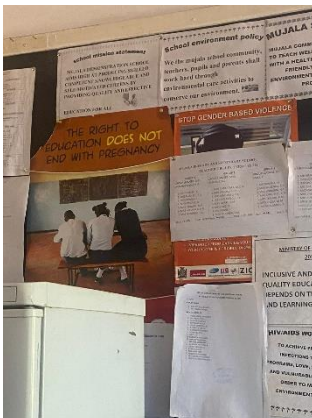


## My experience as a Laidlaw Scholar



I vividly remember the day I first received the email introducing me to the Laidlaw Programme. As I clicked through to the website, words like "extraordinary," "brave," and "determined" jumped off the screen, immediately capturing my attention. It felt like a perfect match for the person I aspired to be. Fast forward to the interview day—I arrived 20 minutes early, anxious about finding the room, but determined to seize the opportunity. Despite the inevitable nerves, I left the interview feeling confident I had given it my all. At that moment, I understood the Laidlaw Scholarship was primarily about research, but I had no idea how much more it would offer.

The journey began with the residential weekend, which exceeded all my expectations. Those two days were filled with leadership challenges, where we learned to navigate complex problems as teams, and the evenings were marked by passionate debates on the world's pressing issues today. Among my favourite moments were abseiling, which pushed me out of my comfort zone, and the chance to collaborate with so many inspiring peers who shared the same enthusiasm for making a difference.

Shortly after, I embarked on the research phase of the programme. I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Zambia, a journey that profoundly shaped my personal and academic life. Living with fellow Laidlaw Scholar Adam Woolf and being graciously welcomed into the home of Musola Cathrine Kaseketi was transformative. But perhaps the memory that stands out most is visiting the home of Precious, my first guide and second friend, in a shantytown near Livingstone. That humbling experience taught me invaluable lessons about community, resilience, and the power of friendship. Zambia was an eye-opener in so many ways, and one of the most special moments was presenting my research in front of an international audience, including a Zambian government minister, at the Zambian International Human Rights Festival. Speaking at such a forum alongside influential figures was a surreal and proud moment for me.

Returning from Zambia, I felt like a changed person, ready for the second year of the Laidlaw Programme. Although it started with some challenges, including a cancelled flight and a missed weekend trip to Trinity College Dublin, the camaraderie among the scholars only grew stronger as we spent six hours bonding in the airport. This unexpected experience became a testament to the resilience and connection we had built over the course of the programme.

For my Leadership in Action project, I travelled to Dubai, UAE, for three weeks, working with *Thrift for Good* under the *Gulf for Good* organisation. My role involved coordinating donations and planning an event to support disadvantaged communities. This experience taught me about the power of sustainable social enterprises and the importance of local impact in global contexts.

Going forward, I know that my Laidlaw journey is far from over. The programme has equipped me with tools, experiences, and a global network that I will carry with me as I continue to pursue leadership roles and meaningful change.

## **Acknowledgements:**

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Foundation for making this incredible experience possible. Your vision and generosity have empowered me to engage with communities, broaden my leadership skills, and pursue meaningful local and global change. This experience has opened doors I could never have imagined, and I will always carry with me the lessons and values that the Laidlaw Programme has instilled in me.

I also thank my research supervisor, Dr. Gillian Bentley, for your invaluable guidance, patience, and support throughout this journey. From the early stages of my research to the final steps of publishing, you have been a constant source of encouragement, and I have grown immensely under your mentorship.

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Finally, a huge thank you to all the friends I have made along the way. You have made this journey not only rewarding but also enriching and joyful. The shared experiences, late-night conversations, and moments of laughter have been essential to my growth. I am incredibly grateful to have met such an amazing group of like-minded, driven individuals, and I look forward to staying connected as we all continue our journeys as leaders.