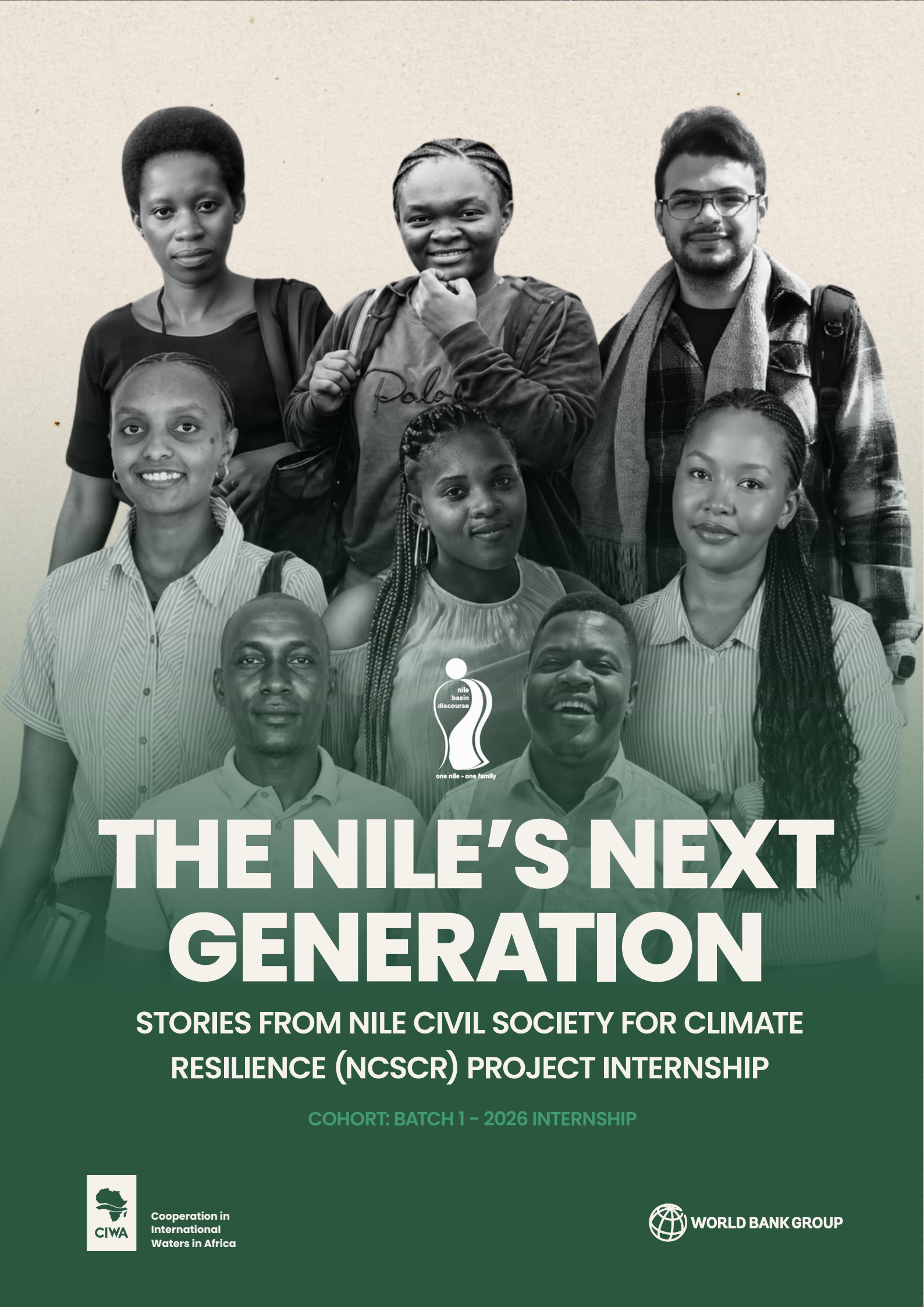




THE NILE'S NEXT GENERATION

STORIES FROM NILE CIVIL SOCIETY FOR CLIMATE
RESILIENCE (NCSCR) PROJECT INTERNSHIP

COHORT: BATCH 1 – 2026 INTERNSHIP



Cooperation in
International
Waters in Africa



WORLD BANK GROUP

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**NDF: Nile Discourse Forum*

CONTRIBUTORS



CLAUDINE KWIZERA

06

FROM DISASTER RESPONSE TO DROUGHT RESILIENCE:
WHY POLICY IS THE REAL FRONTLINE



BURUNDI



**BÉNÉDICT KASOKI
MUSAVULI**

08

FROM THE FIELD TO THE FUTURE: HOW ONE INTERN IS HELPING
COMMUNITIES ALONG THE NILE BUILD CLIMATE RESILIENCE



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



**ZIAD MOHAMED
ABDEL-AAL**

10

FROM LECTURE HALL TO THE FIELD: HOW ZIAD MOHAMED ABDEL-AAL IS
BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN THE NILE BASIN



EGYPT



TSION DEMISSE ZERGA

12

BRIDGING GRASSROOTS VOICES AND REGIONAL
POLICY: TSION DEMISSE ZERGA'S JOURNEY WITH
THE NILE BASIN DISCOURSE



ETHIOPIA



MERCY OGWAYO

LEARNING WHERE THE WATER FLOWS: MERCY OGWAYO'S
INTERNSHIP AT THE KENYA NILE DISCOURSE FORUM



KENYA

14



LISA AKAMANZI

CONNECTING THEORY TO THE GROUND: LISA AKAMANZI'S
INTERNSHIP WITH THE NILE BASIN DISCOURSE IN RWANDA



RWANDA

16



AKOMI VIC INNOCENT LEGGE

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, SECURING TOMORROW: AKOMI VIC
INNOCENT LEGGE ON CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND RESILIENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN



SOUTH SUDAN

18



CRETUS KABENGO KAGELE

FROM THE SHORES OF MWANZA TO REGIONAL IMPACT: CRETUS KABENGO
KAGELE'S INTERNSHIP IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



TANZANIA

20

INTRODUCTION

NCSCR INTERNSHIP STORIES, BATCH 1 – 2026

CIWA Program supports the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD)'s two-year, \$3 million Nile Civil Society for Climate Resilience (NCSCR) project, launched in early 2025. The project builds citizen-led environmental monitoring and nature-based solutions capacity in key sub-basins, turning grassroots data into evidence that can shape major water investments—ensuring they are inclusive and climate-resilient. It works across three components: community engagement and monitoring, stakeholder platforms for women and youth, and project management toward NBD's long-term financial independence.

In November 2025, eight young professionals from across the Nile Basin — Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Tanzania — have been embedded in communities on the frontlines of climate change through the NBD's Nile Civil Society for Climate Resilience (NCSCR) project. This initiative was supported by the Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) program, a World Bank multi-donor trust fund supporting transboundary water cooperation across Sub-Saharan Africa.

For more information, visit: ciwaprogram.org



Eight young professionals, seven countries, one shared mission: building climate resilience across the Nile Basin.

From assessing riverbank erosion in Burundi to documenting flash-flood impacts in Tanzania, their internships have turned policy discussions into lived, on-the-ground understanding. This collection shares their stories: what they learned, what surprised them, and what they're bringing back to shape more inclusive, community-driven climate action across the region.



CLAUDINE KWIZERA

FROM DISASTER RESPONSE TO DROUGHT RESILIENCE: *WHY POLICY IS THE REAL FRONTLINE*

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A NEW GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS

Ms. Claudine Kwizera, a member of the Burundi National Discourse Forum (NDF), has spent the last few months immersing herself in the heart of environmental conservation and climate resilience. Her internship, which began in November 2025, has been more than a professional experience—it's been a testament to the power of community-driven solutions in addressing Burundi's most pressing environmental challenges.

From high-level policy discussions to hands-on fieldwork, Claudine's journey offers a rare glimpse into the intersection of governance, innovation, and grassroots action—a model for how communities can lead their own sustainable futures.

THE VOICE OF BURUNDI'S NDF: WHERE POLICY MEETS COMMUNITY REALITY

As a member of the Burundi NDF, Kwizera has participated in strategic forums focused on climate resilience, nature-based solutions, and sustainable resource management.

These aren't just meetings—they're living laboratories where ideas are transformed into action.

Through her involvement, she has gained a deeper understanding of how multi-stakeholder dialogue can drive real-world impact. Whether it's designing interventions to combat soil erosion, promoting reforestation, or integrating conservation with livelihoods, Kwizera has seen firsthand how the NDF is turning policy into practice.

WALKING THE PATH OF SUSTAINABILITY: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

Kwizera's internship has taken her beyond the conference room, into the communities where change is happening.

WHERE CONSERVATION CREATES LIVELIHOODS

In rural villages, she witnessed how environmental protection and economic empowerment go hand in hand. Farmers are planting trees that serve as both windbreaks and income sources, while women-led groups are transforming plastic waste into marketable products. These aren't just projects—they're stories of resilience and ingenuity.

RIVERS AS LIFELINES

Walking the banks of Burundi's rivers, Kwizera assessed the devastating effects of soil erosion and gully formation. These aren't just environmental issues; they're threats to food security, water access, and community stability. Her fieldwork underscored why integrated land and water management is critical for Burundi's future.

FORESTS: BALANCING RESOURCES AND LIVELIHOODS

From reforested areas to natural forests, Claudine observed how communities manage these vital resources. The charcoal trade, a lifeline for many, presents a dual challenge: providing income while protecting forest health. This dilemma highlights the need for sustainable alternatives and market innovations that empower communities and preserve ecosystems.

WASTE AS OPPORTUNITY

A visit to a plastic waste collection center left a lasting impression. Here, waste isn't just trash—it's a resource. Kwizera learned how circular economy principles are cleaning up communities while creating jobs, proving that sustainability and economic growth complement each other.



THE BIGGER PICTURE: WHY KWIZERA'S STORY MATTERS

Claudine's internship is a microcosm of Burundi's climate resilience journey. Her experiences highlight three critical truths:

1. Community-led solutions are the backbone of sustainable change.
2. Policy must be rooted in reality—shaped by the voices of those most affected.
3. Innovation isn't just technological—it's social and economic.

Kwizera is part of a new generation of leaders committed to turning challenges into opportunities. Her work—from advocating for sustainable charcoal alternatives to scaling up community-led reforestation—embodies the NDF's mission: to empower communities to shape their own sustainable futures.

A CALL TO COLLABORATE

Her story is a reminder that real change happens when we listen, learn, and act together. Whether you're a policymaker, an entrepreneur, or a community leader, there's a role for everyone in building a more resilient and sustainable Burundi.

BURUNDI



BÉNÉDICT KASOKI MUSAVULI

FROM THE FIELD TO THE FUTURE: HOW ONE INTERN IS HELPING COMMUNITIES ALONG THE NILE BUILD CLIMATE RESILIENCE

When Bénédicte Kasoki Musavuli began her internship with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) in November 2025, she stepped into a role that would place her at the heart of one of the continent's most pressing environmental challenges: helping small-scale producers — especially youth and women — find practical ways to adapt to the increasingly disruptive effects of climate change.

A WELL-STRUCTURE FOUNDATION FOR IMPACT

Now four months into her six-month contract under the Nile Civil Society for Climate Resilience (NCSCR) project, KASOKI has accumulated a remarkable breadth of hands-on experience. Her work has spanned awareness-raising among local communities on the impacts of climate change, collection and analysis of environmental data, advocacy for local climate policies, and on-the-ground support for reforestation and sustainable natural resource management. She has also led focus group interviews and key informant discussions directly in the field — skills that are invaluable in participatory development work.

THE POWER OF AWARENESS-RAISING

One of her most significant takeaways has been both simple and profound: awareness-raising and targeted training on sustainable practices are among the most effective tools available for mobilizing communities to protect their environment. She has seen firsthand that when people are informed and engaged, they become active participants in the solution — not passive recipients of aid.

THINKING BEYOND BORDERS: THE NILE AS A SHARED ECOSYSTEM

Kasoki also developed a deeper appreciation for the transboundary nature of the Nile ecosystem. The river flows through 10 countries, and its protection demands coordinated action — across civil society, governments, and local communities alike. This regional perspective has sharpened her understanding of what genuine environmental cooperation looks like in practice.



RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE HEARD

Perhaps most telling of her growth is her ability to mobilize and lead individuals, organizations, and networks at the grassroots level, while also contributing analytical support to identify priority climate actions alongside the communities she serves. Her recommendations have not gone unheard — nearly all of them have been taken into account and are currently being implemented to improve the participation of women and young people in climate resilience programs.

Kasoki's internship journey is a compelling illustration of what happens when young African professionals are given meaningful institutional space: communities benefit, recommendations are acted upon, and a new generation of environmental advocates is forged.

D.R.C



ZIAD MOHAMED ABDEL-AAL

FROM LECTURE HALL TO THE FIELD: HOW ZIAD MOHAMED ABDEL-AAL IS BRIDGING ACADEMIA AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN THE NILE BASIN

When Abdel-aal joined the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) as an intern, he brought with him an academic background in agriculture and environmental studies. What the internship gave him in return was something textbooks rarely deliver: the ability to see that knowledge through the eyes of the communities it is meant to serve.

PUTTING ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

Through active participation in research activities, field missions, and stakeholder engagement processes under the NCSCR project, Abdel-aal's internship has strengthened both his technical and professional capacities in environmental and development work — with rural Egypt as his classroom.

FACE TO FACE WITH CLIMATE REALITY

Traveling across rural areas and engaging directly with grassroots communities gave Abdel-aal first-hand insight into the environmental and socio-economic pressures facing populations whose livelihoods depend heavily on agriculture and natural resources. In conversations with farmers, local leaders, and community members, he encountered the living reality of climate variability, water scarcity, and environmental stress — challenges that feel very different when heard in person than when read in a policy paper.

THE SOPHISTICATION OF LOCAL SOLUTIONS

What struck him most was not the scale of the challenges, but the sophistication of the responses. He observed how farmers and local stakeholders draw on traditional knowledge, adaptive farming practices, and community cooperation to navigate changing climate conditions and limited water availability. These locally driven strategies, he came to understand, are not stopgaps — they are vital assets that should be formally incorporated into climate adaptation and development planning frameworks.

FROM FIELD NOTES TO POLICY REPORTING

Alongside his field engagements, Abdel-aal developed strong analytical and reporting capabilities — preparing field reports, synthesizing qualitative findings, and linking community observations to broader questions of water governance and climate policy. These skills represent a critical bridge between grassroots reality and the institutional processes designed to address it.

A RENEWED COMMITMENT

His internship has reinforced his commitment to contributing to climate resilience, sustainable water management, and community-centered development — and has given him the practical grounding to do so with both credibility and empathy.

EGYPT



TSION DEMISSE ZERGA

BRIDGING GRASSROOTS VOICES AND REGIONAL POLICY: *TSION DEMISSE ZERGA'S JOURNEY WITH THE NILE BASIN DISCOURSE*

For TSION Demisse Zerga, her internship with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) under the Nile Civil Society for Climate Resilience (NCSCR) project has been far more than a professional placement — it has been, in her own words, “a master class in the intersection of grassroots reality and regional policy.”

REDFINING RESILIENCE IN THE FIELD

Since joining NBD in November 2025, Zerga has immersed herself in field activities that have fundamentally shifted her perspective on what climate resilience truly means. Rather than viewing it as a technical metric, she has come to understand resilience as something deeply human: a farmer's capacity to adapt to shifting rains, or a community's collective ability to manage shared water resources during a drought. These insights, drawn from direct engagement with local communities along the Nile Basin, have shaped the lens through which she approaches development work.

BRINGING OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVES IN

She has also made a point of bringing external perspectives into her institutional contributions. She attended the Eco-Justice Ethiopia “Great Debate: The African Development Crossroads” — an experience she describes as pivotal. The intersectional discussions on energy futures and fossil fuel investments enriched her understanding of the Nile Basin's challenges as not merely environmental, but fundamentally social and political. She carried these insights back to her work at NBD, demonstrating how a young professional's personal initiative can directly enhance institutional outputs.

NBD AS A PLATFORM FOR DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE

Central to Zerga's experience has been witnessing NBD's unique role as a platform for genuine democratic discourse — not just government-to-government dialogue, but people-to-people cooperation across basin nations. This people-centered model of Nile cooperation has deeply impressed her.

A VISION FOR YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY

Looking ahead, Zerga advocates for a more robust framework for youth-led research and advocacy within NBD and similar organizations. She believes that the next generation of water professionals must transition from being field observers to becoming active architects of regional policy — and that mentorship structures connecting young civil society leaders directly to decision-makers are essential to making that shift possible.

Her internship experience stands as a reminder that when young professionals are given the space to both learn and lead, the results speak for themselves.



ETHIOPIA



MERCY OGWAYO

LEARNING WHERE THE WATER FLOWS: MERCY OGWAYO'S INTERNSHIP AT THE KENYA NILE DISCOURSE FORUM

Over the past four months, Ogwayo has been doing the kind of environmental work that rarely happens behind a desk — and she has the field visits, community conversations, and restored wetland insights to prove it.

DRIVING INTO KENYA'S MOST VITAL ECOSYSTEMS

Attached to the Kenya Nile Discourse Forum under the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD), she has been an active participant in the organization's NCSCR project, gaining deep exposure to two of Kenya's most ecologically significant river systems: the Mara River and the Sio-Siteko wetlands. Her work has given her a granular understanding of the ongoing efforts to restore these ecosystems, as well as the complex dynamics of flooding and drought that affect communities living within them.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AT THE HEART OF CONSERVATION

One of the defining moments of her internship was a reconnaissance visit to Narok and Busia, organized by NBD. This visit placed Ogwayo in direct conversation with local communities and traditional leaders who shared invaluable indigenous knowledge about the Mau wetlands and the Mara River ecosystem — knowledge that often exists outside formal institutional records but is critical to any meaningful conservation strategy.

FROM KENYA TO KIGALI: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Beyond Kenya's borders, Ogwayo had the opportunity to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Nile Basin Discourse held in Kigali, Rwanda — a regional gathering that broadened her perspective on transboundary water cooperation and the collective efforts being made across Nile Basin nations.

GROUNDING DATA IN LIVED REALITY

Her experience has also included multiple field visits to communities affected by flooding and drought, reinforcing the lived realities behind environmental data and policy discussions.

In relatively few months, Ogwayo has built both knowledge and practical experience that will inform her contributions to environmental and water governance for years to come. She looks forward to continuing to learn and contribute through the NCSCR project during the remaining period of her internship.

Her journey is a compelling case for investing in youth environmental leadership — not just as future custodians of ecosystems, but as present contributors to their protection.



KENYA



LISA AKAMANZI

CONNECTING THEORY TO THE GROUND: LISA AKAMANZI'S INTERNSHIP WITH THE NILE BASIN DISCOURSE IN RWANDA

Akamanzi came to her internship with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) with an academic understanding of development and environmental issues. What she has gained over the course of her placement at the Rwanda National Discourse Forum is something that no classroom can fully replicate: practical, people-centered experience at the intersection of climate change, community resilience, and sustainable livelihoods.

A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES, A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

As part of her internship under the NCSCR project, she has been involved in a wide range of activities — from field visits and community engagement to documentation and participation in knowledge-sharing events. These experiences have placed her in direct contact with farmers' groups, partner organizations, and development practitioners, giving her a multidimensional view of how communities are responding to environmental pressures.

WHEN CLIMATE CHANGE SPEAKS THROUGH CROPS

One of the most illuminating aspects of her internship has been listening to farmers describing, in their own words, how climate change is affecting their agricultural production. She observed how shifting weather patterns contribute to crop diseases — particularly in rice — leading to significantly reduced yields and threatening food security for households that depend on these crops. These conversations grounded abstract climate data in very real human consequence.

WOMEN LEADING THE WAY IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Akamanzi also had the opportunity to observe community-led initiatives, including kitchen gardening activities organized by women's groups as a climate-smart livelihood strategy. These grassroots efforts — practical, adaptive, and community-owned — illustrate both the ingenuity of local populations and the critical role of women in climate adaptation at the household level.

SKILLS BUILT FOR THE LONG RUN

Through this work, Lisa has developed strong skills in community engagement, field observation, and development reporting, while deepening her understanding of how sustainable development theory translates — and sometimes must be renegotiated — in real-world contexts.

Her internship is a testament to the value of learning by doing, and to the kind of grounded, empathetic understanding that comes only from time spent in the field.



RWANDA



AKOMI VIC INNOCENT LEGGE

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, SECURING TOMORROW: AKOMI VIC INNOCENT LEGGE ON CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND RESILIENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN

For Legge, his internship with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) at the South Sudan Nile Discourse Forum has been, above all, a transformative lesson in the human face of climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE INTERSECTION OF CONFLICT

Embedded in a context where environmental pressures intersect with the realities of conflict-affected communities, he has engaged with some of the most complex and urgent challenges in the Nile Basin.

Through field observations, demonstrations, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, he has built a deep, ground-level understanding of how climate change manifests in people's daily lives — not as a distant policy issue, but as a daily struggle against drought, flooding, food insecurity, and shrinking access to essential resources.

THE QUIET STRENGTH OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Yet Legge's experience has not only been one of challenges. He has witnessed powerful examples of community-led resilience: indigenous practices such as cover cropping and crop rotation that reflect generations of climate-smart land management; local strategies for coping with rising temperatures; and community-based water resource management approaches that predate modern conservation frameworks. These observations have underscored for him the immense practical value of indigenous knowledge — knowledge that is often overlooked in formal policy spaces but deserves a central place in climate adaptation planning.

A YOUTH EXCHANGE THAT LEFT A LASTING MARK

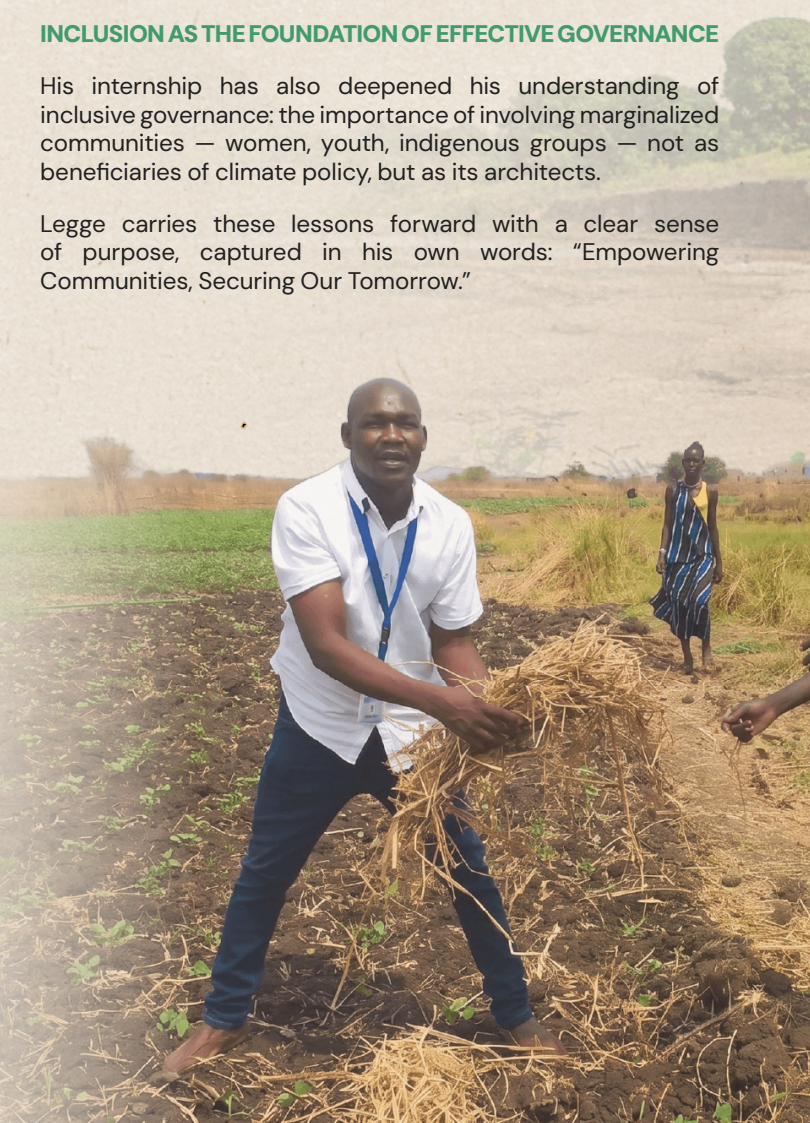
A defining moment in his internship was a peer-to-peer exchange visit to the Rungano-Ndota Youth Initiative in Rwanda — a youth-led group that has organized itself to promote sustainable livelihoods with minimal external support. This

experience reinforced Legge's belief that young people are not just climate change's future responders, but its present-day catalysts for change.

INCLUSION AS THE FOUNDATION OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

His internship has also deepened his understanding of inclusive governance: the importance of involving marginalized communities — women, youth, indigenous groups — not as beneficiaries of climate policy, but as its architects.

Legge carries these lessons forward with a clear sense of purpose, captured in his own words: "Empowering Communities, Securing Our Tomorrow."



SOUTH SUDAN



CRETUS KABENGO KAGELE

FROM THE SHORES OF MWANZA TO REGIONAL IMPACT: *CRETUS KABENGO KAGELE'S INTERNSHIP IN CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT*

For Kagele, his internship with the Nile Basin Discourse (NBD) at the Tanzania Nile Discourse Forum has been a convergence of technical growth, community immersion, and cross-cultural learning — an experience that has prepared him not just for a career in environmental management, but for the kind of collaborative, people-centered work that the Nile Basin urgently needs.

Since joining the NCSCR Project in late 2025, Kagele has been at the forefront of field-based climate resilience work in Tanzania, with his efforts culminating in a field visit to Pamba Ward, Mwanza — a community grappling with the tangible and disruptive impacts of flash flooding.

LISTENING BEFORE ACTING: FIELD-BASED DATA COLLECTION

At the core of Kagele's internship has been a commitment to listening before prescribing. Through site visits, stakeholder interviews, and focus group discussions with grassroots communities, he has systematically documented indigenous environmental practices and local water use patterns — building an evidence base that is rooted in community experience rather than external assumption.

This approach to citizen science reflects one of the NCSCR Project's foundational principles: that the most accurate and actionable climate data often resides not in laboratories or satellite imagery, but in the lived knowledge of communities who have managed their environments across generations. In Pamba Ward, Kagele documented not only the devastating impacts of flash floods on livelihoods and infrastructure, but also the indigenous coping practices that communities have developed in response — knowledge that deserves to be formally recognized and integrated into climate adaptation frameworks.

RAISING AWARENESS, ELEVATING VOICES

Beyond data collection, Kagele has taken an active leadership role in community outreach. He facilitated a community climate awareness session in Mwanza — an initiative designed not just to disseminate information, but to create a genuine two-way exchange between civil society and the communities most affected by climate variability. His approach reflects an understanding that awareness-raising is most effective when it is grounded in local realities and driven by local voices.

By gathering critical community perspectives on climate change adaptation priorities, Kagele has ensured that the data he brings back to the Tanzania Nile Discourse Forum is not just technically sound — it is humanly meaningful.



BUILDING TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

Cretus's internship has also been a period of significant professional development. He has meaningfully strengthened his technical proficiency in ICT tools, project coordination, and environmental management — skills that are increasingly essential in a field where digital platforms are transforming how community data is collected, analyzed, and shared.

Equally valuable has been the collaborative environment the internship has created. Working alongside a diverse network of professionals from across the Nile Basin has given Kagele exposure to different approaches, methodologies, and cultural perspectives — a cross-cultural exchange that has enriched both his professional practice and his personal worldview.

A FOUNDATION FOR LASTING IMPACT

What emerges from Kagele's internship experience is a clear picture of a young professional who has not simply completed a placement, but grown into a practitioner. He leaves each field mission with deeper knowledge, stronger relationships, and a sharper sense of the contribution he can make to Tanzania's environmental and climate resilience goals.

His journey is a reminder of why investing in youth engagement in civil society is not just a capacity-building exercise — it is a long-term strategy for building the human infrastructure that sustainable development in the Nile Basin depends on.

TANZANIA





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