

Name: Wanchi Lucia Yen

Program: Master of Science in Engineering Artificial Intelligence, Carnegie Mellon University Africa

Gender: Female

Country of Origin: Cameroon

Wanchi Lucia Yen is an AI researcher from Cameroon, currently pursuing a Master's in Engineering Artificial Intelligence at Carnegie Mellon University Africa. She previously studied Computer Engineering at the University of Buea, navigating her education during a prolonged conflict in Cameroon's Northwest region, which disrupted schooling and forced her family to relocate and rebuild their lives from scratch in Douala.

Before joining the program, Wanchi supported her education by running a small pastry business (Yen Pastries), where she trained young women on baking, cooking and becoming financially independent. Despite financial challenges, she returned to university in 2022, funding her studies through savings, competitions, and academic excellence awards.

Since joining the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in 2025, she has received holistic support including tuition, living expenses, and leadership training, enabling her to focus on academic and research goals while supporting her family. The program has strengthened her leadership, resilience, and sense of purpose, while allowing her to mentor students in Cameroon and support others in accessing similar opportunities.

Wanchi is passionate about building inclusive AI systems, particularly in language technologies for underserved communities. She focuses on sign language recognition and low-resource language processing. She is also a competitive researcher, placing 1st in the AI4EAC Challenge across eight African countries and winning the Tartan Innovate Hackathon at CMU-Africa. She aspires to pursue a PhD and advance equitable AI across Africa.