

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name : **Laston Petro Manja**
Permanent Address : University of Malawi, Department of Economics, P.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi
Languages : English (Fluent); Chichewa (Native); Portuguese (Beginner); KiSwahili (Beginner)
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PROFILE

I am a [pre-doctoral fellow](#) (under [Professor Dean Yang](#)); an active member of the [Development Economics@Michigan](#) community; and an [African Presidential Scholars alumnus](#) at the [University of Michigan - Ann Arbor](#). I hold a position of Lecturer in Economics (tenure track) at the [University of Malawi](#), and got experience consulting with various organizations and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank. I have held various leadership positions in academic, workplace and in other settings; working with different development partners, government departments, and other organizations and institutions involved in high-level research and development activities.

I was born, raised and educated up to the Master's level in Malawi. My life experience has seen my passion for research and international development grow. I am looking to get into an Economics-related doctoral program with interests in development.

EDUCATION ATTAINMENTS

2022 : University of Michigan African Presidential Scholars (UMAPS) Program
- Audited Multivariable Calculus under Prof. Serin Hong
- Audited Development Economics (Econ 665 and Econ 666) under Prof. Dean Yang

2022 : University of Malawi
-Audited Real Analysis under Prof. Patrick Ali

2016 to 2018 : Master of Arts (Economics) - **Distinctions**
University of Malawi (UNIMA) – Chancellor College
-Distinctions
-Specialized in Econometrics and Monetary Economics
-**Thesis Topic:** An Empirical Examination of the Determinants of Demand for International Reserves in the SADC Region

2011 to 2015 : Bachelor of Social Science (University of Malawi) – **Distinction**
-**Major:** Economics **Minors:** Psychology and Sociology
-**Dissertation Topic:** Determinants of Demand for Subsidized Farm Inputs in Malawi

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Jan 2021 – Present : **Pre-Doctoral Fellowship: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**
- Under Prof. Dean Yang from the Department of Economics.
I provide research assistance in a team studying “The Economics of Health Decision-Making in Mozambique”; by far culminating in a number of publications on [Knowledge, Stigma, and HIV Testing](#), and [Teaching and Incentives](#). The team has Prof. Dean Yang as Principal Investigator and, among others, Professors Tanya Rosenblat and Basit Zafar as Co-investigators. I assist in, among others, preparing documents for ethics approval, developing and digitizing survey instruments, monitoring and analyzing field data, and writing publications.
- Feb 2020 - Present : **Lecturer in Economics (Tenure): University of Malawi**
I teach, among others, Quantitative courses, Development Economics, Labor Economics and Monetary Economics. I also conduct research in various research projects.
- Jan 2019 – Dec 2020 : **Education Analyst Consultant: The World Bank Group**
I conducted data analysis and wrote reports on the Malawi longitudinal schools Survey and government EMIS data, for the Malawi education Sector Improvement Programme (MESIP). I also developed survey instruments and supervised data collection teams for the project. In addition, I participated in Education Development Partner Group meetings arranged by the UNDP. I trained officials from the Ministry of Education on use of available data sets to direct education policy, and provided technical support in their research.
- Jan 2019 – Dec 2020 : **Finance, Competitiveness & Innovation Consultant: The World Bank Group**
I undertook the first ever mapping exercise for business support programs in Malawi for various development partners, government and other NGOs. I contributed to drafting of project documents (such as the project Appraisal Document) for the Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Scaling project by the World Bank.
- Aug 2018 – Dec 2020 : **Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment Consultant: The World Bank Group**
I participated in several consultative meetings (with the IMF, central bank of Malawi, commercial banks, the private sector, government ministries and others) and co-drafted economic reports including the World Bank's flagship publication "the Malawi Economic Monitor (MEM)", a World Bank bi-annual publication that updates the state of the macroeconomy and addresses a special policy issue in Malawi. I also participated in disseminating the MEM findings with various stakeholders including government, development partners, NGOs and other interested parties. I worked with the Senior Country Economist to consolidate and update macroeconomics data on indicators such as inflation, interest rates, exchange rates and others.
- 2018 – 2019 : **Research and Teaching Assistant: University of Malawi**
- Served under Professor Levison Chiwaula.
I provided research assistance in various projects including one “Measuring Household Income among Smallholder Tobacco Farmers in the Central Region” in Malawi. I also assisted him in delivering lectures in various classes including Elementary Microeconomics.

- 2016 to 2018 : **Part-time Lecturer: University of Malawi (Human Ecology & Statistics Departments)**
I prepared and delivered lectures and tutorials to undergraduate students at the university from the time I was studying for the MA in Economics and after graduating. I also conducted research in the Department of Economics, including for policy formulation for the Tea Association of Malawi.
- 2015 to 2017 : **Associate Director: TEREN Consulting Ltd**
I led and managed various research projects, and conducted team building and technical training. I facilitated proposal writing, supervised field data collection, data management, data analysis and report writing. I led the firm in transitioning from paper-based surveys to online surveys at a time when online surveys were less familiar in Malawi.

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2018 : World Bank Internship after graduating top of the class from UNIMA's graduate school
2016 : Was awarded a Master's Degree scholarship by the Economics Department
2011-2015: University of Malawi's (Chancellor College) Deans' list awards
2011-2015: Government sponsorship at University of Malawi

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Select Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

1. Salima, W., **Manja, L.P.**, Chiwaula, L.S. & Chirwa, G.C. (2023). The impact of credit access on household food security in Malawi. *Journal of Agriculture and Food Research*, 11. Available [here](#).
2. **Manja, L.P.**, & Badjie, I.A. (2022). The Welfare Effects of Formal and Informal Financial Access in the Gambia: A Comparative Assessment. *SAGE Open*. Available [here](#).
3. **Manja, L.P.**, Silumbu, E.B.D. & Chaweza, R.D.C. (2022). Determinants of Demand for International Reserves in the SADC Region. *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 1-28. Available [here](#).
4. Kambewa, P., Khangamwa, L., Masanjala, W., Chaweza, R. & **Manja, L.P.** (2022). The Impact of Ill-Health on Welfare of Rural Agricultural Households of Teuka Village in Zomba District, Malawi: An Application of the Individual Household Modelling Approach. *Malawi Journal of Economics*, 3(1): 1-13.
5. Zingwe, D.E., **Manja, L.P.** & Chirwa, E.W. (2021). The Effects of Engendered Intra-household Power Dynamics on Household Food Security and Nutrition in Malawi. *Journal of Gender Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2021.1940110. Available [here](#).
6. Al-Hanawi, M.K., Chirwa, G.C., Kamninga T.M. & **Manja L.P.** (2020). Effects of Financial Inclusion on Access to Emergency Funds for Healthcare in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 2020(13): 1157—1167. Available [here](#).

Working Papers

1. **Manja, L.P.** (2022). Payment Delays for Cash Transfers: The Role of Subsistence Constraints. University of Michigan African Presidential Scholars Fellowship Working Paper. Available [here](#).
2. **Manja, L.P.** & Isatou A. Badjie. (2022). The Impacts of Access to Finance on Household Welfare - A Mixed Methods Approach for Women and the Youth in The Gambia. African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Working Paper. Available [here](#).

Published Reports

1. Allen IV, James, Patricia Freitag, Faustino Lessitala, Arlete Mahumane, **Laston Manja**, RyanMcWay, James Riddell IV, Tanya Rosenblat, Kwasi Tabiri, Dean Yang, and Hang Yu. 2022. "Combining Financial Incentives and Teaching to Improve COVID-19 Knowledge: A Policy Brief." Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan. Available [here](#).
2. Allen IV, James, Patricia Freitag, Faustino Lessitala, Arlete Mahumane, **Laston Manja**, RyanMcWay, James Riddell IV, Tanya Rosenblat, Kwasi Tabiri, Dean Yang, and Hang Yu. 2022.

- “Correcting Misperceptions about Support for Social Distancing to Combat COVID-19: A Policy Brief.” Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan. Available [here](#).
3. Allen IV, James, Maggie Barnard, Zach Brown, Patricia Freitag, Faustino Lessitala, Arlete Mahumane, **Laston Manja**, Ryan McWay, James Riddell IV, Tanya Rosenblat, Dean Yang, and Hang Yu. 2021. “Combating COVID-19 in Mozambique: Round 4 Summary Report.” Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan. Available [here](#).
 4. **Co-Author:** World Bank. (2019). Malawi Economic Monitor, December 2019: Strengthening Human Capital Through Nutrition. World Bank, Lilongwe, Malawi. World Bank. Available [here](#).
 5. **Co-Author:** World Bank. (2019). Malawi Economic Monitor, June 2019: Charting a New Course. World Bank, Lilongwe, Malawi. World Bank. Available [here](#).
 6. **Co-Author:** World Bank. (2018). Malawi Economic Monitor, November 2018: Investing in Girls' Education. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Available [here](#).

Book Chapters

1. Mwale, M.L., Chirwa, G.C., Kamninga T.M. & **Manja L.P.** (2021). Trust in Election Management Bodies, Participation in Demonstrations and Willingness to Pay Taxes: evidence from Malawi. In K. Ross, A.L. Chiweza & W.O. Mulwafu (Eds.), Beyond Impunity: New Directions for Governance in Malawi (pp. 97-114).

Conference Proceedings and Presentations

1. **Manja, L.P.** & Silumbu, E.B.D. The Comparative Potential Growth-Enhancing Effects of the AFCFTA and COMESA Trade Regimes. Paper Presented at The Seventh COMESA Annual Research Forum, 19-21 October 2020, Virtual. Paper [here](#), published in [COMESA's Key Issues in Regional Integration Vol. 9](#).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1. Lecturer - Undergraduate Courses

- ECO 214 : History of Economic Thought
- DEC 313 : Development Economics
- ECO 322 : Monetary Economics
- ECO 413 : Labour Economics
- HEFC 222 : Consumer Education and Financial Management

2. Lecturer – Master’s Courses

- ECO 620 : Advanced Macroeconomics

3. Teaching Assistant

- Master’s : ECO 630 – Quantitative Methods
- Undergraduate : ECO 111 – Elementary Microeconomics
- Undergraduate : ECO 212 – Mathematics for Economists

GRANTS

1. **Co-Grantee:** AERC “Inclusive Finance for Fragile and Post-Conflict States in Africa” Project. Conducting study on “The Impacts of Formal and Informal Access to Finance on Household Welfare: The Case of Women and the Youth in The Gambia” (2021).
2. **Co-Grantee:** IFPRI’s “Enhancing the impact of agricultural extension in Malawi” project. Conducting study on “Agricultural Extension and Technical Efficiency for Malawian Smallholder Farmers” (2019).

3. **Co-Grantee:** AERC AFPON project. Study on “A Comparative Assessment of the Impacts of Malawi Farm Input Subsidy and Irrigation Policies on Child Nutrition Status” (2019).

CERTIFICATES/TRAINING

4. 2022: ICPSR - Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research
 - Causal Inference for the Social Sciences
 - Panel Data and Longitudinal Analysis
 - Introduction to R Statistical Computing Environment
 - Introduction to Python
5. 2022: GSMA Mobile Sector Taxation
6. 2019: GSMA Internet of Things
7. 2016: IFPRI-NYU Improving Studies in Agricultural Communities

RESEARCH CONSULTANCY

1. ECD Coalition 2019-20 Budget Analysis Report
2. **Principal Investigator:** Heifer International Malawi Baseline Study (2016). Small Scale Milk Processing Business Viability Study (TEREN Consulting Ltd).
3. **Data Manager:** Care Malawi End of Project Evaluation study (2016). Echo Flood Recovery Project in Nsanje District (TEREN Consulting Ltd). Was responsible for designing questionnaires, designing and managing Open Data Kit (ODK), supervising data collection, data cleaning and data analysis.
4. **Data Manager:** Concern Universal Baseline study (2016); Project Indicators Survey for Sugar Capacity Building Project Phase III (TEREN Consulting Ltd).
5. **Data Manager:** UNICEF (2015); Assessment of Socioeconomic Life of Women and Children in Nsanje (Individual Consultancy).
6. **Data Manager:** UNICEF (2015); Socioeconomics Factors Affecting HIV/AIDS Positive Adolescents in Malawi (Individual Consultancy).

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Statistical: Stata | R | Python | eViews | Nvivo | CsPro | SPSS.
- Administrative: LaTeX | JabRef | Git | Microsoft Office Suite | Project Management | Project Administration.
- Survey Design: SurveyCTO | ODK | World Bank CAPI/CAWI
- Proposal writing, Data Collection, Data Analysis and Report Writing
- Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

VOLUNTEERING AND ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT (OD)

- 2017 : Started Chirimba Youth Organization to deal with drug and substance abuse and reinstate school dropouts in school
- 2015 : Was appointed Electoral Commissioner for University of Malawi Student Leader Elections

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Economics

- Development Economics
- Impact Evaluation
- Household Behavior and Decision Making
- Labor Economics

OTHER INTERESTS

Hobbies: Playing soccer; Walking in the park; Coding; Playing with children; Maverick City Music.