Alumni Spotlight: Joyce Mumah

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Associate Research Scientist

What year did you graduate from USU and what was your major/research focus?

I graduated from USU in 2011. My doctoral research examined the interplay of social, cultural and economic factors that influence risks of HIV infection among women in Cameroon. I explored the distinctive mechanisms that put women of different socioeconomic (SES) strata at increased HIV risk. Specifically, my research sought to understand why higher SES women in Cameroon counter-intuitively exhibit higher rates of HIV infection.

Could you tell me a little about your job as an Associate Research Scientist—where are you currently working, how did you end up there, and how do you spend your days?

I am currently an Associate Research Scientist with the African Population and Health Research Center in Nairobi, Kenya. I have been working here for the last six years. For this position, I serve as the Site Principal Investigator and Co-investigator on several multi-year projects, including a study on Developing and validating measures of unintended pregnancy and reasons for contraceptive non-use among married women in Nairobi’s informal settlements. My responsibilities at the Center include managing complex projects, developing and implementing effective monitoring tools, evaluation of programs using rigorous scientific methods, engaging donors, partners and government, and disseminating research findings in academic papers and reports.

I started as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in 2012 and was promoted to my current position in 2014. My days vary and really depend on the objectives and deliverables I have for the different projects I manage or provide technical support on. Some days I am bogged down with administrative duties. Other days, I am in the field working with data collectors, developing manuscripts/reports or providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health.

How did your time at USU prepare you for your current position?

My training at the USU gave me the ability to understand and lead research programs. More specifically, I learned different methodologies that are quite useful in designing and implementing programs, as well as communicating research, especially in peer-reviewed format. It also taught me the value of collaborating with others in the field, which is a very useful tool in this line of work.