



**2011 AWARD Fellow**  
**Dina Nabasumba**

<b>Position</b>	Research assistant
<b>Institution</b>	Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (ZARDI), Mbarara
<b>Country</b>	Uganda
<b>BSc</b>	Forestry, Makerere University, 2009
<b>Mentor</b>	Zepher Bakeiha, Zonal agroforestry coordinator Vi Agroforestry Project, Masaka

*Research area: Focusing on developing agro-forestry innovations that will increase food security and household income while promoting environmental conservation.*

Dina Nabasumba's father, an Anglican priest, has always reminded her to "live to leave a legacy" and that is what this enthusiastic young forestry researcher plans to do. "My father sacrificed to give my four siblings and me an education. He gave his best, and therefore I have decided to give my best to everything I do," says Nabasumba, who studied hard to get a government scholarship to university.

Nabasumba's mother, a farmer who "implements new ideas easily," according to her daughter, strongly influenced her decision to pursue a forestry career. As a member of a farmers' training group, her mother learned to produce vegetables and eucalyptus trees. "She implemented all she learned and sold the surplus wood, which improved our standard of living compared to other families in our village, and it paid for our school fees and other needs," recalls Nabasumba. "I saw trees in action, so to speak, and realized that they are an investment that brings short- and long-term returns, and I wanted to study them."

In her work as a research assistant at ZARDI, Nabasumba enjoys discovering new information that will directly help farmers. "Farmers tend to go for 'improved' varieties without understanding whether they will grow in their area," she explains. "However, we know the best-performing fruit varieties and can confidently tell them which mangoes and apples will do well in our specific zone."

Having recently commenced a master's program in agroforestry at Makerere University, Nabasumba wants to focus on developing related products, such as improved fodder using dried calliandra plants. "Farmers didn't know about the nutrients in the dried leaves, and the potential was being overlooked," she says. "They plant it among their crops, but they let it overgrow instead of cutting it back to make it sprout more, and then using it for fodder."

While she enjoys research, Nabasumba's passion is working shoulder-to-shoulder with smallholders during on-farm trials organized by ZARDI. "For example, we teach them the benefit of pruning, what causes diseases, and some control measures," she explains. "They see the benefit of these things in action, because they can compare pruned and non-pruned fruit trees." As part of her master's research, Nabasumba wants to publish

a paper about the status of fruit production in Uganda, including the knowledge and practices, as well as the biophysical and social economic factors affecting the industry.

Enthusiastic about so many potential research opportunities, Nabasumba says she appreciates how AWARD has helped her to focus on her goals. “The seminars on personality types at the Mentoring Orientation Workshop enabled me to know myself better and understand what I need to do to achieve my goals,” she shares. “I’ve put them down on paper for the first time, and I know I have a meaningful journey ahead.”

As an AWARD Fellow, Nabasumba plans to build her professional network and to present her research at a science conference. “I want to show my ability to package information and collaborate with others.”

Nabasumba also looks forward to learning from her mentor—a second-generation teacher of her family. “He trained many farmers, including my mother, on how to practice agroforestry. We still benefit from those trees, long after the project has finished in our area,” she says. “He brought something to our family that made a real difference in our lives—knowledge and hope.”

Inspired by her mentor’s influence and her parents’ perseverance, Nabasumba is determined to leave her own mark. “I want to produce something that will have an impact on someone else’s life. I’m so happy when a farmer comes for advice, and later says, ‘Yes, that was the right thing to do,’” says Nabasumba. “I’m grateful to be an AWARD Fellow, and I’m going to make people realize that it’s worthwhile to invest in women.”

*Nabasumba is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development. For more information, visit [www.awardfellowships.org](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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