



## Elias Gaveta

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

### Position

PhD candidate

### Institution

Mzuzu University

### Country

Malawi

### Education

MSc, Transformative  
community development,  
Mzuzu University and  
National University of  
Ireland, Maynooth

### Mentor

Dr. Victor Sunganani  
Wesley Kasulo, Associate  
Professor, Mzuzu University

### Research Area

Role of climate-smart  
agriculture in promoting  
nutrition-sensitive crop  
production by smallholder  
farmers

If Elias Gaveta had his way, all projects intended for the transfer of technology to communities or groups would include the social lens as an indispensable component. This is because he knows from experience that many technological innovations fail in adoption or impact mostly because their implementation processes lack a connection with the beneficiaries' culture, and in particular they fail to exploit cultural artefacts such as art and music in the delivery of adoption messages.

In his home district of Chikwawa, for example, which in Malawi is the most prone to perennial flooding disasters, Gaveta has observed with frustration many development projects come and go with little uptake of the prescribed practices and almost no impact on the problem they were meant to address. Finding ways to put this to an end is the goal driving his development work and research.

Gaveta, who is working on climate-smart forestry technology for community adoption, is purposive in his endeavor to find technology application approaches that lead to sustainable livelihoods, understanding that environmental

management is connected to cultural practices. To that end, he co-founded the nongovernmental organization Conservation Music to develop and deliver transformative information material for adoption of innovations, focusing on research-based technologies with evidence of success.

He uses music and traditional art related to environmental management and climate change issues as the vessels for conveying messages, working with nongovernmental organizations to bring their messages to the public.

Gaveta has been interested in science for as long as he can remember. As a child he always sought to understand how things worked. He found his father's science books to be a goldmine of knowledge and the stories from his math teacher about scientists like Albert Einstein to be a source of inspiration. He even dreamt of going into space. But his interest these days is in applying his knowledge and skills to help others.

A PhD candidate with a passion for transformative community development, Gaveta is also working on climate change and food security research, and

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specifically the nutritional aspects of food and climate-smart agriculture. He is breaking a lot of new ground in this area, where a dearth of research exists. He sees as his mission to ensure that science speaks to people, and so his modelling has cultural or social underpinnings. His approach is two pronged, as he says, "I am kind of studying two things at the same time: adaptation with the inclusion of the social lens."

Gaveta is also bringing new thinking in regard to the levels at which climate change predictions are made and interpreted. Generally, predictions occur at the global level and are interpreted universally without regard to community-specific factors such as resilience levels. To him, for applicability, community predictions need to be made at the community level, and the models need to relate to the community, taking their cultural circumstances into consideration.

Gaveta sees a future where he will partner with the United Nations in influencing the adoption of climate change technologies, sharing ideas and practices and developing globally recognized technologies that start from the community level and advance to the global level. He believes that the soft skills acquired through the One Planet Fellowship will help in his networking, development of a global mentality, leadership, and building of his confidence.

The opportunity to work with global leaders in his research area will serve him well in clearly pointing out the gaps in his work and validate his research. With the skills from the One Planet Fellowship, Gaveta also aims to contribute to the transformation of his institution's practices by transferring the skills and knowledge to colleagues and introducing mentoring and diversity inclusion initiatives.

Gaveta's nonconventional social-dimensional approach to technology adoption is bound to be challenged and has already seen resistance from his colleagues. In certain circles of science the use of art in promoting technology adoption itself is considered as entertainment not science. Gaveta is working to find a unique operating space and information on his area of interest, and he will need a lot of time for that since his area has not yet generated much research owing to its uniqueness.

**Elias Gaveta** is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa's smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Fondation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.

Do you have any further questions? Send an email to: [oneplanet.award@cgiar.org](mailto:oneplanet.award@cgiar.org)

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