



NEWSLETTER SPRING 2023

*Integrating knowledge and skills to prepare
a new generation of development practitioners*



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Edited by Mirian Yadira Molina

Director's Note: Glenn Galloway

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our Spring 2023 newsletter providing a synopsis of noteworthy developments of the University of Florida Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program. We are particularly proud of our new graduates and are also excited to share with you information on the field practicums our first-year students are undertaking this summer in Brazil, Honduras, Italy, Kenya (2), Nepal & Rwanda, Nicaragua, Senegal, Tobago, Uganda, and the USA (3).

Just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were planning a celebration of the first 10 years of the UF MDP program. This event was postponed until April 10th of this year when we found an evening to come together to celebrate the achievements of the UF MDP program and extend thanks to the many people who have contributed to its success, including the growing list of students and alumni for whom the program was created.

In the introductory presentation, Renata Serra and I provided a brief overview of the UF MDP program. Here an abbreviated list of highlights:

- The UF MDP program was one of the first MDP programs worldwide to receive a grant from The MacArthur Foundation, building on 30 years of the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) program and the institutional strengths offered by the Center for Latin American Studies and the Center for African Studies.
- The Global MDP consortium has grown and now includes approximately 32 universities around the world.
- Students who enroll in the UF MDP program are characterized by noteworthy diversity with regards to their disciplinary backgrounds (see word cloud) and countries of origin (25 to date). All share passion



and vocation to be global citizens and contribute in some way to sustainable development (SD) processes.

- Student diversity is further expressed in the development approaches students aspire to explore in their elective courses and specializations and in their capstone field practicums. The adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 expanded the topics students focus on in their programs and made it explicit that all countries in the world face SD challenges, including those denominated “more-developed countries”. This recognition has resulted in greater multi-directional student mobility when they plan and conduct their field practicums: North – South; South – South; South – North.
- Strong faculty involvement and support across academic departments has enabled the UF MDP program to accommodate this remarkable student diversity. 110 faculty members from 34 departments/centers/institutes and eight colleges have served on student committees, including 10 core faculty members and over 40 faculty affiliates with linkages to the program.

Noteworthy diversity of MDP students – UF

- To date, UF MDP students have carried out their field practicums in 45 countries (see word cloud) around the world with NGOs, governmental organizations, educational institutions, entities from the private sector and international organizations.
- UF MDP alumni are working in NGOs (international, national, and local), governmental and international organizations, in private sector entities, universities, and 27 have pursued or are pursuing PhD programs in UF and other universities around the world.



Director's Note: Glenn Galloway (cont.)

Here, I would like to congratulate our new graduates who successfully completed program requirements and are now embarking on their respective professional pursuits. We look forward to sustaining communication with each of you in the coming years!

Many thanks to MDP alumni Taryn Devereaux and Antonieta Eguren who shared updates on their professional practice. Taryn serves on the faculty of the University of Maryland, recently taking on a new role in NASA Harvest, an initiative focused on food security. She recently co-authored the paper in the *Journal of International Students: Transformational Learning Through Shifting Global Perspectives: The Impact of COVID-19 on a Global Classroom in the U.S. and Liberia* (link provided). For her part, Antonieta Eguren is currently working with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Chile as a Human Dimensions Specialist in the Area of Conservation Strategies. Among her achievements, she is one of the founders of the Network of Women in Conservation in Latin America and the Caribbean. She has shared a few videos and articles on the important work being carried out by WCS with her notable contributions.

In the Faculty Spotlight, Yadira Molina interviewed Dr. Sandra Russo, who until quite recently served as Director of the Office for Global Research Engagement. After a highly productive and creative career, Sandra retired at the end of the Spring semester. We are grateful that she agreed to be interviewed for this newsletter, since she has been such an enthusiastic supporter of the UF MDP program since its inception. Among other activities, she has identified capstone project opportunities for an important group of our students, has served on student supervisory committees, has provided leadership to the Gender and Development Working Group, and when invited, has shared her experience and knowledge in class sessions of different courses. She also mentored students like Dr. Rebecca Williams, who became an important faculty member of the UF MDP program. The interview provides insights into her remarkable career,

primarily in countries in Africa and the Middle East. In representation of the UF MDP program, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Sandra for her friendship and collaboration and wish her the best as she embarks on new challenges in the coming years.

Finally, I want to extend my appreciation to Yadira, who has served as MDP Graduate Assistant over the past year. Yadira has taken leadership in the development of our newsletters each semester and in the preparation of our weekly listserve. She has also taken on additional tasks supporting her fellow students, always with a smile, while meeting the challenges associated with her courses and capstone project. We want to wish Yadira the greatest success as she embarks on the second year of her program.

Spring 2023 Poster Session - Fieldwork Festival 2023

We want to thank Clate Korsant and the Center for Latin American Studies for organizing the 2023 Fieldwork Festival Poster Session to showcase the research carried out by graduate students from MDP, MALAS, and TCD.

Thirteen Cohort 11 and 12 students shared their posters based on their summer 2022 Field Practicums.

Congratulations to **Sarina Kawall**, MDP poster winner!

*An examination of human-wildlife conflict
as it relates to small carnivores and small livestock in the Rupununi region, Guyana.*



Fieldwork Festival 2023 (cont.)

Sebastian Ponce demonstrating the use of traditional Himalayan singing bowls



Omar Hernandez presenting his work with the Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville



Antony Gitei Gathiru sharing his project in Kenya with the organization Moving the Goalposts on gender and female participation in sports



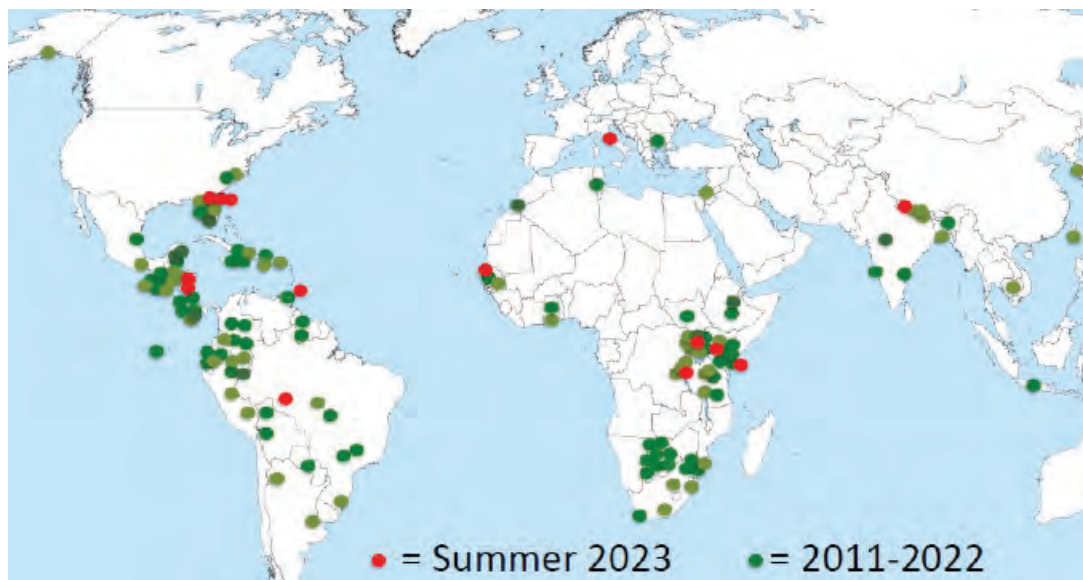
Summer Field Practicums 2023 (Cohort 13)

Thirteen Cohort 13 students have embarked on field practicums with excellent host organizations abroad and domestically. For international travel they are receiving generous support from the Jacqueline Friel & Jonathan Friel International Travel Fund, Center for African Studies, Sahel Research Group, Tropical Conservation and Development Program, Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Catholic Relief Services. We wish each one health and success in their summer work and travel.

| Name | Theme | Region/Country | Host Organization |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| Sylvia Adisa | <i>Assessing the contribution of Women to Blue Foods production in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO): A case study of the Billfish value chain on the Kenyan coast.</i> | Mombasa, Kenya | Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute |
| Catalina Baracatt | <i>A Gender Transformative Approach in Climate Information Services in Kenya.</i> | Nairobi, Kenya | International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) |
| Ashley Dukhu | <i>Understanding the perceptions, attitudes, and barriers of Corporate Social Advocacy and how to utilize CSA to establish trust and confidence within organizations.</i> | Gainesville, FL, USA | Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP) |
| Genaro Guerrero | <i>Experiential agricultural education for a secondary school in Bombo, Uganda.</i> | Bombo, Uganda | Catholic Relief Services |
| Raymond Hopkins | <i>Rural livelihoods and world-building in Nicaragua.</i> | Estelí, Nicaragua | Friends of the ATC (Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo) |
| Mesly Mata | <i>Documenting monitoring efforts against illegal activities in Indigenous territories of the Brazilian Amazon.</i> | Porto Velho, Brazil | Kanindé |
| Mirian Yadira Molina | <i>Restoring landscapes: an analysis of cost-effective policies influencing restoration practices in Honduras.</i> | San Pedro Sulas, Honduras | World Resources Institute |

Summer Field Practicums 2023 (Cohort 13)

| Name | Theme | Region/Country | Host Organization |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Carla Lissa Nelson | <i>Enhance understanding of the quality of communication within the healthcare system in Alachua County, Florida.</i> | Gainesville, FL, USA | HealthStreet |
| Julia Nelson | <i>Environmental practices of the Umbriaverde shooting range and potential measures to improve them.</i> | Todi, Italy | Tori a Volo Umbriaverde Shooting Complex |
| Damian Oakes | <i>Understanding migrants' perceptions of environmental-induced migration at the individual level within the West African Sahel region.</i> | St. Louis, Sénégal | Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Migrations et Faits de Sociétés (GERM), Gaston-Berger University |
| Laras Salsabila | <i>Strengthening the Livestock Research Systems and Local Partner Institutions: A Formative Evaluation of Local Capacity Development (LCD) Initiatives in Nepal and Rwanda.</i> | Kathmandu, Nepal and Kigali, Rwanda | University of Florida Livestock Systems Innovation Lab |
| Matthew Sealy | <i>Agricultural Sectoral Development in the Small Island State of Tobago: An Assessment of Needs and Opportunities for Sustainable Development.</i> | Scarborough, Tobago | Tobago House of Assembly |
| Khaalil Williams-Frier-son | | Gainesville, FL, USA | Climate First Bank |



MDP Graduates Spring 2023 (Cohort 12)

Our graduating students celebrated in person at the Ben Hill Griffin Stadium and the O'Connell Center with family and friends. We are very proud of our new graduates who accomplished so much, and we wish each one great success in their next steps.

Here we provide information about each of our Spring 2023 graduates, members of their supervisory committees, and the topic of their capstone field practicums.



Antony Gitei Gathiru

Specializations: Sports Management, African Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Marit Østebø (Anthropology / African Studies)

Committee member: Kyriaki Kaplanidou (Tourism, Recreation, and Sport Management)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Gender (In)equality and female participation in Sports: A case study of Moving the Goalposts Kilifi, Kenya."*



Trent Gautney

Specializations: Gender & Development, Global Health, Latin American Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Sarah McKune (Environmental and Global Health / African Studies)

Committee member: Matthew Hallett (WEC)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Evaluating and improving community engagement for electoral reform in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana."*



Omar Hernández Carmona

Specializations: Entrepreneurship, Social Impact and Sustainability, Nonprofit Organizational Management, Latin American Studies, TCD

Committee co-chairs: Glenn Galloway (MDP / Latin American Studies) and Karissa Raskin (MALAS alumna / City of Gainesville)

Committee members: Manda Wittebort (Center for Leadership & Service), Muthusami Kumaran (FYCS), John Kraft, Jamie Kraft (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Facilitating the co-design process of the monitoring and evaluation system of the Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville."*

MDP Graduates Spring 2023 (cont.)



Chioma Fidelia Iyamu

Specializations: Soil and Water Science, Environmental Education & Communication, African Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Ann Wilkie (Soil, Water & Ecosystem Sciences)

Committee members: Amanda Waddle (The Repurpose Project), Chris Wilson (SWES)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Pilot study of elementary school food waste diversion and composting, Gainesville, Florida."*



Sarina Kwall

Specializations: Global Health, Latin American Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Matt Hallett (Wildlife Ecology and Conservation / TCD)

Committee member: Becky Williams (Latin American Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Human-wildlife conflict as focusing on small carnivores and small livestock in the Rupununi, Guyana."*



Fraleigh Kause

Specializations: Gender & Development, African Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Sarah McKune (Environmental and Global Health / African Studies)

Committee members: Adrienne Strong (African Studies / Anthropology), David Diehl (FYCS)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Build the Person, Change the World: Rethinking Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children."*

MDP Graduates Spring 2023 (cont.)



Katherine McCall

Specializations: Monitoring & Evaluation, African Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Sebastian Galindo (Agricultural Education and Communication)

Committee members: Erica Odera (LSIL), Levy Odera (African Studies)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Systems thinking education for youth: An evaluation of the SAYDS (Systems Acumen for Youth-Led Development Solutions) program in Kenya."*



Sebastián Ponce

Specializations: Spirituality and Wellness, Latin American Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Sarah McKune (Environmental and Global Health / African Studies)

Committee members: Becky Williams (Latin American Studies), Mary Rockwood Lane (Nursing)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Implementing Wellness Tourism: Mindfulness-Based Intervention Services for Sapana Eco-Lodge, Nepal."*



Fallon Riaño Jiménez

Specializations: : Integrative Management in Agriculture Development, African Studies, Latin American Studies, TCD

Committee chair: Sarah McKune (Environmental and Global Health / African Studies)

Committee members: Geoffrey Dahl (Animal Sciences), Erica Odera (LSIL)

Capstone Field Practicum: *"Experiences with the Rwanda Dairy Farm Assessment and Advisory Tool."*

Sustainable Development Practice Certificates Spring 2023

Seung Gi Kim, MA (Latin American Studies)

MDP Graduates Spring 2023 (cont.)



Spring 2023 Awards

Jacqueline Friel & Jonathan Friel International Travel Fund Grants: **Sylvia Adisa, Catalina Baracatt, Damian Oakes, Mesly Mata, Julia Nelson, Genaro Guerrero, Laras Salsabila, Mirian Yadira Molina, Raymond Hopkins, Matthew Sealy**

Center for African Studies Field Practicum Travel Grants: **Catalina Baracatt, Laras Salsabila, Damian Oakes, Sylvia Adisa**

Center for African Studies Sahel Research Group Travel Grant: **Damian Oakes**

TCD Practitioner Grants: **Sarina Kwall, Mesly Mata, Sylvia Adisa**

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Feed the Future Livestock Systems Innovation Lab Field Research Grant: **Laras Salsabila**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Travel Grants: **Raymond Hopkins, Mesly Mata, Sylvia Adisa**

2023 Superior Accomplishment Award: Community Service:
MDP Affiliate Faculty Agnes Leslie (Center for African Studies)



Spring 2023 Awards (cont.)

2023 Boren Fellowship: Hannah Jo Maier (Cohort 12)

The Boren Fellowship has awarded me the opportunity to study Romanian Language and Culture in Transylvania, and I currently take Romanian courses at Universitatea Babeş Bolyai. As a supplemental activity to my language learning, I volunteer as a project officer with a local organisation that provides humanitarian aid to Ukrainians in the region. I've spent my free-time exploring Transylvania's castles, hiking in the mountains, and visiting smaller villages. I've loved having the chance to celebrate Romania's many traditions, especially those surrounding Orthodox Easter and "Mărţişor" (the arrival of spring). My favourite Romanian dishes are Salata de Vinete (eggplant salad) and any kind of ciorbă (Romanian soup). It's been exciting to study my family's heritage language while learning more about US-Romanian diplomatic relations.

****The Boren Fellowship grants undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to study a language critical to US national security.**



Spring 2023 Conferences and Publications



Antony Gitei Gathiru (Cohort 12)

Center for African Studies: 2023 Gwendolen M. Carter Conference: Inclusive and exclusive communities: minorities, women & youth in African sport. March 23-25, 2023; Gainesville, Florida.

Chair for Panel 7: Sport Activism

Paper presented in Panel 8 Women in Football: Gender equality and female participation in sports, a case of study Moving The Goalposts Kilifi, Kenya.

Dr. Joel Correia (former MDP core faculty): With this note I write to share news of my new book — *Disrupting the Patrón: Indigenous Land Rights and the Fight for Environmental Justice in Paraguay's Chaco*. The book was just published by University of California Press and is available **open access** here: <https://luminosoa.org/site/books/m/10.1525/luminos.151/>.

Disrupting the Patrón is an ethnography of Indigenous resistance and resurgence centered in the Chaco region of Paraguay. Drawing from several years of collaborative research, the book makes interventions into theorizations about the politics and practice of Indigenous rights, territoriality, and settler colonialism by attending to the ways that communities advance new forms.



P. Collings, E. Ready & **O.M. Medina-Ramírez (Cohort 6):** 2023. An Ethnographic Model of Stress and Stress Management in Two Canadian Inuit Communities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Online First at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220221231155105>.



Students Outside the Classroom

Many MDP students carry out activities outside the classroom, at times as graduate and teaching assistants and other times in service to the broader community. In this way, students take full advantage of their time in the program to gain experience and enhance their professional development.

Cohort 12

Antony Gitei: Dept. Languages, Literatures and Cultures, ki-Swahili Teaching Assistant

Catherine Hart: UF IFAS Family Nutrition Program – Public Health Specialist for Northeast Florida

Chioma Iyamu: Center for African Studies, Graduate Assistant

Fallon Riaño Jiménez: Graduate Assistants United, Graduate Assistant

Fraleigh Krause: Created Gainesville, Marketing Coordinator; Gender & Development Working Group, Facilitator

Jeantel Cheramy: Dept. Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Haitian Creole Teaching Assistant

Khumo Nicole Senuku: Dept. Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Graduate Assistant

Omar Hernández: UF-BCLS Path to Purpose Advanced Leadership Cohort Fellow; UF-Warrington College of Business- Social Impact & Sustainability Initiative Scholar; UF-TCD Student Group and TCD Steering Committee member Latin America Representative; International Alliance for Localization, Volunteer; City of Gainesville – Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Development, Student Member

Sarina Kawall: Tropical Conservation and Development Program, Graduate Assistant

Trent Gautney: Global Food Systems Institute, Assistant

Cohort 13

Raymond Hopkins: UF Department of Biology, Teaching Assistant

Mirian Yadira Molina: MDP Program, Graduate Assistant

Carla Lissa Nelson: UF Department of Assessment and Research, Graduate Assistant

Lia Nelson: UF Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Student Assistant; US National Team, Skeet Shooter; 4H Skeet Shooting Mentor

Damian Oakes: Sahel Research Group, Research Assistant Assistant

Matthew Sealy: UF Department of Biology, Teaching Assistant

MDP Alumni Updates



Taryn Devereaux (Cohort 3)

I'm still on the Faculty with University of Maryland (UMD) but in 2021 I transitioned over to the NASA Harvest (<https://nasaharvest.org>), which is their food security initiative. I'm the Technical Manager for the Africa program. I'm still affiliated with the UMD College of Ag / Extension, and the last four years I led/taught a Global Ag Global Classroom with a university partner in Liberia.

My counter professor and conducted a research project around the course model and published a paper last year - <https://ojed.org/index.php/jis/article/view/4642>

Taryn Devereux & Anna Glenn. 2022. Transformational Learning Through Shifting Global Perspectives: The Impact of COVID-19 on a Global Classroom in the U.S. and Liberia. *Journal of International Students* 12(S3): 96-115.

Antonieta Eguren (Cohort 4)



I have been working in WCS Chile since 2018 as a project assistant firstly and currently coordinating some projects. As a Human Dimension Specialist in the Conservation Strategies Area, I seek to incorporate different stakeholders' visions, knowledge, and experience in the early stages of biodiversity conservation initiatives for more equitable, just, diverse, and inclusive results. These years have been a fun road with many challenges, but I am lucky to be part of a great team.

I leave you some videos and notes of some projects I have been participating:

<https://youtu.be/q4iTur4Qgpl>

<https://chile.wcs.org/Nosotros/Noticias/ID/18627/ESPAP-2022-co-conservando-la-biodiversidad.aspx>

<https://youtu.be/l9DJoJXsLI0>

<https://chile.wcs.org/Nosotros/Noticias/ID/16197/Visibilizar-la-relacion-entre-Genero-y-Medioambiente.aspx>

Cheers from the South!

Antonieta

MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sandra Russo

Yadira: Hello Dr. Russo, first, let me congratulate you on your retirement, which you have just begun, I feel privileged to do this interview with you! We want to thank you for taking time to contribute to our MDP Newsletter, to tell us about yourself and your professional trajectory. You have had a rich career. What are some of key moments you would like to highlight?

Dr. Russo: Well, that is a difficult question since there are a lot of key moments. I think cumulatively it's the graduate students that I've had, through their programs but then seeing them through their careers and how they are living their lives and living their dreams and that I had a part in making that happen for them. It's any number of moments.

Another defining key moment was after I got my PhD and then I went to work in Kenya. That whole experience was a highlight, first, because I had actually studied and planned to work in Latin America, but then my first job was in Kenya. After that, I just worked in Africa for most of the rest of my career.

Yadira: Oh wow. I didn't know that. We lost you then in Latin America. Just joking, I believe everyone is in the right place. The next questions are related to the fact that you are recognized for your interdisciplinary research interests and their application to practice. The first question is: how have your research interests evolved over time? You mentioned you were originally thinking Latin American but then Kenya. Could you explain more?

Dr. Russo: When I was in graduate school, UF was one of the first places in the country that began talking about systems thinking. HT Odom and others were developing the whole idea of systems modeling. Bob Hart was here for a while. He had worked in Costa Rica for several years with Pete Hildebrand and farming systems. And so, UF was a real center for looking at the whole system that you were working in. Even though I studied agronomy and animal



Sandra Russo being recognized by Dr. Kent Fuchs, past President of the University of Florida

science, it always got placed into a system. It was not just the plot or the animal, but where is that plot or that animal in the farming system or in the ecosystem.

And once I got to Africa and went out and talked to farmers, I figured out that women are doing all the work and only talking to the male farmers was not going to get me anywhere. Then I had to bring people into the whole picture because my little research plot where I was successful did not work in the farmer's field. You must know people where they are.

Yadira: It makes a lot of sense. You have to see the whole system to try to solve something. You realized that you cannot concentrate on just one thing; you need to look at the whole picture.



MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sandra Russo (cont.)

The next question is, how did you embark on your pioneering work in gender and development? Previously you mentioned that when working in Kenya, you discovered how women were playing a predominate role in farmwork.

Dr. Russo: Yes, it was during the farming system support project funded by USAID and based at UF. Pete Hildebrand and Susan Poats were key players on that project, and it was all over the world. At the time I was living in The Gambia, working for Colorado State on a USAID-funded farming systems project, so we all started working together, as people who were interested in farming systems. And we published the first book on women in farming systems, in the mid-1980s. Susan Poats and Hillary Feldstein and Jackie Ashby at CIAT and several other people were early pioneers on women in farming systems. That was my cohort of gender researchers and we worked together all over the world.

Learning along the way, and eventually getting to the higher level of the women's empowerment and agriculture index and then looking at bringing men back into the picture, but not the same way it used to be. There have been a lot of good changes. What I find a bit frustrating are students and researchers today who only go back into the literature about 10 years and think they have discovered something new. But if they really went back to the literature developed in the 1980s, they would realize it's not new. And even earlier, Polly Hill was writing in the 1960s and 1970s about women's role in economic development.

Yadira: Yes, I got a sense of what you are saying, when I took the Gender and Development course last semester with Dr. Nargiza Ludgate and Colby Silvert, Nargiza mentioned being your student and how you introduced things like the index tool measuring empowerment, how then it was something really new because there were no tools developed

before to measure empowerment, and then we studied how this index has evolved with specific criteria for agriculture, for fish and for value chains. In the course, we talked about how this evolution has been taking place. It takes us to the next question: how would you describe the progress that has been achieved related to gender and development?

Dr. Russo: Yes, I think there has obviously been progress, there have been tools developed, there have been policies put into place. Most donors and most governments at least have policies, although they may not be implemented or funded sufficiently to be implemented. But I think this is why it's important to include power in the discussion because people who have power are not willingly going to give up power. When you get the male-female power dynamic there are many reasons, whether they're rational or not, for men to not be willing to share power, to acknowledge that they could share power and not lose it. So again, you can have the policies but they do not mean that behavior changes will occur at the individual level or organizational level.

Yadira: Yes, I remember during our Gender course we talked about how social norms are the hardest to change because they are rooted in people's minds. Some of the new laws mandate changes but women cannot benefit from those changes, because even their own families could be reluctant to change their behavior, and are not happy about enforcing the changes.

Dr. Russo: Exactly, look what's happening in the United States. In many parts of the country, women no longer can get an abortion. Power dynamics are directly impacting women's access to reproductive healthcare.



MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sandra Russo (cont.)

Yadira: Sadly true. Yet, there is another question about the interdisciplinary research you have been successfully doing. What do you consider are the major barriers or challenges impeding research and progress on gender and development?

Dr. Russo: I think that the hard scientists, of which I am supposedly one, with degrees in agronomy and animal science, have a hard time accepting that what social science can contribute is valuable. So, for example, in the project that we are just completing, that was funded by the Canadian development agency, we are working with livestock vaccines to figure out ways for women's animals to get vaccinated, because social norms keep their animals from being vaccinated. When we prepare a manuscript and submit it for journal reviews, a lot of times the veterinarians who review the journal articles fail to understand why this is an issue. You know they say, well we have a vaccination campaign, and we just go out there and then the animals somehow show up magically. And we say, well, what kind of animals, and who is bringing them and where are you administering the vaccinations?

And for a whole bunch of reasons, women's animals are not getting vaccinated. The veterinarians understand that if you do not vaccinate all the animals, then there is a reservoir of the disease and the disease just comes back. So that's part of the equation. But the hard science scientists simply fail to get out of their silos, their little scientific box, to see the world around them. And it goes back to what I was saying about when you're doing your research, in the hard sciences, you must control all the variables so that you can be sure that those results are valid. Well, it gets messy when you go to the field and those variables are not controlled.

As a good example, I was in Mozambique before the Civil War ended. That was a horrible situation. There were landmines everywhere, there were no

services, people were starving. And I ran into somebody who was a maize agronomist, and I was sharing with him my experience of being in Mozambique and how bad it was for the people. And he said: if they just solved the problem of this maize stem borer, then everything would be fine. The maize stem borer is the whole solution to the problem of the Civil War in Mozambique? It did not sound logical, but that was the mindset. And so, many problems cannot be solved until people accept that other disciplines and other people have something to contribute to solve a problem, because it has to do with a multidimensional solution.

Yadira: These insights resonate strongly with me. There are things you cannot control, especially if you are doing social science, applying mixed research methods and integrating qualitative and quantitative information, I identify with what you are saying. Now, we have another question here. When we look at the considerable number of countries in which you have worked in both the Middle East and Africa, what has been one of your most memorable and rewarding professional experiences?

Dr. Russo: That's another difficult question, because a lot of the rewards were personal experiences. I would say that one of my most rewarding professional experiences was when I won my first grant for over a million dollars, \$2.348 million to be exact, in 1996. I was the Principal Investigator and the grant was with USAID to create a Women in Development (WID) Fellows program. We recruited people with WID expertise, also trained them, and placed them in USAID missions all over the world. Although I had worked on two USAID-funded projects previously (in Kenya and The Gambia), this was the first one that I was in charge of. I really got to know how to work with USAID. I followed this up by spending two years working at USAID Headquarters in Washington as an AAAS Fellow, working



MDP Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sandra Russo (cont.)

on higher education reform, developing partnerships with US and other countries' universities. And so, it rolled into many more USAID (and other donor) activities.

Yadira: Okay. Here is another question, as you have been an important part of the UF MDP program since its inception. What advice do you have for MDP students?

Dr. Russo: Because most of the students in the MDP are going to stop there with the Master's degree, I think students need more skills. If you are going to go work for example in an NGO, monitoring and evaluation is so important these days, so you should have a class or even a module on monitoring and evaluation. I think it would be important regardless of whatever track you are on. That is to be able to, not claim that you are a Monitoring and Evaluation expert, but at least you understand the importance of it. I think those are the kinds of skills that you need to have when you are managing a project in the field. Part of the problem may be that the MDP program is only two years and you do not have enough time to do all that and do your practicum. Sometimes the practicums have been students going out and doing M&E or gender analysis but they haven't been trained, because those courses don't come until the second year. So, my advice is try to get some of those skills earlier because you're going to need them for your practicum.

Yadira: I understand. Because most of the time we end up working on many projects where we are concerned about the results, and we will look back and ask if we really reached what we wanted to accomplish from the beginning. Because it can be easier to determine and convey quantitative results, without necessarily attaining the outcomes people aspire to achieve.

Dr. Russo: Yes, because a lot of the times practicums are with an NGO that has a short-term task that they want you to do—do some M&E, a gender analysis, go figure out something with the youth. They have some very specific short-term ideas.

Yadira: Yes, we have so many interdisciplinary tasks that then it's hard to determine which is the one that we really want to concentrate on. Thank you. That's very good advice.

Here is the last question: what are you looking forward to now that you may have more free time to pursue other interests?

Dr. Russo: I am a potter and I have a pottery studio in my backyard.

I'm pursuing pottery, but I also intend to keep traveling and seeing my friends, and staying engaged in development in one way or another.

Yadira: Wow! That sounds entertaining, enjoying what you like to do and inspiring others. Perfect! And again, I feel privileged to do this interview, for all I have learned from you. Thank you again for your time.

MDP 12-year Celebration

Celebrating

UF MASTER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE



MONDAY, APRIL 10TH

Formal Celebration:

Bryan Hall 130 Auditorium at 4 pm

Reception:

Bryan Hall 232 at 5 pm

MDP 12-year Celebration (cont.)



MDP Photo Competition winner **Antony Gitei Gathiru (Cohort 12)**: "Old ferry, Kilifi, Kenya."

MDP 12-Year Celebration Alumni Updates

We were honored by the participation of five alumni who spoke at our Celebration in April.

You can see them and hear their words here:

<https://mdp.africa.ufl.edu/mdp-celebration-ceremony/>

Indah Bong (Cohort 2)

Gabriela Polo (Cohort 5)

Irving Chan Gómez (Cohort 5)

Daniela Lizano (Cohort 8)

Katie Fiorillo Downhaniuk (Cohort 11)

MDP 12-year Celebration (cont.)



Spring Socials



Spring Socials (cont.)



Spring Socials (cont.)





MDP UF Foundation Donations

We have all been witness to the invaluable work being carried out by MDP Students with broad, cross-departmental faculty support and by our growing body of alumni.

Now this is an opportunity to contribute to our exciting program! The MDP UF Foundation Account will support MDP students, for example, in the realization of their capstone field practicums and to attend relevant conferences where they can present their work and engage with other practitioners. Donations can be made online at:

https://www.uff.ufl.edu/give-now/?fund_id=020485

**We especially thank all of you who contributed to MDP
on Gator Nation Giving Day (Feb. 16, 2023)!**

***We wish all our readers a safe and healthy
summer and hope you find opportunities
to engage with friends and family and the
natural world.***