



Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program

Alumni Steering Committee Bios

Simon Mariwah

Dr. Simon Mariwah is an Associate Professor in Health and Development Geography at the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana. His research interests include community development, sanitation, waste management, health behaviours, mobile phones for health (mhealth) and livelihoods. He holds a BA (Economics and Geography) degree from UCC, and in his graduating class of 2004, Simon was adjudged the Overall Best Graduating Student. He was subsequently awarded a scholarship by the University of Cape Coast for an Accelerated PhD in Geography with specialisation in Environment and Development. His PhD thesis focused on Urban Solid Waste Governance, and he has over 10 years post-PhD experience in teaching, research and community service. Between March and June 2014, he was a Visiting Fellow of International Studies at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, Rhode Island, USA. He has rich experience in academic leadership, serving as the Head of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC (2015-2017), and as the Director of the Institute for Oil and Gas Studies, UCC (2018 to 2023). He has consulted for several organisations including Plan International and World Vision. Simon has collaborated with both national and international researchers from University of Oxford, UK; University of Durham, UK; University of Bradford, UK; University of Reading, UK; University of Sussex, UK; University of Newcastle, UK; University of Hull, UK; Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, USA; University of Hasselt, Belgium; University of Malawi; University of Gondar, Ethiopia; and University of Ghana. He has over 50 research publications to his credit and has shared his research findings in conferences across the world.

Kefa Otiso

Dr. Kefa M. Otiso is Professor of Geography and Director of the Global Village Learning Community at [Bowling Green State University \(BGSU\)](#), Bowling Green, Ohio, USA. He has a PhD in Urban and Economic Geography from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, USA, an MA from Ohio University, USA, and a B. Ed from Kenyatta University, Kenya. His research interests are in urbanization, socioeconomic globalization, international migration, development, governance, and cultural change in the context of Africa and North America. He teaches various courses in urban, economic, population, and cultural geography, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications. He is the founding president of the US-based [Kenya Scholars and Studies Association \(KESSA\)](#) and a former Commissioner on Ohio's [New African Immigrants Commission](#). He is also a past editor of the [African Geographical Review](#) and has

presented papers in many national and international conferences including those organized by the [Kenya Scholars and Studies Association](#), [American Association of Geographers](#), [African Studies Association](#), and the [Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning](#). He is a frequent media commentator on many US, Kenyan, and other international news outlets.

Dr. Otiso's commitment to research and exploration is evidenced by a series of grants and projects he has undertaken. Noteworthy among these are, first, the 2020-2023 US National Science Foundation grant that he and colleagues from Bowling Green State University, Kisii University, Technical University of Kenya, and Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute are using to conduct water quality research in Kenya's Lake Victoria waters. Second, is the 2017 U.S. Department of State's Mandela Washington Fellowship grant in support of a Mandela-Washington Fellowship Institute on Civic Leadership for young African leaders (YALI) at BGSU.

Dr. Otiso has also [contributed significantly](#) to the academic literature by singly or jointly publishing six books titled, [African Immigrants and the American Experience: Race, Anti-Black Violence, and the Quest for the American Dream](#), [Debating African Issues: Conversations Under the Palaver Tree](#), [Sakagwa's Ghost](#), [Culture and Customs of Tanzania](#), [Population Geography: Problems, Concepts, and Prospects](#), and [Culture and Customs of Uganda](#). He has also authored/co-authored many academic journal articles and book chapters that explore topics such as US-Africa trade relations, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Kenya and her diaspora, the geography and socioeconomic profile of Kenyan and African immigrants in the US, geographic (spatial) and gender inequality in education in Kenya, Chinese economic expansionism in Africa, urbanization in Kenya and Africa, Africa's Chinese-induced railway renaissance, global terrorism, air transport and the globalization of African cities, mining and livelihood conflicts in Ghana, postcolonial Tanzanian national identity, and the construction of African metropolises.

Lindani Ncube

Dr. Lindani Ncube is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Environmental Sciences, College of Agriculture and Environmental Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA). She holds a PhD in Geology (University of Fort Hare) and certificates in Project Management, and in communication. Since joining the University of South Africa, Lindani Ncube has been involved with research related to the provenance of sediments, interpretation of sedimentological data, analyzing geographic location to find natural deposits, developing mineral deposit models for prospective areas of exploration interests, analyzing petrophysics, weathering of continental platforms, analysis of surface and subsurface structural data, geological block and statistical modeling of geological systems, machine learning, climate change, and utilization of oceans for sustainable energy. Her other areas of interest include science diplomacy and water quality and her research has been instrumental in the development of a multi-tier software-based decision support system for water quality. She served briefly as an EXCO member for the Organization of Women in Science for the Developing World, - South Africa Chapter and is an associate of the UNESCO Chair on Big Data for Sustainable Utilization of Mineral Resources, committee member of the Global Indigenous Youth Summit on Climate Change, a United Nations Institute for Training and Research initiative. Lindani's multi-disciplinary research related work is mostly in partnership with other Universities and several industries. She has received several research awards from UNISA, and is funded by the National Research Foundation (South Africa), Water Research

Commission (South Africa), African Institute of African Sciences (AIMS), Committee on the Advancement of Women Chemists (COACH-University of Oregon), and the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program. Dr. Ncube has published nearly articles with peer reviewed journals and recently was a contributing author to the book “Recent advances in environmental sustainability.”

Esther Adhiambo Obonyo

Dr. Esther Obonyo is the Global Building Network Director at Penn State University as well as an Associate Professor of Engineering Design and Architectural Engineering. Dr. Obonyo was a 2015/ 2016 Jefferson Science Fellow placed with the USAID Global Development Lab in DC. Between August 2005 and July 2015, she was a faculty member at the University of Florida's (UF) Rinker School of Construction Management. Dr. Obonyo has extensive industry experience, having worked as a Construction Engineer, Project Manager and Innovations Analyst in several engineering and construction companies in Kenya, the United Kingdom and the United States. Dr. Obonyo has successfully completed several externally and internally funded research, including several awards by the National Science Foundation (NSF). All these projects include a social-impact focused international education component. Dr. Obonyo's calling is in international research and education. She has created social impact-related international educational experiences for over 2,100 students. Throughout her career, she has strived to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our traditionally white, male-dominated building sector. Against that backdrop, she is proud of the fact that over 40% of the students and over 50% of the professionals who have participated in the programs she has led are female. In addition, four out of her five current PhD students are female. Over 70% of the students she has advised are international. She is also contributing to the celebration of our global diversity through teaching dance fitness using international music and choreography. Dr. Obonyo's work has been disseminated through over 160 journal papers, conference proceedings and presentations. She is on the editorial board of three Journals – Journal of IT in Construction, Buildings and Intelligent Systems.

Michael Olabisi

Dr. Michael Olabisi is a tenure stream Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Sustainability (CSUS) and the department of Agricultural Food and Resource Economics (AFRE) at Michigan State University. He received his PhD from the University of Michigan in 2015 and has a master's degree from Cornell University. He has worked with international scholars on research visits to Singapore and Beijing, with support from the National Science Foundation and the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER). He is currently affiliated with Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR). Michael studies how to achieve the sustainable development goals through trade, and the barriers that hold back low-income economies and communities. His published research includes papers that describe international trade's role in economic development, how the poor face barriers in energy use and food purchases and challenges in access to finance.

Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika

Dr. Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika is a full professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Department of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. Her areas of expertise include Gender and Higher Education in Africa, and African International Migration. Over the course of a nearly 30-year academic career, Dr. Okeke-Ihejirika has worked on research projects, program planning, graduate training and mentoring emerging scholars. Her publication track record reflects an extensive knowledge of transnational, post-colonial, and intersectional feminist approaches. Her work with the Carnegie Corporation, African universities, and research centers such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, has given her a strong presence in Africa's higher education circles. As a community-based researcher, policymakers, service providers and community partners are central to her work as stakeholders accorded agency in every stage of knowledge production and translation. Her research is supported by prominent funders, including the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Status of Women Canada and Rotary International. As the Vice-Chair of the governing board of the largest Black-led organization in Western Canada, the Africa Centre, and the Co-Chair of the Premier's Council on Multiculturalism, Dr. Okeke-Ihejirika works with a vast network of Canadian service providers and policymakers. Among many awards, Dr. Okeke-Ihejirika is a Rotary scholar, Killam professor, Carnegie fellow, a founding member of the College of Mentors for African Universities, and a collaborating researcher with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Anakalo Shitandi

Dr. Anakalo Shitandi is a Professor at Kisii University in Kenya and coordinator of the Education Leadership program with an overall objective of enhancing the management, governance, teaching, research and evaluation capacities in Higher education institutes functions in support of inclusive innovation for sustainable development. Dr. Shitandi previously served as Head of research and partnerships for 13 years at Kisii University. As the head of Research and partnerships he was in charge of developing research, partnerships strategy and securing collaborative R&D funding for Kisii University. Dr. Shitandi coordinated the management of ongoing relationships with existing partners and leveraged those relationships to greater collective impact. He conceptualized new strategic initiatives that could be built around corporate, foundations, government, bilateral organizations, or other partnerships. He also developed and implemented appropriate processes and support systems to achieve the strategies and evaluated effectiveness. He served as a global fellow at the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) a non-profit professional organization for professionals in all areas of international education including education abroad advising and administration. He continues to be involved in the promotion of international education through the African Network for Internationalization of Education committed to the advancement of quality research, capacity building and advocacy on internationalization of higher education with a prime focus on Africa. Dr. Shitandi has training in STEM education and earned a PhD. in Food Microbiology from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Uppsala.