

## Profiles of the G&D-Rockefeller Fellowship Winners “Enhancing the Careers of East African Women Scientists”

**A Three-Year Program supported by The Rockefeller Foundation and implemented by the Gender and Diversity Program (G&D) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)**

**Round 2: July 2006–June 2008**

### Jolly Kabirizi

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**“I would like to appeal to all women scientists to work hard and stay tough. We should not sit back and wait, but keep fighting for what we want to achieve.”**

Position: Forage Agronomist  
Institution: National Agricultural Research Organization  
Country: Uganda  
Msc: Agriculture, Makerere University, Uganda- 1996  
PhD: Agriculture, Makerere University, Uganda- 2005  
Mentored by: Dr. Jean Hanson  
Project Leader, Forage Diversity Project, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Ethiopia

Dr. Kabirizi’s research focuses on the incorporation of forage legume crops in intensive smallholder farming systems in Uganda. Funded by DANIDA and World Bank, the project’s major research activities include i) investigating the effects of intercropping forage legumes with elephant grass on fodder production; ii) monitoring the effects of intercropping maize with *Lablab purpureus* (Rongai beans) on cob size, fodder yield and quality; and iii) observing seasonal effects on grain and fodder yield in a maize-lablab intercropping system. The project also aims to examine the effects of spacing and staggering planting dates of lablab in maize/lablab intercrop systems on fodder and grain production. Assessments of the benefits and constraints from improved forage crop technologies to the production system and the welfare of resource poor households are carried out in tandem.

In addition, Dr. Kabirizi leads a regional project on “Nutrient management strategies for sustainable crop and livestock production systems in East and Central Africa” within the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and Australia's Academic and Research Network (AARNET) collaboration. Another key area of her research includes finding measures to manage Napier and Elephant grass stunting diseases in East African Countries and training farmers on techniques to control these diseases. She has presented over 15 scientific papers in international conferences and published over 10 papers in referred journals and conference proceedings. She has also been involved in several consultancies and worked with international agencies to conduct surveys, produce technical reviews and co-write working papers related to agriculture. She hopes mentor other women scientists in her institution with the skills and knowledge gained from the fellowship.

She explains, “Since women in Uganda are involved in nearly all processes of crop production, any positive contribution such as improved access to new crop technologies, participatory learning, acquisition of skills and the formation of groups will benefit both individual households and the entire community within and outside Uganda.”

## Kiddo Mtunda

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**“...women scientists need to help the majority of African farmers, who are women, because they feed the world...”**

Position: Senior Agricultural Research Officer  
Institution: Sugarcane Research Institute-Kibaha  
Country: Tanzania  
Msc: Crop Production (Agronomy), Wageningen Agricultural University, Netherlands- 1996  
PhD: Plant Breeding, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa- currently ongoing  
Mentored by: i) Dr. Rob Melis (July-October 2006)  
Senior Lecturer and Cassava Scientist, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa  
ii) Dr. Edward Kanju (November-December 2006)  
Cassava Breeder and Senior Researcher, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Tanzania

Miss Mtunda’s specialty is germplasm development. This includes breeding, selection and evaluation of root and tuber crop varieties (e.g. cassava and sweet potato) that are high yielding in terms of dry matter content, tolerant to major pests and diseases, widely adaptable to the environment and acceptable to farmers. Her major interest is to develop varieties that are suitable for different end-stage products such as food, feed and starch. The development of such varieties involves crossing plants and recombining genes to achieve favourable traits. Evaluations and selections are then conducted in a participatory manner among researchers, farmers and consumers to identify acceptable varieties for different applications.

She says, “Tanzania has very few women scientists who are breeders. During this period I hope to publish several articles related to the topic of my research. I have accomplished several techniques related to breeding and agronomy in my career, but I still continue to learn, and I want to be able to assist and mobilize other researchers to help the farmers.”

In her germplasm development research, she collaborates closely with researchers from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT). Miss Mtunda is also involved in seed multiplication of improved crop varieties in collaboration with non government organizations in the region, extension services and the Southern Root Crop Research Network (SARRNET). Between 1998 and 2004, she actively participated in extension work to introduce cassava processing and utilization techniques to rural farmers, and in the establishment of pilot sites in rural areas in Tanzania in collaboration with IITA, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) and the local government. From 1997 to 2004, she served as program leader for the Root and Tuber Crops Program for Eastern, Central and Southern African agro-ecological zones in her institution. Her career goals are to contribute to the reduction of hunger and poverty in Africa through the use of technology.

She summarized, “I want to be a successful scientist and mother. I want to help the poor and combat food insecurity in my country. Now I have learned that to progress in my career, people skills are just as important as scientific skills. I hope to share these skills with others.”

### **Jane Nabawanuka-Oputa**

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**“The voice of women farmers from rural areas are so important because they work so closely with food production and they know the real problems. As women scientists, it is our duty to listen to this voice and work with them to make a difference.”**

Position: Agro-Processing Technologist  
Institution: Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute  
Country: Uganda  
Msc: Post Harvest Technology, Silsoe College, United Kingdom- 1993  
Mentored by: Dr. Joyce K. Kikafunda  
Head, Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Agriculture,  
Makerere University, Uganda.

Miss Nabawanuka’s research focus is on food processing and value addition techniques for crops. Her work is aimed at generating more income for crop workers in Uganda. Her project experiments with the use of locally manufactured plastic bags in a technique called modified atmosphere packaging to keep fruits and vegetables fresh at room temperature without refrigeration. She is collaborating with scientists from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology for this initiative.

Apart from that, she is also conducting research on cassava processing methods to yield value-added products that would attract international consumer attention. Her project aims to increase worldwide demand for cassava and to market it as a global commercial crop instead of a food-security crop in Africa. She works with farmers, private sector counterparts, cassava stakeholders and other researchers in Tanzania, Zambia, Madagascar and Mozambique towards this purpose.

“I need to have my work published to make it accessible to other scientists. I want to share my experiences with other researchers in developing countries who face similar problems. I would like to focus my energy on finding solutions to food security issues in the rural areas and to reduce post harvest losses, improve on household food preservation skills and to develop instant foods from local food staples for urban populations.”

Another key area of her research is processing technologies for solar dried fruits. Solar dried fruits are in high demand for export but local processors in Uganda still lack basic knowledge on processing techniques. She explains that most workers learn on the job and they have no formal training or background information about the science of their work. Miss Nabawanuka also works with local private companies involved in the export of fresh and dried fruits to improve the standards of their goods and processing techniques.

She also advises women’s groups on fruit and vegetable processing methods and trains them to produce quality products and develop better marketing strategies. In the future, Miss Nabawanuka hopes to establish processing centres in villages and furnish them with processing equipment, and provide training for women on crop processing techniques.

“These women are the very people who grow the food, but their children are malnourished and their families underfed because they sell off their food crops at meager prices when they cannot afford to store them. Household food processing is the answer to improving food security and rural livelihoods. I would like to develop simple manuals for food processing in rural areas that can be used all over the country and translated into local languages.”

When asked about how the fellowship program will help her to achieve her ambitions, she replied, “G&D brings out the best in me. I have more confidence and a better strategy of how to plan my career.”

## Charity Mutegi

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**“...For a long time, many women have kept a distance from science related courses and duties, mainly because many African systems have not encouraged them in this direction from the time they begin school.”**

Position: Research Officer  
Institution: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute  
Country: Kenya  
Msc: Food Science and Technology, University of Nairobi, Kenya- 2002  
PhD: Agriculture, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa- currently ongoing  
Mentored by: Dr. Richard Jones  
Assistant Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid tropics (ICRISAT), Kenya.

Miss Mutegi conducts research on aflatoxin contamination in groundnut in Kenya. She explains that very little is known about the prevalence of this phenomenon, despite the fact that local communities have been engaged in groundnut production for a long time and there have been numerous reported cases of dietary aflatoxin poisoning in the country.

Providing some background of her work, she says, “Aflatoxins are a group of toxic metabolites produced naturally by fungi of the section Flavi, mainly *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*. They are a major threat to the safety, quality and marketability of groundnuts. Epidemiological, clinical and experimental studies reveal that exposure to large doses of aflatoxin cause acute toxicity with acute hepatitis, jaundice and sometimes leading to death. Exposure to low doses for prolonged periods may result in carcinogenic and immunosuppressive effects, stunted growth in children and liver cirrhosis.”

Her research seeks to identify risk factors associated with aflatoxin contamination from groundnuts in the Homabay and Busia Districts in Kenya by assessing the pre and post harvest handling and preparation techniques and recommending possible interventions at household level. From the research, she aims to complete a PhD thesis, publish at least four papers and identify possible food preparation techniques that can reduce aflatoxin contamination at household levels.

Her research constitutes an important component of a broader project aimed at improving seed and groundnut quality and marketability in the Western African region. This project is being carried out in

collaboration with three key institutions, namely, International Crops Research Institute (ICRISAT), Technoserve and Catholic Relief Services, which all share a common goal of improving food security for households at the project sites by increasing their sources of income and nutritional quality of their diets.

Miss Mutegi aspires to initiate a mycotoxin testing laboratory in her institution which could be used collaboratively with other institutions such Kenya's National Cereals and Produce Board, Kenya Bureau of Standards, National Public Health Laboratories and local universities to perform routine surveillance for grains and pulses in the country.

One of her goals is to reach-out to other women scientists as well as women in poor households with her leadership skills and knowledge. She explains, "I plan to use my professional knowledge to train rural women in food preparation, storage and preservation techniques. I want to link them to opportunities which strengthen their health and well being, and provide them with better means to support themselves, their children, and their families."

"Through this fellowship, I have the opportunity to keep myself updated with new developments in my field, network with CGIAR researchers, learn from G&D's electronic newsletters and establish discussions with women researchers worldwide. The mentoring program offered by the fellowship is one that grooms and nurtures female scientists for leadership positions. This will have a trickle down effect as the fellows mentor other young, upcoming female scientists whom they come in contact with," she says.

In conclusion, she said, "As a woman scientist, I've had to work twice as hard to get where I want to be. This fellowship gives me hope. I realise there are so many other women scientists like myself. Together, with perseverance, we can win this battle."

## Agnes Nyomora

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**"It is so difficult for us to break into the male dominated working arenas, and gain the respect and recognition we deserve. Through this workshop and through the information I receive from G&D, I've learned to network and be more assertive. I am prepared for the struggle because nothing good comes served on a silver platter."**

Position: Lecturer  
Institution: University of Dar-es-salaam  
Country: Tanzania  
Msc: Agriculture, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania- 1981  
PhD: Plant Biology, University of California-Davis, USA- 1995  
Mentored by: Dr. Amelia K. Kivaisi  
Professor in Microbiology and Biotechnology, Applied Microbiology Unit, Department of Botany, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Dr. Nyomora and her research team are developing protocols for propagating difficult and endangered plant species using tissue culture. Examples include edible orchids and African Blackwood species. She also evaluates the growth performance of indigenous vegetables like amaranths, African eggplants, peppers, okra, sweet potato leaves and pumpkin leaves in hot and humid coastal environments with the aim of sensitizing growers to cultivate and use them. Her studies are aimed at reducing poverty levels of city dwellers by encouraging and training them to grow vegetables in Dar es Salaam city. She assesses problems

faced by growers who are mostly women and male youths, and liaises with the city officials to identify solutions. Her work also involves the analysis of nutrients and heavy metals in irrigation water by sampling plant tissue from selected sites in the city. With this information, she is able to advise the workers about proper and healthier vegetable cultivating systems.

She points out, “The urban vegetable growers that I work with in Dar es Salaam are the poor and destitute who resort to this kind of work for survival in the city. This fellowship program provides me with skills that enable me to work more closely with these people to improve their livelihoods.”

Through the fellowship, Dr. Nyomora also hopes to acquire proposal writing and publishing skills, and improve her leadership abilities as she believes these skills will mobilize her in her career and provide her with confidence to overcome challenges.

“My faculty is keen for women to participate in leadership positions, but we can’t just place women into these ranks to balance the gender scale. Women need to be as capable and efficient as their male counterparts in contending for these vacancies and this program helps me to make better progress in my career.”

Dr. Nyomora is currently a member of a women’s group called ‘Tanzania Women Leaders in Agriculture and Environment’ within the African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment (AWLAE) program. Their priorities include encouraging female students to take up science subjects and ensuring that these students complete their secondary school education. She also mentors women’s groups engaged in agricultural activities to help them acquire means for economic survival.

## Josephine Okot

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**“...I expect to broaden my knowledge of global agricultural research, network and get inspiration from successful scientists and become a role model as a successful, African woman entrepreneur.”**

Position: Managing Director and Proprietor  
Institution: Victoria Seeds Ltd  
Country: Uganda  
Msc: International Business Administration, Washington International University, USA- 2005  
Mentored by: Dr. Usha Zehr  
Chair of the CGIAR Private Sector Committee,  
Director of Research, Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company, India

Josephine Okot, Managing Director and proprietor of Victoria Seeds Ltd is the first and only fellowship winner from the private sector in this round of awards. The full line seed company based in Uganda began operations in December 2003 with the goal of delivering quality seed to smallholder farmers who produce over 90% of agricultural output in Uganda. The company’s mission is to increase agricultural productivity and rural incomes through research, production and marketing of appropriate and superior seed varieties. She explains that the company has established over 80 seed production centres in Uganda and disseminates quality seed to small-holder farmers through a countrywide network of 47 distributors who in turn disseminate through 400 rural stockists. The company’s products range from seed for cereal, legume and oil crops to pasture forage crops.

The varieties promoted by the company are mainly sourced from the National Agricultural Research Organization in Uganda. In addition, it also markets hybrid maize varieties from South African seed companies.

Miss Okot says, “The seed sector in Uganda is relatively young and has many challenges to address before it can realize the full market potential of the industry estimated at 30,000 metric tonnes of certified seed per annum. Presently annual seed sales are at only 6,000 metric tonnes.”

In 2005 the company established an 8 acre research farm to undertake seed variety research, evaluation and development. The company is collaborating with the Gulu University of Agriculture in Uganda for technical assistance with an aim to build in-house capacity for seed variety evaluation and registration.

Miss Okot aspires to play a leadership role in the regional seed industry with the goal of lobbying for appropriate policy and institutional frameworks that provide the basis for integrating Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME’s) in agri-business in the global economy and improving their chances of success. She feels that this is necessary because the emergence of the global economy has brought new challenges to agri-based MSME’s and addressing them requires significant resources and commitment.

In the future, she hopes to integrate Victoria Seeds Ltd into the world and regional seed market by investing in research and human capital development in the company. She envisions the delivery of new seed varieties to all farmer categories and the use of modern agricultural technologies to help small holder farmers. She would especially like to target women’s farming groups and contract growers and assist them in adjusting to new trade regimes which require stringent quality standards and competitive production and processing systems. Above all, she hopes to address the major issue of food insecurity through her work.

She says, “In the longer term, I would like to become a role model to others as a successful, indigenous, woman entrepreneur and inspire others to take bold steps. She aims to have both business and technical experience to command respect from agriculture stakeholders throughout the continent.”

## **Florence Olubayo**

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**“... This is a great opportunity that will give me a chance to recommence scientific research actively and also develop my potential by learning from those who have succeeded within the continent and beyond. I am looking forward to being a better scientist and leader..”**

Position: Senior Lecturer  
Institution: University of Nairobi  
Country: Kenya  
Msc: Agricultural Entomology, University of Nairobi, Kenya- 1979  
PhD: Agricultural Entomology, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom- 1994  
Mentored by: Dr. Patti Kristjanson  
Operating Project Leader and Agriculture Economist, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya

Dr. Olubayo is an experienced entomologist whose research projects range from pest management of citrus plants and epidemiology of plant diseases to the study of thrips attacking french beans and aphid vectors of potato viruses. Funded by the government of Netherlands, her projects are focused in the eastern, central and western provinces of Kenya.

“I wish to get involved in regional level research, improve my professional visibility, and be a role model to the younger women coming into the scientific research profession; I wish to contribute to food and nutrition security and poverty reduction in Africa, move up the career ladder in my institution and take up more leadership positions to help my country,” she remarks.

As a senior lecturer at the University of Nairobi, Dr. Olubayo and her team of students are also conducting research on mites, horticultural and postharvest pests in collaboration with scientists from the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE). She aspires to publish papers with her project collaborators using the information generated from her research and formulate new ideas for research.

“This fellowship program is important for my career development, because it will enable me to interact with women in my profession who are from different agricultural disciplines, share ideas and experiences, and learn from one another for mutual benefit” she reflects.

As a member of the Kenya Professional Association of Women in Agriculture and Environment (KEPAWAE), Dr. Olubayo helps to mentor female university and high school students, by encouraging them to continue their education and introducing them to KEPAWAE’s series of capacity building and training programs for girls. Her involvement with KEPAWAE also enables her to work with rural women farmers to help them improve food production.

With much enthusiasm, she says, “There is an urgent need to use science and technology to set Africa free from constant hunger. We can do that by empowering and educating our women whose lives are so closely intertwined with food production and provision here. I want to make a difference in the lives of people and improve the well being of communities in Africa that are stricken by poverty. This fellowship program is a vehicle for me to reach out and achieve my goals”.

## Lusike A. Wasilwa

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**“So many people have shown me kindness in my life, and I want to pay it forward by helping other women scientists achieve success. G&D equips me for this purpose.”**

Position: Programme Officer  
Institution: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI)  
Country: Kenya  
Msc: Horticulture, University of Arkansas, USA- 1992  
PhD: Plant Science, University of Arkansas, USA- 1998  
Mentored by: Dr. Jan Low  
Agricultural Economist and Regional Leader for Sub-Saharan Africa, International Potato Center (CIP), Kenya

Dr. Wasilwa’s research at KARI involves collaborations with the Ministry of Agriculture, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) and Kenya Gatsby Trust to disseminate mango production, processing and marketing technologies to farmers in Kenya.

She explains, “In Kenya, mango has considerable potential to generate employment and is an important crop for domestic and export markets. Mango is consumed fresh or processed to make fruit drinks or dried

snacks. It constitutes an important source of energy and may be used to combat nutritional disorders. The tree also has ornamental value because it provides shade and contributes to reduction of soil erosion.”

She works with farmers in Malindi and Kilifi Districts to address knowledge gaps on the proper application of agrochemicals, and appropriate post-harvest handling and processing technologies for mango. Her work in KARI is funded by FARMAfrica, a United Kingdom based non-profit organization who works with poor African farmers to help them to produce more food for their families. At the end of the intervention, the anticipated outputs are that smallholder farmers will be sensitized to health and environmental risks associated with improper pesticide use. Through her work, 300 to 500 farmers will receive training and have access to agrochemicals at affordable rates and gain farming skills which will improve their livelihoods.

She aspires to take a leadership position in a leading national or international institution, and work towards empowering women and reducing child malnutrition in sub-saharan Africa. Her goals are also to publish in refereed journals and initiate research on the development of underutilized fruits which have medicinal properties.

“To ensure that farmers adopt technologies that will improve their livelihoods, I need tools to communicate effectively. In my professional training as a scientist, no training was provided on how to communicate with other counterparts, how to negotiate, how to be an effective team worker or how to mentor,” she contemplates. “These weaknesses limit my progress as a scientist with KARI. This program provides me with information, skills, and access to professional networks: these are very tools I need to work effectively with scientists and farmers alike.”

## Margaret Mulaa

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**“With leadership training, I will be a better leader; one who is able to guide other scientists in the proper implementation of their research and produce results which will make a difference at community levels.”**

Position: Senior Principal Research Scientist  
Institution: Kenya Agricultural Research Institute  
Country: Kenya  
Msc: Applied Entomology, Imperial College, University of London, United Kingdom- 1987  
PhD: Applied Entomology, University of Wales, Cardiff, United Kingdom- 1996  
Mentored by: Dr Ramni Jamnadass  
Senior Scientist and Plant Geneticist, World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), Kenya

Dr. Mulaa received her PhD in Entomology from University of Wales, Cardiff in 1996. She has been attached to KARI for the past 25 years. She is now Senior Principal Research Scientist, and the Head of the Crop Protection Section at KARI Kitale. She is also the chairperson of the Gender Task Force there.

At this research institution, she leads the Bt maize insect resistance management (IRM) component of the Insect Resistant Maize for Africa (IRMA) project. The IRMA project, a collaboration between scientists from Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo (CIMMYT) and KARI, was launched in 1999 with the primary goal of increasing maize production and food security for African farmers through the development and deployment of improved maize varieties that provide high resistance to insects, particularly stem borers. The project is mostly funded by the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable

Agriculture and seeks to identify conventional and novel sources of stem borer resistance and incorporate them into maize varieties that are well suited to Kenyan growing conditions and to farmer and consumer preferences. Her main focus is pest management in maize and cereals, but her research interests extend to citrus pest management, botanical pest control, Napier grass stunting disease, non-target insects in transgenic Cassava, and wheat rusts and pests. For these projects, she collaborates with a wide range of international, regional, and local partners and donors. She also participates in several joint projects with the Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture especially in those which demonstrate crop protection technologies, identify major pests, diseases and provide advisory services on crop management.

“I'd like to set up a project involving regional and international partners to combat Napier Grass stunting disease which is becoming increasingly serious in Kenya. I feel empowered by this fellowship program to achieve the things I want and to improve food security.”

For her career development, she hopes to learn molecular genetic techniques to detect the presence and types of insect vectors of Napier stunting disease. She also hopes publish her research widely, gain leadership skills, become more visible and improve working relationships with colleagues.

She says, “I would like to share the knowledge acquired from this fellowship program with women leaders in the community and help to empower women’s groups and self-help units by giving them the necessary knowledge and skills to be more assertive, better decision makers and better leaders.

## Linnet Gohole

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**“I believe women scientists in Africa have so much potential. I believe they can make it. I'd like to encourage them to seize opportunities in their education, careers and lives.”**

Position: Lecturer  
Institution: Moi University  
Country: Kenya  
Msc: Agricultural Entomology, Jomo Kenyatta University, Kenya- 1995  
PhD: Agricultural Entomology, Wageningen Agricultural University- 2003  
Mentored by: Professor Lennah Nakhone  
Director, Crop Management Research and Training, Egerton University, Kenya

Dr. Gohole is involved in research to promote under-utilized crops like indigenous leafy vegetables for food and nutritional security in western Kenya and eastern Uganda, in collaboration with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and Makerere University in Uganda. She identifies various indigenous vegetable species and finds ways to improve their production, harvesting practices, seed production technologies and marketing strategies. She also collaborates with the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) on several projects and proposal developments on biological control of pests and sericulture techniques (the rearing of silkworms for the production of raw silk).

Dr. Gohole aspires to be among the leading scientists in the area of crop protection with emphasis on the use of Integrated Pest Management Strategies. She plans to form linkages with international scientists, especially women with whom she can collaborate with in areas such as research, consultancy, and advisory

services for farming communities. One of her ambitions is to be able to supervise and develop upcoming scientists, especially women, to be researchers and policy makers and work towards achieving food and nutritional security in Africa.

"My postgraduate students will be the first beneficiaries of my training. I will inculcate a sense of responsibility and leadership in them, and encourage them to move forward in their pursuit of their science careers. I will also make sure that they get sufficient exposure through the networks and contacts that I've formed through the fellowship program."

She adds, "I will develop proposals which involve my junior colleagues and postgraduate students who are women. I want to mentor them and impart knowledge to them."

Dr. Gohole would like to be involved in the mobilization of rural women to form farming groups, as this will help them attain food and socio-economic security. She explains, "Through these groups, they can identify common issues that need attention and seek funding or micro-financing to achieve their goals." She adds, "I will organize training programs for these women on farming issues which include improved farming practices, storage methods, marketing strategies, diversification of farming activities, engagement in high value crops and the set up of alternative income generating activities."

### Everina Jovita Lukonge

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**"I'd like to train other women, be they scientists or farmers, to be independent. This workshop has taught me important lessons and inspired me to have more confidence in myself."**

Position: Agricultural Research Officer  
Institution: Agricultural Research Institute-Ukiriguru  
Country: Tanzania  
Msc: Plant Breeding, Universities of Birmingham and Reading, United Kingdom- 1996  
PhD: Plant Breeding, University of Free State, South Africa- 2006  
Mentored by: Dr. Regina Kapinga  
Vitamin A for Africa (VTAA) Project Coordinator and Agronomist, International Potato Center (CIP), Kenya

Dr. Lukonge is currently involved in crop breeding research, with special focus on cotton. She uses cross-hybridization techniques and molecular marker methods to develop cotton varieties which are not only resistant to pests and diseases but also adaptable to the environment and have improved yields, quality and fibre compositions. She explains that these newly developed cotton varieties are then tested on field-trials in collaboration with farmers, extensionists, agronomists, entomologists and fibre technologists who work together as a team to assess the growth performance of the varieties and select those that are feasible for release. Better cotton varieties will have a positive impact on the income and livelihoods of the rural poor especially women. Dr. Lukonge also handles genetic collection and conservation of cotton varieties and maintenance of cotton germplasm material which will be used for future hybridization studies in her institution.

She hopes to increase her visibility through the opportunities presented by this fellowship program and to publish extensively in peer-reviewed journals. She aspires to become an internationally known scientist and

a confident leader with the ability to train and influence other women scientists for the purpose of alleviating poverty and improving food security in Africa.

She remarks, “I am willing to mentor the female staff in my research institution because many women scientists here are in need of access to opportunities to improve their careers. Chances of career development programs are so few and competitive in Africa that not all women will experience such training. I will make it a point to share my skills and training with them.”