



## **Goodfriday Yamungo Chikwezga**

Born in the Karonga district of Malawi. Became interested in environmental studies after working with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteers who were helping develop a molecular biology research center at Chancellor College in Zomba. Impressed by Japan's technological expertise, joined the ABE Initiative. Currently a master's student at the University of Tsukuba's Graduate School of Environmental Sciences.

## Partnering with Japan for Sustainable Resource Use in Malawi

“Malawi needs to implement sustainable use of the nation’s natural resources, which along with the environment have been under strain from population growth and other issues.” So explains Goodfriday Yamungo Chikwezga, a master’s student at the University of Tsukuba’s Graduate School of Environmental Sciences. Chikwezga came to Japan in October 2015 through the Japanese government-sponsored African Business Education Initiative for Youth (ABE Initiative). Under this initiative, Chikwezga, who in Malawi is a teacher trainer at Domasi College of Education in the southern city of Zomba, will earn an advanced degree in environmental science while developing business and marketing skills through internships at Japanese companies and by attending business seminars.

Chikwezga joined the program out of a desire to “help Malawi achieve greater sustainability.” Malawi receives development aid from various overseas sources, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), but Chikwezga understands the necessity of the country being able to better address sustainability issues on its own. He intends to apply the knowledge and experiences he gains in Japan toward Malawi’s national Science and Mathematics in Secondary Education Program so as to enable his homeland to more fully utilize its local human resources.

Sustainability is vital to improving the livelihood of Malawians, many of whom are heavily reliant on agriculture and fishing. Chikwezga can be expected to play a vital role in government efforts to find new techniques to help those dependent on land and water resources garner larger returns while ensuring sustainable use of these assets.

As part of his studies Chikwezga is working with Japanese researchers in Tsukuba monitoring phytoplankton in fresh water ecosystems. The approaches they are using will provide a new tool for evaluating Lake Malawi’s ecosystem beyond standard measurements. “The methods I’m learning will allow us to directly monitor the impact of external factors and provide a clear guideline for when to introduce mitigation measures,” he explains.

Chikwezga is also studying Japanese agricultural approaches for improving irrigation, production, and processing. In September he will travel to Okinawa Prefecture to study farming and agroprocessing techniques. He also has interned at a firm that manufactures pest control tape. He admits that he was unfamiliar at first with many of the methods and devices commonly used in Japanese laboratories and firms. However, he notes that his Japanese colleagues have provided assistance at every turn. “If I were to use one word to describe Japan and people here, it is just ‘friendly,’” he says with a smile.

In addition to pursuing technical and business training, Chikwezga is working to build a vibrant network of collaboration between Malawi and Japan. “Going forward, I will act as a bridge between the academic and business partnerships I am building here in Japan and smallholders, enterprises, and research institutes in Malawi.”