



2010 AWARD Fellow
Teddy Amuge

Position:	Research assistant
Institution:	National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) Namulonge
Country:	Uganda
MSc:	Crop Science, Makerere University, 2010
Mentored by:	Dr. Lilian Waiboci-Muhia Department of Biochemistry University of Nairobi

Research area: Integration of molecular breeding tools in the fight against major cassava virus diseases and cassava brown streak disease.

A gifted young scientist, Teddy Amuge is determined to help find a solution to cassava virus diseases, including cassava brown streak disease that has the potential to wipe out Uganda's entire cassava crop. In her research, she is blending conventional breeding strategies with molecular tools (gene-based markers and single nucleotide polymorphisms) to stem these devastating viruses.

"If a family loses 100 percent of its cassava crop, its entire livelihood is gone. As a researcher, I want people who don't even know what molecular biology means to have their daily bread because of what I'm doing in the lab," says Amuge, who recently won a PhD scholarship at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Kenya. "I intend to do what I call 'honest' research; I want to do research not just to make a living, but to make a difference in the lives of poor families just like mine."

Amuge's father died when she was 11 years old, leaving his wife with 10 children. Her mother sold vegetables and brewed beer, earning about US\$50 a month—not enough to pay for Amuge's annual school fees. "I only went to school for a few months at a time, so I had to study hard to get the whole year's syllabus done."

Getting an education was financially difficult and dangerous in war-torn northern Uganda. Landmines littered the school bus routes. Rebels from the Lord's Resistance Army often attacked schools and abducted girls, taking them to Sudan to work as porters or sex slaves. Most never returned.

Amuge chooses to remember the kindness, rather than the cruelty, of those days. "When I couldn't pay the US\$100 fee for my university entrance exams, my chemistry teacher treated me as his own, spending hours after class to teach me some basics that I didn't understand, and telling me to work hard and God would take care of the rest. Only three of us from a class of 70 made it to university that year," recalls Amuge, who won a government scholarship. "For the first time in my life, I didn't need to worry about school fees."

As an AWARD Fellow, Amuge looks forward to meeting scientists from different disciplines and learning how to use e-libraries, but mastering mentoring skills is what interests her most. Amuge will be mentored by a senior scientist for one year, and she will mentor a junior scientist herself in the second year of the program.

"I want to encourage girls to discover their gifts," says Amuge, a natural leader who already counsels and tutors several undergraduate students. "I want them to know that they have the will to progress, even if they don't have much else."

Amuge is one of 180 African woman 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. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org
