



AWARD Fellow:
Dr. Isabel Wagara

Position:	Senior Lecturer
Institution:	Department of Biological Sciences, Egerton University
Country:	Kenya
PhD:	Plant Pathology, Nairobi University, Kenya 2005
Mentored by:	Dr. Alice W. Kamau, Senior Lecturer Department of Crops, Horticulture and Soil Sciences Faculty of Agriculture, Egerton University

"The skills I gain through this fellowship will improve my interactions with smallholder farmers. I will be able to better understand their problems and help formulate practical interventions."

Dr. Wagara has done much of her research on beans - a major dietary staple and an important income-earner for smallholder farmers in Kenya. She is working to develop bean varieties rich in nutrients, resistant to major diseases and pests, and tolerant to low soil fertility. She is also studying farmers' knowledge about and use integrated pest management.

Dr. Wagara is also interested in producing affordable mushroom spawn. She wants to promote the cultivation and use of edible and medicinal indigenous mushrooms. Mushrooms are used locally, both as a nutritional food and in treating many illnesses. Mushroom cultivation requires little space and uses agricultural and industrial waste, but it has been underexploited for lack of production skills and of viable spawn.

Dr. Wagara wants to be a role model for students, especially female students, in Kenya where enrolment in university agricultural courses has decreased during the past decade. She hopes to encourage them to study crop sciences, build their self-confidence and enable them to take up leadership positions in the community.