



Ngozi Linda Edoh
2015 AWARD Fellow

Position	Research Scientist
Institution	National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike
Country	Nigeria
MSc	Environmental Chemistry, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, 2014
Mentor	Dr. Chiedozie Egesi, Assistant Director Biotechnology, NRCRI, Umudike, Nigeria
Research Area	Genetic improvement of root and tuber crops while ensuring safety of biotechnology products extended to poor farmers.

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Ngozi Linda Edoh remembers accompanying her mother to the cassava farm as a six-year-old child, and she is sure that this early exposure to farming is what piqued her interest in agriculture. The scientist who loves laboratory analysis was drawn to a career in research. After completing a bachelor’s degree in Applied Chemistry, she moved on to a master’s in Environmental Chemistry, graduating in 2014.

Armed with a BSc in 1995, Edoh worked as a research consultant in the field of environmental chemistry, but took a career break between 2000 and 2007 to raise her children. Upon returning to work, she was determined to make up for her absence from the competitive field. “I felt I needed to get back on my feet again as I knew I had lost some years,” she says.

In 2012, Edoh met Joy Adiele who inducted her into the NRCRI and began mentoring her, even before she became an AWARD Fellow. “She became my role model, giving me tips on how to improve myself,” she says. Adiele was a 2013 Fellow who made Edoh her AWARD Fellow’s mentee; sharing the knowledge and skills she had gained from AWARD. “She took me through all the things I need to develop my career—research, writing, and gaining skills in communications and presentations.”

This initial mentorship relationship helped to boost Edoh’s confidence. Of the new scientists employed in 2011 at NRCRI, she was the only one who made a presentation during the institute’s annual workshop in 2012. This visibility, coupled with her resourcefulness and dedication resulted in her appointment as the

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AWARD is a career-development program that equips top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills through tailored fellowships. AWARD is a catalyst for innovations with high potential to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of African smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.

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head of the biosafety unit. With the same drive, she applied for and won a competitive one-year fellowship with the European Biosafety Association (EBSA). “I have always found that everything worth achieving will have obstacles in the way—you’ve got to have the determination to overcome them,” she says with conviction.

Currently working on the genetic improvement of cassava, Edoh hopes her research outputs will have an impact on farmers. “We have challenges such as diseases, postharvest losses, and a lack of micronutrients in cassava,” she explains. “Using biotechnology tools, my research aims to make cassava more nutritious, and readily available to resource-poor farmers.” She is currently doing confined field trials on two sets of genetically modified (GM) cassava—one fortified with different concentrations of iron and the other with beta-carotene. She is analyzing the agronomic performance of the newly produced GM lines for regulatory purposes.

Edoh is also conducting research on the in-vitro establishment of *Plectranthus esculentus* (Livingstone potato, or LSP) to develop and establish an in-vitro protocol for the induction of somatic embryogenesis and regeneration of LSP, and to develop acclimatization protocols to improve the crop’s sustainability.

Edoh is keen to increase her research skills so she can contribute to improving the nutrition and livelihoods of smallholder farmers through innovative research and development. She is currently making applications for a PhD, as she believes pursuing an advanced degree will help to hone these skills.

“As a chemist and an agriculturalist, I share knowledge on how to improve people’s lives and livelihoods,” she says. Through a church forum, she educates women on agriculture, food and nutrition, sanitation, family planning, and financial independence. While doing her national service, the scientist educated women on good nutrition. “Many women and children do not have access to vitamin A, and vitamin A deficiency can lead to blindness,” observes Edoh. “I learned that the institute was doing research on vitamin A-fortified cassava, a project that was piloted by my AWARD Mentor—his innovations in R&D have really inspired me,” she says with pride, adding that she is involved in the research project.

“The AWARD Fellowship is highly treasured in my institute,” says Edoh, who plans to share information gained through AWARD with her colleagues through a biotech e-group in addition to contributing to proposal writing and research work. She is keen to debunk the myth that women are not good in the sciences. “Women are strong, not weak vessels who are unable to move further,” she says emphatically.