engagement, particularly when working to advance gender-sensitive and sustainable solutions to environmental challenges in African contexts.

The experience has also expanded my regional networks through interaction with scholars in another southern African country. As part of the Advanced Social Sciences Research Methodology course, we were required to present our research proposals. Although not all proposals focused on climate change, what I began to realise was how African scholars can create transformative knowledge if they can move, learn, and think together for their communities and at the individual level. African scholars play a crucial role in generating meaningful and locally relevant solutions.

Finally, on a personal note, I would take this opportunity as one that has been a special retreat, where I was able to think deeply and reconnect with my purpose. As a woman and mother, this has been a profoundly empowering experience. I will return home renewed, with clarity and purpose and a deeper commitment to my research.



A tapestry woven from the threads of resilience, determination, and an unwavering passion for education!

By: James Lomax Mukwambo
(Master's Degree Seeking Mobility – UB)

Growing up in the remote areas of Chimanimani District, my life has been a tapestry woven from the threads of resilience, determination, and an unwavering passion for education. I was born into a humble family, where my father worked tirelessly as a subsistence farmer. Despite the challenges of rural life, he instilled in me the importance of education, a value that would shape my future. I attended a rural primary school, where resources were limited, yet the passion of my teachers ignited a flame within me. I absorbed every lesson, relishing the opportunity to learn. My curiosity knew no bounds, and I often found myself pondering how to improve the conditions of my community. As I progressed to secondary school, my dedication bore fruit; I passed my A-levels with flying colors, a testament to my hard work and my father's sacrifices.

In March 2019, my life took a dramatic turn when Cyclone Idai ravaged Chimanimani. My family was among those deeply affected by the disaster. This experience opened my eyes to the vulnerabilities faced by rural communities and sparked my interest in disaster management. I realized that my education could be a powerful tool to effect change and build resilience in communities like mine. With my father's unwavering support, I pursued a Bachelor of Science Degree in Rural and Urban Planning at the University of Zimbabwe and graduated in 2023. His sacrifices, though small, were monumental in my journey. Tragically, during the time I received my scholarship from TESIECS, my father passed away. This loss disheartened me, and it also fueled my determination to honor his legacy through my studies. In August 2025, I boarded an airplane for the first time, traveling to Botswana to begin my Master's degree in Development, made possible by the TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scholarship.

I am immensely grateful for the fairness and unwavering support that TESIECS provides to its students, regardless of their backgrounds. Their commitment to fostering academic growth and empowering individuals like myself is truly inspiring. As I look to the future, I am committed to using my education to uplift my community and other communities that face similar challenges. My research focuses on community resilience and disaster risk management areas that resonate deeply with my personal experiences and aspirations. I envision implementing programs that enhance disaster preparedness and promote sustainable development in rural areas. By equipping my community with the tools and knowledge to face challenges head-on, I hope to transform adversity into opportunity. The journey from Chimanimani to academia has been one of growth and learning. **With the support of TESIECS and my unwavering resolve, I am determined to contribute positively to my community and inspire others to pursue their educational dreams, no matter the obstacles they face.** My story is just beginning, and I am ready to make a difference since it was already ignited by the TESIECS Scholarship.



A transformative journey beyond the borders of my home country!

By: Justice Asiedu

(Masters Credit Seeking – UB)

The day I received the news of my selection as a TESIECS scholar remains one of the most memorable moments of my life. Knowing that I would soon be studying at the University of Botswana filled me with a mix of excitement and nervous anticipation. It was not just about pursuing higher education; it marked the beginning of a transformative journey beyond the borders of my home country.

Studying the Advanced Social Science Research Methods module at the University of Botswana has been eye-opening. The classes are intense and thought-provoking, but what stands out the most is how much I've learned as a student aspiring to become a researcher and as a person. Engaging with lecturers and students from different countries has broadened my understanding of how social issues are studied and tackled across contexts. It's incredible how diverse perspectives can challenge you to think in new ways.

Beyond academics, life in Botswana has been incredibly enriching. From exploring the vibrant culture to making friends from across Africa, every day has taught me something new. One of my favourite experiences was working hand in hand with other TESIECS Scholars from different backgrounds. We spent long hours debating ideas, sharing laughter, and learning from one another. This reminded me of a powerful proverb in the Akan language, *"Obi nnim a, obi kyer "*; which means we should share knowledge to improve one another; failure to do so results in a backward and ignorant society.

TESIECS made all of this possible. Their support gave me the confidence to step out of my comfort zone and embrace global learning. **This scholarship isn't just financial help, it's a gateway to discovery, growth, and connection.** I'm returning home more confident, more informed, and more inspired to contribute to social development, specifically those related to the mandate of TESIECS (*climate sustainability*) in my community.

Looking back, I'm deeply grateful for this opportunity. TESIECS has shown me that education truly transcends borders, and that when given the chance, young people can rise, learn, and make a difference wherever they go.

Thank you, TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scheme

Thank you, TESIECS UB team

Thank you, TESIECS UB scholars





When a Village Raises a Scholar!

By: Nyasha Murimbika
Masters Degree Seeking Mobility – UWC)

The phone vibrated with a message I had been hoping for all year. After a long day distributing maize to communities affected by El Niño-related drought in Hurungwe District, I finally saw two emails from TESIECS saying “congratulations.” I felt disbelief and a deep joy that changed everything.

I am a “rural boy”; raised in Karoi, Hurungwe, where socio-economic challenges were part of my everyday life. My family’s limited resources meant that access to quality education was

always a struggle. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the proverb “it takes a village to raise a child,” my community supported me as far as they could. That support carried me through to my 2023 graduation in Social Work from the University of Zimbabwe. Still, as another proverb reminds us, “Mwana asingacheme, anofira mumbereko,” which loosely translates to a baby that does not cry will suffocate in the baby carrier. Applying for scholarships like TESIECS was my way of crying out, of seeking help to continue a journey that I could not finance alone.

The TESIECS scholarship was not just financial help; it was the chance I needed to move forward. It turned a long-held dream into something real and immediate. I remember opening the emails on my stoep, calling my family, and feeling their pride lift me forward. In Zimbabwe, I attended an information session with Professor Moolla, the ISD and UWC team, where every question about visas, registration, and the transition was answered, which made the process clear and manageable. With that guidance, I submitted my visa application and, having managed to receive my visa a bit earlier, travelled overnight from Karoi to Bulawayo to collect it, then took a bus to Johannesburg and, for the first time, flew to Cape Town. Landing in the mother city felt both strange and wonderful, and a kind Uber driver who took me from the airport to my residence and then to the mall to buy essentials for my first days here turned a daunting moment into something gentler. Small moments, the emails, the long bus rides, the calls home, and the warm welcome at UWC have stayed with me, and the ongoing mentorship from ISD has made the transition smoother and allowed me to focus on my studies with renewed purpose.

The scholarship has changed my life. It removed a large barrier to studying and gave me space to focus on learning. I feel more confident and more prepared to use my studies to help others. My fieldwork in Hurungwe, mapping drought relief, volunteering with NGOs, and witnessing the devastation of climate change has shown me that rural development and climate resilience are inseparable. The communities I worked with are living proof that climate change is not a distant theory but a daily struggle that deepens poverty and inequality. These experiences have profoundly shaped my academic focus and my determination to contribute to sustainable rural development in my community, Southern Africa, and globally.

Coming from a village where sitting for Ordinary Level exams is a milestone, being a Master’s student at a reputable institution is a source of immense pride for my mother, family, and community. I carry this chance with humility and a strong sense of duty. I want to give back to my village, to make them proud, and to show young people there that with hard work and the right support, education can change a life.

I am grateful to God, the TESIECS community, the ISD department, and everyone at UWC who supported me. This scholarship is more than financial aid; it is an investment in a young African committed to building resilience, advancing rural development, and ensuring that vulnerable communities are not left behind.

Thank you for believing in me and for making this journey possible.



From the anxious anticipation of the application to the fulfilling reality of my new academic life in Botswana

By: **Tawanda Murepa**
(Degree Seeking Masters – UB)

I vividly remember the period when I was applying for this scholarship. It was an opportunity I deeply desired, and consequently, my anxiety was high. When the initial acceptance email from TESIECS arrived, I could scarcely believe it was real. However, a new wave of anticipation followed. While TESIECS had confirmed my selection, the University of Botswana had yet to send its official offer letter. The waiting period, which spanned from a Wednesday through the following Monday, was incredibly stressful. I found myself having to temper my excitement, reducing my movements and keeping the potential good news private until everything was confirmed. My mind was filled with questions and dreams: What would life in Botswana be like? How would I find the University of Botswana? What were the people and the culture like? As someone who had never flown before, I was also eager to experience boarding an airplane.

The moment everything became tangible was when we began virtual engagements with the TESIECS administration and representatives from the University of Botswana, including Dr. Pearl and Dr. Sechele. Their professionalism and clarity made the impending transition feel real and manageable. The administration's thoroughness was exemplary. The TESIECS UB team even advised us to bring extra funds to navigate potential delays with banking and immigration, ensuring we were fully prepared. On the day of my departure from Zimbabwe, my entire family, my mother, daughters, nephews, and brothers gathered to see me off. It was a poignant moment, filled with both sadness and excitement for the greater opportunity that lay ahead.

The journey itself was amazing, with a connection through Zambia before we finally landed in Botswana. True to their word, upon arrival, we were warmly greeted by Ruth and Sean from the TESIECS team. They were exceptionally lovely, helping us with our luggage and immediately assisting us with getting local internet connectivity. Their kindness extended to buying us a meal at Nando's before bringing us to the university. They facilitated our room clearance and settlement with remarkable efficiency and professionalism.

Now, fully immersed in my research and maintaining excellent communication with the TESIECS coordinators and administration here in Botswana, I can confidently say that everything is progressing smoothly.



A leap of faith!

By: Sukoluhle Ncube

(PhD Degree Seeking Mobility – UB)

Applying for the TESIECS Scholarship was a leap of faith on my part. I knew I would most probably be one of the oldest applicants and that my age could work against me in terms of eligibility. However, I placed my hope on the fact that the scholarship call did not stipulate any age limit. When my acceptance was confirmed, to say I was over the moon would be an understatement. For years, I had been coming up

with excuses why I didn't think I was ready to enrol for a PhD, but with the TESIECS Scholarship, the biggest excuse (lack of funding) had been nullified. One of the things that stood out to me from the onset was the open communication and the warmth I could sense from the scholarship coordinators; we had never met (not even virtually), but they seemed to pre-empt my information requirements, and their responses to any questions set my heart at ease. Arrangements for my arrival at the University of Botswana were made seamlessly, and the welcoming committee made me forget all the apprehension I had felt during my flight.

The warm welcome and seamless coordination did not end upon my arrival; the first semester as a whole has literally been a breeze. The UB TESIECS team has provided support in making sure that my academic and social integration into campus life has been nothing but a joy. And the warmth I felt from the team when we first communicated via e-mail has been magnified by their physical presence and continued support through the regular check-in meetings, random chats, and shared links to various academic and social activities.

What started as a nerve-racking journey into the unknown has turned out to be what I believe is the first of many fulfilling months. I have had the opportunity to experience the friendly Botswana culture through various social interactions and have been left in awe by the rich research culture at the University. Through the lectures and seminar presentations, I have met with academics across the Faculty of Social Sciences and beyond, and they have given me invaluable insights into the opportunities that exist for multi-disciplinary research and for the honing of my research skills. This last aspect, especially, is what I feel has been missing from my academic growth path, and through the TESIECS scholarship, I have an opportunity to learn from and be mentored by exceptional scholars. In the Ndebele culture, we have a saying, *"ukuhamba kuzala inkosi"*, which roughly translates to "travelling broadens one's horizons" or "travelling makes one wise".

The TESIECS scholarship has provided me with an opportunity to get out of my home comfort zone to explore, learn, network, and embrace new experiences. Not just academically, but also culturally and socially, which contributes to a holistic member of society. I believe this opportunity will contribute to my personal growth and potentially equip me for positions of leadership and influence so I can contribute to broader social development. These five months are just the beginning of greater things to come, and I cannot thank TESIECS enough for the opportunity. Orientation week provided an opportunity to meet some of the TESIECS scholars and a guided tour of the cultural landmarks in Gaborone. The Graduate School, located in Block 247 at UB, is where I spend most of my days, as it provides a conducive atmosphere for reading and writing, and access to online and library facilities. All work and no play...The University of Botswana campus is centrally located with several cultural sites and a variety of churches located within walking distance. Sunday morning provides an opportunity to take a break from studies, attend Mass for spiritual refreshment, and socialise with the locals, appreciating the culture.

An opened door to opportunity, growth, and purpose!

By **Tatenda Mabhande**

(Masters Degree Seeking Mobility – UB)

Receiving the TESIECS Scholarship to pursue my Master's in Development Practice at the University of Botswana has been one of the most transformative experiences of my academic and personal life.

Coming from a background where financing postgraduate education seemed almost impossible, the scholarship did more than fund my studies it opened a door to opportunity, growth, and purpose.

When I first arrived in Gaborone in January 2025, I was both excited and anxious. The city's calm rhythm, organised infrastructure, and cultural diversity quickly made me feel at home. Living and studying in Botswana has taught me not only about academics but also about how policy, community engagement, and sustainable practices intersect in real life. I have had the privilege to interact with students and professionals from across Africa, each bringing unique perspectives on the continent's development challenges. These interactions have broadened my worldview and deepened my commitment to inclusive and climate-resilient development.

The TESIECS Scholarship has allowed me to focus entirely on my research and academic growth without the financial pressure that so often hinders postgraduate students. Through this support, I have been able to conduct fieldwork and access research materials that have enriched my studies. My coursework and research on climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods have been both intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling, linking closely with the development realities of Southern Africa.

Beyond academics, my experience in Gaborone has been a lesson in cultural exchange and personal growth. The warmth of the people, the vibrant student community, and the serene environment of the University of Botswana have made my stay memorable. I have learned to appreciate the balance between academic rigor and community life, whether it is participating in student-led initiatives, engaging in policy dialogues, or simply sharing stories with fellow scholars from different regions.

Most importantly, this scholarship has strengthened my confidence and sense of responsibility. It reminded me that education is not just about personal advancement, but about giving back, using knowledge and skills to empower others and creating sustainable change in our communities.

As I continue my Master's journey, I remain deeply grateful to the TESIECS Scholarship for believing in my potential and investing in my future. It has transformed my academic journey into a lifelong mission to contribute meaningfully to development practice in Africa, starting right here in Botswana.





A Dream Come True

By: Nzwisisai Vhembo

(Master's Degree Seeking Mobility – UB)

As a girl from Gutu, Zimbabwe, I had always dreamed of furthering my studies and contributing to positive change in my community. However, there was a time when that dream seemed distant. I remember telling myself that perhaps continuing my education might not happen. Then one day, everything changed. I received a notification that I had been awarded the TESIECS scholarship. I froze for a moment and then screamed with excitement. It felt surreal. I kept rereading the message and smiling, thinking to myself, “This is really happening.” It was more than just an academic opportunity; it marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

The scholarship came at a time when I needed it most and reminded me that perseverance and faith truly pay off. Preparing for my mobility journey was filled with anticipation and mixed emotions. From organizing travel documents to packing my bags, each step made the experience feel more real. I imagined what life in Botswana would be like and looked forward to the opportunities that awaited me.

The day of departure was both exciting and emotional. Standing at the airport with my suitcase, I felt proud but also nervous. It was my first time travelling without my family. Watching them wave goodbye was bittersweet. Their smiles were filled with pride, and I realized how much this journey meant not only to me but also to them. When the plane finally took off, it truly sank in that my journey toward becoming the person I had always wanted to be had begun.

During the flight, I reflected on how far I had come and felt curious and hopeful about the future. I even carried a small notebook where I began journaling my thoughts and expectations for the journey ahead. When I arrived at the University of Botswana, the department and TESIECS coordinators welcomed me warmly, making the transition much easier. Their kindness and encouragement reassured me that I was in the right place to grow academically and personally.

To me, TESIECS represents opportunity, growth, and renewed hope. It reflects the power of education to transform lives and reminds us that everyone deserves the chance to succeed, regardless of their background. This scholarship has reignited my passion for learning and strengthened my commitment to give back to my community.

Looking back, I am filled with gratitude for this journey and for everyone who has supported me along the way. TESIECS has been more than a scholarship; it has been a bridge between who I was and who I am becoming. It has given me not only an education but also a purpose—to create change, uplift others, and inspire others to believe that dreams delayed are not dreams denied.

Conclusion

The testimonials from the TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scholars consistently highlight the program's profound and multi-faceted impact on funding recipients' lives, extending far beyond mere financial support. The core conclusion drawn from these accounts is that the scholarship acts as a transformative catalyst for academic achievement, personal growth, and regional collaboration aimed at addressing climate change and environmental sustainability in Africa. Additionally, the TESIECS Intra-Africa Mobility Scholarship directly contributes to the European Union's "green project goals," particularly those related to climate change mitigation, sustainable development, and global partnerships. The program's core focus is on building a skilled workforce capable of addressing climate change and environmental sustainability in Africa. By training scholars in this field, the project aligns with the EU's global commitment to promoting sustainable development globally. The scholarship is an investment in Africa's future, creating "young Africans committed to building resilience" who will return home with "practical solutions rooted in both theory and lived realities." This directly supports the EU's Green Deal goal of supporting partners to tackle climate change and environmental degradation. By fostering regional collaboration and sharing knowledge "among diverse African scholars," the program builds the necessary technical and intellectual capacity to implement green policies and sustainable practices, which is a key pillar of the EU's external climate action. The mobility scheme helps "transform borders into bridges," which is essential for tackling environmental issues (like climate change, biodiversity loss, and water management) that require regional, coordinated responses.

In summary, the TESIECS program's success in cultivating specialized expertise and fostering an action-oriented vision for sustainable change in Africa makes it a tangible contributor to the EU's overarching goal of promoting a global, inclusive, and green transition. In 2026, we look forward to launching staff mobility programmes, while continuing with student credit-seeking mobilities.

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