



**Patricie Niyitegeka**

Assistant Director, Nutrition and Global Health Program  
Department of Global Health and Population

**Background**

Patricie Niyitegeka's story begins in Rwanda, in Eastern Africa, where she grew up as the youngest of eight siblings. In high school, she developed a passion for chemistry, and so attended the National University of Rwanda to study chemistry. Two months before completing her undergraduate studies, the Rwandan genocide broke out, forcing a temporary halt to her quest. Patricie does not believe in giving up, even when faced with unreasonable odds. So after a hiatus of a few years, which included losses related to the genocide, Patricie made her way to Benin, West Africa, where she attended the University and in 1999 and obtained her master's degree in Physical Chemistry.

Patricie's experiences demonstrate how perseverance, dedication and a willingness to explore new horizons are essential to success in any endeavor. Prior to her employment with Harvard, she worked at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. This is where she discovered her passion for the intersection of public health and finance through her involvement with projects meant to benefit people living in low income countries. Her work took her back to Zambia and Rwanda, as she coordinated international project sites and the behind the scenes financial requirements, acquiring some of the core qualifications needed for her next endeavor.

In June of 2010, due to a series of fortunate circumstances, she learned about a position in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Taking the new position in Boston would involve some tradeoffs, as Patricie was not too thrilled about leaving the warm weather of Atlanta for the frigid winters of Boston. However, she bravely made the move and launched into her new role as an International Project Manager on international projects with Professor Fawzi (then of the Department of Nutrition and now the Chair of the Department of Global Health and Population). Her work entails collaborations in Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, India and other countries, as she plays her part to ensure the success of these projects. Her desire for her international projects is that they run smoothly so they can make the biggest impact possible.

In her current role as Assistant Director of the Nutrition and Global Health Program of the Departments of Global Health and Population and Nutrition at the Chan School, Patricie explains that each day is different from the one before. Managing global health projects that occur in international settings requires a great amount of flexibility. Her work requires that she juggle skills as diverse as analytical and budgeting skills, for contributing to the development of research proposals; to customer service skills, as the primary liaison

between the School and the local and central offices of funding agencies, domestic and international partners; to capacity building and problem-solving skills, as she trains, monitors and advises international project staff and subcontractors to meet the requirements of federal and non-federal donors.

Patricie is certainly not the chemist she imagined at the beginning of her journey, but is certain that she is exactly where she is meant to be. She is thankful for the support of mentors, supervisors and colleagues, who have made working at the Chan School so rewarding. She plans to continue her work at the Chan School where she is proud to support the mission and watch how success within her role ties into the overall goals of the School!

### **Recommendations for Staff**

**Do not be intimidated by not knowing or understanding something. Be willing and open to learn.** Patricie explained that “you should never put a limit on what you are capable of.” She suggests asking questions and being open about “not knowing” or “not understanding” a particular task or subject. Use this information to build your knowledge base and take trainings and courses to continue this learning.

1. **Identify good mentors.** It is important to have encouraging figures that help you to be your best self. She considers herself fortunate to work with Wafaie Fawzi and Aimee Fox, who have served as mentors here at SPH. “Sometimes when you are stuck, all you need is a mentor to give you that drive to carry on and take on more!”
2. **Network, network, network!** Far too often we find ourselves feeling too busy to attend training or an event. Networking can break you out of that mindset and introduce you to some helpful people. From 2013-2014, for example, Patricie took part in the Foundation of Leadership Training offered at SPH, as well as the Administrative Fellowship Program. Although the programs themselves were life changing, they exposed Patricie to other successful leaders and allowed her to adapt important skills from her peers that she would not have developed otherwise.

### **What Do You Like Most About Working at SPH?**

Patricie’s favorite part about SPH is interacting with people from different cultures. She loves that she is able to work in a diverse environment at the school level, but especially at the department level in Global Health and Population. She feels very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with researchers from all over the world. Patricie believes that this helps show the mission of the Harvard Chan School and truly brings it alive.

### **Resource to You**

Interested in learning more about Patricie and her work, or getting one on one advice from Patricie herself? Contact her directly via email!

### **How about You?**

Interested in telling us your success story? Let us know by sending an email to [kgravell@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:kgravell@hsph.harvard.edu).