

End-of-Programme Reflection

By: Felipe Sarmiento Gómez

The Laidlaw Scholars Programme has been a unique and pivotal opportunity in my early professional life. Without exaggeration, it has been the opening door to fulfill my professional dream of doing impactful ecological research and science-based projects in underserved communities.

All the components of the program added to this, starting with the first summer of research that threw me into my first independent research project in a new topic that connected with deeply with my roots and scientific interests. Then all the outreach and dissemination of my work through the Symposium and Conference taught me the importance of storytelling and working on how to connect with an audience. I found great passion and challenge in doing so, as I had always focused on the scientific side of things. It was also very nourishing interacting with Scholars from around the world, as they inspired me with their diverse projects and passions. Particularly, having the opportunity to go overseas to meet the Scholars from Europe was very exciting for me, as I got to make in-person connections I could not have otherwise and obtain new perspectives. Finally, the LiA project led me to work with a unique organization where I learned so much about leadership, cocoa-growing, and the beautiful country of Costa Rica. I really enjoyed the challenge of embarking on a practical project for the first time, thinking how science can be used for tangible, sustainable impact.

The Programme has inspired me to take on challenges, has helped me grow as a professional and as a global citizen, and has allowed me to take on new, exciting opportunities to continue my career in science-based, locally co-created solutions for sustainable agriculture globally.