

# **Godfrey Mchunguzi Oyema is the Global Sustainability Leader of the Year 2022**

**By Bronagh Loughlin**



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The importance of leaders within the sustainability sector cannot be understated. Sustainability leaders have the skills and courage to challenge industries and businesses and act as the voice for the people. It is just as crucial to recognise the excellent work they are doing to fight climate change and make the world a better place.

In this article, we spoke with the winner of our Sustainability Leader of the Year Award, Godfrey Mchunguzi Oyema, the Assistant Environmental Officer with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR is the UN Refugee Agency in Kasulu, Tanzania. His career background has extensively been in wildlife conservation, human ecology, and sustainability.

Additionally, Godfrey uses his social media networks to spread awareness of the environmental issues we currently face and encourage people to act to leave behind a better world. Godfrey's passion for advocating for sustainability issues was ignited during his school years. He knew he wanted to pursue further study in these areas, particularly biodiversity, human ecology, and the environment.



He studied for a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Science and Conservation at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). He followed that with a Master of Science in Biology specialising in Environment, Biodiversity and Human Ecology. Godfrey has had a very interesting and exciting career in sustainability.

Godfrey speaks about his career to date: "It's been quite a journey; I've worked with many different organisations working in environmental conservation, biodiversity, and wildlife protection. My journey is so mixed since I worked with so many different sectors, and now because I have acquired the knowledge and skills, I've been able to work with the United Nations."

Godfrey kickstarted his sustainability career in 2010, working with the Tanzania Commission for Science & Technology as their Associate Country Programme Coordinator. In this role, Godfrey established the Tanzania Biodiversity Information Facility (TanBIF) Portal and co-published the first-ever National Biota Checklist, which included more than 13,000 biological species.

Following his work with the Tanzania Commission for Science & Technology, Godfrey went on to work as the Senior Biodiversity Officer at MTL Consulting Company Limited: Engineers & Science, where he continued to shine as an expert in biodiversity and environmental management. His impressive career continued as he began working as the Environmental Compliance & Forestry Manager for Unilever in 2015 and was responsible for implementing their Sustainable Living Plan, which linked environmental objectives to business operations.

While working with Unilever, Godfrey achieved the Rainforest Alliance Certificate for three consecutive years and created numerous plans to prevent biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. In 2018, Godfrey was unsurprisingly coined as an expert for his experience and knowledge within these areas. He began working as an Environmental Expert for Growever Infra Corp and developed and executed their Environmental and Social Strategies.

Following his work with Growever Infra Corp, Godfrey worked as a Freelance Consultant, providing professional advice and expertise on sustainability issues. Thanks to his vast experience in numerous different sectors, including agriculture, conservation, construction, energy, forestry, mining, and tourism, Godfrey advised businesses on how to integrate sustainability issues into their business portfolios. He focused his guidance on three key sustainability barometers: Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG).



Now, he serves as the Assistant Environmental Officer at UNHCR. His work with this refugee agency has centred around offering advice on alternative sustainable cooking energy programmes, ensuring they are sustainable and compliant. Godfrey shares his personal goals for the planet: “I hope to see a better world for every living organism.”

He explains: “When I say every living organism, I speak about people, plants, and animals. Without a better, balanced world regarding the environment, economy, and society, our lives, businesses, communities, and societies cannot be what they are. So putting these three components together really motivates me to ensure they stay in balance for all living organisms on this planet.”

Godfrey shares his personal values and what keeps him going: “The issue of sustainability needs to start from home, and this needs to rise from the fact that environmental resources are vital to us.

We need to protect, conserve, and sustainably use these limited natural resources. My value has always been to be a custodian and take the responsibility of managing the limited natural resources we have and taking this knowledge to the general public, family, friends, and colleagues.”

Godfrey feels this helps them see that they are responsible for protecting these resources. He believes that through this they will do the right thing concerning safeguarding, conserving and managing these resources. He strongly believes we all need to do this to ensure a balanced world for all living organisms. Many of us are saddened by the realities of the climate crisis and are anxiously trying to figure out how we can get involved to make a difference. Unfortunately, sometimes we do not know where to start or what to do.

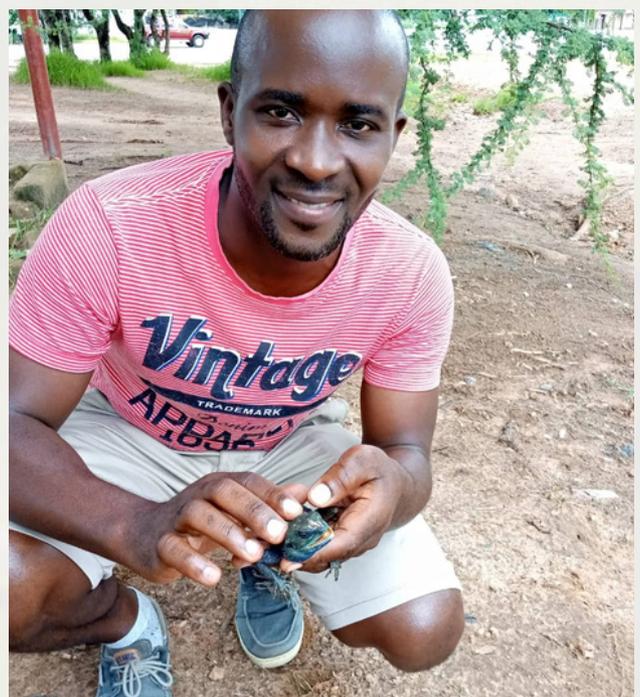
Godfrey speaks on this from his own experience of harnessing the power of social media to drive change: “For me, I use the power of social media, and through this, we can create groups of like-minded people and advocate for environmental issues. I speak to groups, people one-on-one, and communities to discuss our current problems. Social media has provided us with a great platform to do this!”

His strong presence on social media led to Godfrey being shortlisted for the Sustainability Leader of the Year Award. He shares why recognition is essential for leaders and what being nominated for the award meant for him: “First and foremost, I don’t think people should do good work just to get recognised. People should instead naturally do great work without expecting a reward.”

He adds: “However, recognition of leaders within sustainability is critical. This is because someone recognises my work is important. When I received the news I was nominated, I was very excited, and I am still so excited. I’m delighted my work in protecting nature and helping to achieve a better world has been recognised.”

The Sustainability Leader of the Year Award winner was determined by public voting. Now that the news is out, Godfrey speaks on what it means to win this award: “For me, winning this award means so much. This is my first-ever sustainability award with global recognition. The award only motivates me to do more work in this area and continue inspiring others to do right by the environment. It means so much in terms of my career and is a huge personal milestone for me.”

Equally, Godfrey believes it is vital to recognise the work of other great leaders and individuals in the sustainability sector. He finishes by sharing some of his favourite kinds of sustainability work.





He says: “Some work I love is Environmental Restoration Programmes. These projects are so important because we have lost so much vegetation cover right now, and our land is moving more into desertification. So whenever I see other people or leaders involved in these projects, I get excited because I know we are bringing back the nature we lost.”

Sustainability leaders are vital if we are to create a more sustainable, balanced world. These individuals often work tirelessly, and their incredible work gets overlooked. We are delighted to shine a spotlight on all the individuals who prioritise the health of the planet and act in its best interest. Congratulations to all nominees and the winner, **Godfrey Mchunguzi Oyema**. It brings us such joy to see so many like-minded people working to achieve our very mission of protecting the planet from harm.

Godfrey was recently a guest on Moving Water Alliance Podcast where he spoke about the importance of Biodiversity.

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