

My tale to the land of hills and mountains

On December 22, 2022, the time came and I made my way to Switzerland. Eva Winizki, the president of UECD Switzerland, had put together a program in joint planning of how to spend the two weeks of my visit. It was a tight schedule that we arranged so that I could enjoy every week, every day, every hour, and every minute that I spent in Switzerland.



On the morning of December 23, 2022, I arrived in the city of Zurich, a city surrounded by hills, lakes and mountains. I walked with Eva along the Limmat River, the river in the heart of the city, and was fascinated by the cleanliness of the city. What a good culture of the Swiss not to dump garbage everywhere that could pollute the environment, no wonder Zurich is one of the cleanest cities!

We had breakfast in one of the good restaurants along the said river and then went to VONTOBEL Bank to meet my sponsor Hanspeter. It was the first time I met him. I must confess that our meeting was very emotional and one of the best things that ever happened to me in my life. I went with Hanspeter to his house where I was warmly welcomed by the family. I had wonderful conversations with him, we played games with the children that reminded me of my childhood when we played physical games like wrestling while herding cows in the nearby savannah. My charisma with Hanspeter's family was good, I enjoyed the Swiss food and it was fascinating when I was taken to church for Christmas carols and prayers, which is not common with some of the European families I visited.



On December 26, I was taken to the train station and drove to Uster, where I met this wonderful family of Elisabeth's, with whom I walked along the Greifensee, visited the new Zurich Kunsthaus and went to all corners of the city. Later we joined up with some UECD board members and hiked up the Rigi. It was a great experience to stand on the top of this mountain, from which you have a good overview of the landscapes of Switzerland.



In the evening I drove to Engelberg where I was welcomed by a wonderful couple and former UECD board members. Here I had the privilege of meeting one of the founding members and the main sponsor of some UECD students – Phillip. He is a great man, and his passion to support an African female student to pursue vocational training gave me great hope that UECD is indeed doing tremendous work in the lives of the new generation in Uganda. We had a great reflection and discussion about what UECD is doing and how it has accomplished a lot in just a few years. Claude, Nina, the kids and I went on a hike up Mount Titlis, which was almost covered with snow. It was a great experience to stand on the top of the mountain and look at the beautiful landscape from top to bottom.



From Engelberg, I returned to Zurich and met with Eva again for a few days where we discussed various UECD issues and activities with her perspectives. Later, I teamed up with my best friends – Roman and Diana. I met this wonderful couple when they visited Uganda with the UECD team and since then we have become siblings as we call each other 'Ndungu'. Ndungu is a Kiswahili word that means brotherhood, and indeed these two have become my siblings. I wandered around with them all night on December 31, trying to catch a glimpse of the fireworks at the lake. Little did I know that they had organized a lot for my birthday, which was the next day. I was treated to many surprises, from cutting the birthday cake in the middle of the night to bottles of champagne to birthday songs. It was a wonderful and special birthday celebration for me, which I only celebrate occasionally.

The birthday festivities didn't stop that day, they were extended all the way to Gisela's house. Gisela is a big supporter of UECD and has generously sponsored several UECD students. She is an amazing person who is full of humility and kindness of heart. She, along with her husband, organized a birthday dinner for me where guests were treated to a variety of foods. The festivities continued during my visit and ended at Brigitta's beautiful earth house in Widen, where most UECD members gathered for dinner and we said goodbye to each other. Brigitta is a very cheerful woman, full of humor and compassion about UECD activities, and she also sponsored Beatrice, one of the students. On January 3, as I was preparing to leave Switzerland, I met with my friend Fabian – a former UECD board member – for dinner in Zurich, where we played one of our favorite games, billiards, and said goodbye to each other.



I ended my visit on January 4, 2023 and traveled back to the Netherlands. I can honestly say that my visit to Switzerland was adventurous, joyful and incredible. A special thanks to Eva who organized and coordinated my trip. It is Eva's vision, adopted at the founding of UECD, that African female students can pursue professional careers and make independent decisions in life. This vision has held the organization together. One reason why UECD is taking a step forward every day, our students and alumni can attest to this as it is a reality in their lives.

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