



2011 AWARD Fellow
Anne Gesare Timu

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| Position | Research attachment |
| Institution | Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development |
| Country | Kenya |
| BSc | Agricultural education and extension University of Nairobi, 2009 |
| Mentor | Professor Willis Oluoch-Kosura, Senior lecturer University of Nairobi |

Research area: Working on a project that targets poor rural smallholder farmers in marginal areas of Kenya to develop strategies of reducing food insecurity through the promotion, production, and marketing of orphan crops.

Since Anne Gesare Timu spent most of her time on the farm with her mother during primary school, it only seems natural that this influenced her choice of career. After finishing high school, she taught agriculture and biology even before getting a university degree. When she decided to continue her education, she opted for agricultural education and extension at the University of Nairobi, graduating with a BSc in 2009.

Currently enrolled in a master's program in agricultural and applied economics at the University of Nairobi, Timu is writing a thesis on the adoption and commercialization of sorghum, a cereal that grows in semi-arid areas of Africa. "I went to one of the marginal areas of Kenya—Mbeere South—and spoke to farmers," she says. "I discovered that some have very little food, depending only on maize and beans." Her aim is to develop strategies for reducing food insecurity, poverty, and malnutrition through the production, promotion, and marketing of orphan crops, including sorghum.

"Orphan crops are a diverse set of locally adapted crops that are tolerant to drought and low soil fertility, yet they receive little attention from policy makers in terms of enhancing their production, value addition, and marketing," Timu explains. Examples of orphan crops include sorghum, finger millet, cassava, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, green gram, and pumpkin.

Timu's immediate goal is to finish her master's, and then apply for PhD in the field of food economics. "I want to take my doctorate at Cornell University or Michigan State," she says. "This will give me an edge in the profession. I hope to work for an agricultural institute that works directly with farmers, such as KARI."

Timu sees the AWARD Fellowship as being all about networking. She is also eager to work with her mentor. "He's a renowned economist in Africa, and I would like to be like him. I am humbled that he agreed to be my mentor," she says.

Like many women her age, Timu struggles with work-life balance. "I have a child and it's hard when I have to leave her, and sometimes it's difficult to meet deadlines due to family responsibilities. I often have to sacrifice, but I am thankful that I have a very supportive husband."

Timu 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
