

# FISH4ZAMBIA BUILDS CAPACITY THROUGH STUDENT FIELDWORK TRAINING

by Kathleen Ragsdale

Undergraduate students often face challenges gaining hands-on research-for-development fieldwork experience. Fish4Zambia, a quick start of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Fish, provided this opportunity to three undergraduates who joined the research team as student field assistants for seven days in Zambia in July 2019.

Robert Sakapaji and Mwatikosela Tembo from the University of Zambia (UNZA) and Laura Ingouf from Mississippi State University (MSU) helped with collecting data in the Lake Bangweulu region of Samfya District, Luapula Province. During this time, the Fish4Zambia team administered 397 Women's Empowerment in Fisheries Index (WEFI) surveys to men, women, and youth across the fish value chain and conducted 21 focus group discussions among men and women and youth across the fish value chain.



## ROBERT SAKAPAJI

Discussing his first day of fieldwork, UNZA undergraduate Sakapaji, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in agricultural economics, said, "The first experience in the field was so amazing... The families in the camps were so welcoming and eager to respond to our questionnaire. Our team managed to interview 17 adults for the WEFI and conducted two focus group discussions (one with men and one with women) in the fishing camp." Sakapaji has since leveraged his experience on the Fish4Zambia team into an internship at WorldFish Zambia.

## MWATIKOSELA TEMBO, UNZA

Another UNZA undergraduate, Tembo is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in human nutrition. About one of her focus groups with youth, Tembo said, "When asked what type of programs or assistance would be most helpful for them to succeed, I found it very interesting that the youth pointed out that teaching them methods on how to save money and connecting them to people that can readily buy their fish would be very beneficial."

About her experience surveying women, some of whom were widows, Tembo said, "It was an awesome experience as they spoke about their different issues pertaining to why fishing, fish processing and fish trading has such important impacts on their lives, particularly how [these activities] helped them earn the income necessary to ensure their children are fed and clothed and their children's school fees are paid."

## LAURA INGOUF, MSU

MSU undergraduate Ingouf, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in anthropology and history, has a passion for linguistics and noted the challenges related to conducting research across language barriers. Ingouf's training and travel were funded by two MSU undergraduate research fellowships.

During the WEFI Enumerator Training Workshop, “it sometimes took our enumerators several minutes to agree on how to translate a question,” said Ingouf. “Many of the [WEFI] questions ask about ‘decision-making,’ a concept which doesn’t have an easy direct translation into Bemba. But our enumerators eventually decided to translate it using a Bemba word meaning something like ‘power,’ along with further explanations of what exactly the question is asking. They also had to translate the responses they received from Bemba to English as they input them into the tablets. Throughout our time conducting fieldwork here, we were constantly being made aware of the impact and importance of language.”

## **FISH4ZAMBIA TEAM**

### **U.S. PI**

Kathleen Ragsdale, PhD  
Mississippi State University

### **U.S. Co-PIs**

Mary Read-Wahidi, PhD  
Mississippi State University

Elin Torell, PhD  
University of Rhode Island

### **Zambia PI**

Lauren Pincus, PhD  
WorldFish

### **Zambia Co-PI**

Pamela Marinda, PhD  
University of Zambia

To prepare for the fieldwork and data collection, the three student field assistants completed *Focus Groups 101: Brief Guide to Conducting Focus Groups in Village Settings* (a one-hour webinar developed by Kathleen Ragsdale, Fish4Zambia U.S. principal investigator (PI) and research professor at MSU, and Mary Read-Wahidi, Fish4Zambia U.S. co-PI and assistant research professor at MSU; and produced by the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Soybean Value Chain Research) and attended Fish4Zambia’s full-day WEFI Enumerator Training Workshop in Samfya. These activities provided training that is useful to their current institutions and will be valuable to the students themselves should they pursue graduate work or careers in research.

During the Fish4Zambia fieldwork, Sakapaji, Tembo, and Ingouf were directly supervised and mentored by Ragsdale and Pamela Marinda, Fish4Zambia Zambia co-PI and lecturer at UNZA. The students served as notetakers during the focus group discussions led by Ragsdale, Marinda, Tabitha Mulilo (WorldFish Zambia), and representatives from the Zambia Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Because Sakapaji and Tembo also spoke the local language of Bemba, they were able to gain additional

hands-on experience administering the WEFI after their teams’ focus groups were completed each day.

This initial research from the Fish4Zambia team will inform efforts to improve nutrition security and access to income-generating work for women in the region. The individual and institutional capacity developed through these research activities will have lasting impact as the results of the research will be used to address needs along the fish value chain in the Lake Bangweulu region and beyond.

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## **ABOUT THE FISH INNOVATION LAB**

The Fish Innovation Lab supports the United States Agency for International Development’s agricultural research and capacity building work under Feed the Future, the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. Mississippi State University is the program’s management entity. The University of Rhode Island, Texas State University, Washington University in St. Louis, and RTI International serve as management partners.

[www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov)  
[www.fishinnovationlab.msstate.edu](http://www.fishinnovationlab.msstate.edu)