

MANY UGANDANS HAVE PURSUED HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

Across different cities of China, many Ugandan nationals have pursued higher education in fields ranging from engineering and administration to international trade. Their journeys were not only about earning degrees, but also about exposure to new cultures and ideas. They share their stories with **Jacky Achan** about how they are using lessons from studying in China to change the lives of others.

EDUCATION IN CHINA: UGANDAN BENEFICIARIES SHARE EXPERIENCES

PRINCESS AYEBARE

BRIDGING UGANDA AND THE WORLD THROUGH TRADE

I'm a communication professional with a passion for international trade and relations. I spent three years in China at Jiangsu Normal University, in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, where I earned a master's degree in international trade and relations. My thesis focused on how foreign direct investment contributes to Uganda's growth.

That interest began when I worked at a government agency in Uganda, where I saw firsthand how taxation and regulation helped foreign investors. I kept wondering if Ugandans were experiencing the same gains from this initiative? That curiosity pushed me to look at the bigger picture of global trade.

When I returned home in 2021, it took a while to get a job, but I was finally hired at an environmental NGO as a communication and administrative officer, which expanded my skills in public relations and advocacy. I have since moved to a Chinese-affiliated construction company in Uganda where I help Chinese nationals settle in. I support them with work permits, visas and cultural integration. I have become a bridge between our two countries.

For me, international trade is not just about importing and exporting goods, it is about people, partnerships and progress. I believe Uganda must create an environment where investors feel both economically and culturally supported, because when trade works well, it touches every sector.



COLLINS TWEBAZE

FROM BANANA FIBRE TO GLOBAL INNOVATION

I studied textile science and engineering from Tiangong University in Tianjin, China, in 2018 to 2022. I was fascinated with banana fibre, which I continued researching on while in China. On returning home, I started Skilpack (U) Ltd, which I registered as a company in 2022. It is one of Uganda's pioneering banana fibre research hubs based in Njeru Municipality, Buikwe district.

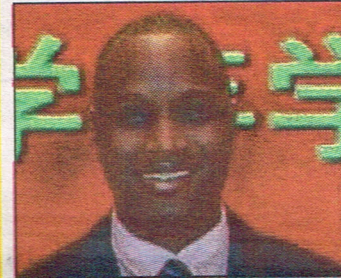
With support from the Office of the President under the Science, Technology and Innovation Secretariat, we set up a fully equipped lab for producing hair extensions from banana fibre.

Over 100 women in Uganda have already used these extensions. We also ensure zero waste by turning leftover fibre into pillows. We also make carpets, mats, lampshades and decorative items, training over 20 young people and employing six full-time staff.

My mission is to prove that banana fibre, something many see as waste, can be turned into products sold both locally and on the international market.



MCGINILY MWIINE



STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

I studied at Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics in Nanchang and did a master's in financial technology on a Chinese government scholarship. I returned to Uganda in July 2023.

Back home, I now work as head of business at Quest Digital Finance. The knowledge I gained has helped me develop solutions for financial inclusion, especially for farmers and people in rural areas. For example, through our platforms, smallholder farmers can use their basic phones to access seeds, tools and mechanisation services.

We also provide systems for SACCOS and microfinance institutions, allowing people in rural areas to save and withdraw money through mobile banking. Today, over 300,000 people use these solutions.

On a personal level, owing to my studies, I earned a promotion. On a community level, my expertise allows me to serve people who were once considered "unbankable".

SYLUS DESTINY OLUKA



TEACHING CHINESE AND BUILDING BRIDGES OPENED OPPORTUNITIES

I studied at Xiangtan University in Hunan province. I studied Chinese language education and specialised in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. I was among five Ugandans chosen for a Ministry of Education programme in 2015. Our task was to study in China, then return and help design the curriculum for Chinese language education in Uganda.

When I came back, I worked with the National Curriculum Development Centre to develop teaching materials. In 2019, the Chinese language was introduced in Ugandan schools, and today, nearly 200 schools countrywide teach it. At Teso College Aloet, where I head the Chinese language department, my students have sat Uganda Certificate of Education exams. Some of them are now working with Chinese companies.

Beyond teaching, I have supported Chinese companies in Uganda as a translator, interpreter and mediator in construction, oil and energy.

NOREEN GIFT NAMAHE

INSPIRING WOMEN IN ENGINEERING

I studied communication and information systems engineering at Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, China (2008-2012). After returning home, I lectured and consulted at Uganda Management Institute while working with ZTE Corporation, a Chinese telecom company.

My influence extended beyond my career. In my community, many girls believed engineering wasn't for them. By pursuing this path, I inspired others – some now study in China, while others run businesses; importing goods, as I once did.

I have also worked closely with Chinese contractors building Uganda's roads and bridges. My understanding of both Ugandan and Chinese cultures allows me to guide companies through local expectations, risks and business practices. Even insurance firms seek my help to better serve Chinese contractors. Today, I run my own company.

