

HOW ONE OF OUR YoSA STUDENTS IS HELPING TO PAVE THE WAY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT

Teta Christa is one of our superstar student-scientists from Rwanda. Since first sponsoring her attendance to the London International Youth Science Forum in 2017, Young Scientists for Africa (YoSA) have had the pleasure of being a part of her personal growth and scientific success over the last few years. Despite the limited career paths available to women like Christa in Africa, she knew early on that she wanted to pursue science, and studied Physics, Chemistry and Biology at Advanced Level. Rwanda is just starting to focus more of its time and resources into the health and science sectors, and Christa hopes to play a major role in its fast changing scientific landscape.



The majority of our scholarship students are introduced to YoSA and the Forum through our fantastic African facilitators, with whom we are able to change the lives of our students. However, Christa's story is unique as she first approached LIYSF Director, Mr Richard Myhill. Without means to pay the registration and travel fees, Christa entered the YoSA selection process with Mr Myhill's esteemed recommendation.

Of the Forum events, Christa particularly recalled the importance of Professor David Smith's talk – 'Chemistry Fighting Disease: Medicine Beyond the Molecule' – on her aspirations towards a career in pharmaceutical sciences. It was this talk, along with the visit to the Wellcome – MRC Cambridge Stem Cell Institute that stirred a desire to help transform the health sector in Africa. Shortly after returning home, Christa graduated in Pharmacy at the Mount Kenya University, a leading private university specialising in Science and Technology. Her final project focused on improving the health of her female peers and examined the 'Practices of Self-Medication for Dysmenorrhoea amongst the Female Students of Mount Kenya University Rwanda'.

Christa so impressed Mr Myhill that she was invited back to the Forum as a staff member in both 2018 and 2019. As an ambassador, she developed her management skills – organising welcome activities and supporting the newer attendees. Using her new skill sets, she secured a hugely impressive promotion as the COO Pharmacist of FLR Rwanda – a company that handles the importation and distribution of para-pharmaceutical and medical products. FLR Rwanda requested to share what Christa had learned at the Forum as examples of best practice throughout the organisation. For this role, she also returned to university to study for a Master's in Business Administration and will graduate later this year in 2020.



Christa has delivered numerous presentations of her science and experiences to students in Kenya and Rwanda. She was also invited to talk at the Rwanda Science Week 2018 and, through YoSA's connections, has been involved in activities with the Next Einstein Forum and the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences. Christa has also participated in health-related community-based awareness campaigns in the most rural locales. The people she supports there have little knowledge of, or access to, high-quality healthcare.

Christa's story is a fantastic example of the knowledge, talent and altruism that YoSA students have to offer their countries. We have no doubt that she will go on improving the healthcare for the vulnerable communities in Africa and setting great examples for women in STEM.

"Before YoSA and the Forum, I didn't fully understand the importance of research in science and its impact on communities in developing countries, like my own. My experiences have opened my mind to what being a female scientist can mean today. Now, my motto is 'always aim higher!'"

