



2014 AWARD Fellow  
**Linda Kairuthi Ethangatta**

“With proper nutrition, you can bring severely malnourished patients back to life without medicine, using food to rehabilitate them.”

Position	Director
Institution	Institute of Research, Development, and Policy African Nazarene University
Country	Kenya
PhD	Human Nutrition, University of Alberta, 1993
Mentor	Charity Kabutha, Consultant and Lecturer Gender and Participatory Development, University of Nairobi
Research Area	Application of science and technology, including the use of solar drying, to reduce postharvest produce losses and reduce undernutrition of young children and mothers.

Linda Kairuthi Ethangatta’s parents were small-scale mixed farmers who encouraged their children to go to school. While in high school, Ethangatta was so impressed by a promotional presentation showing a woman walking confidently through the home economics laboratories at the University of Nairobi that she enrolled in the program. “I had no doubt that this was the course for me,” she says.

After graduating, Ethangatta became a high school home economics teacher, but she had something else in mind for her future. “I dreamed of furthering my education, and I knew that would only happen if I worked at the university,” she says. After six years of teaching, she was hired as a graduate assistant at Kenyatta University College in Nairobi, and obtained two MSc degrees and a PhD over a 13-year period.

During her second MSc, she began focusing on human nutrition. “This test course was a balance between food security and health, sponsored by the German government and Canada’s International Development Research Centre to produce scientists who would be effective trainers and community-level change agents,” she recalls.

Her advisor at the time encouraged her to convert her two MSc degrees to a PhD in Human Nutrition. She is happy to see that nutrition has grown into a more visible discipline, separate from home economics, and that it is taken more seriously. “With proper nutrition, you can bring severely malnourished patients back to life without medicine, using food to rehabilitate them,” she explains.

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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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Currently, Ethangatta is working on two projects. The first is focused on building the capacity of youth to empower them to find jobs in the agricultural value chain. "We are working with rural youth groups to put the training they receive into practice at the community level."

Using the same model, the second project focuses on the link between agricultural technology and nutrition, training women's groups to preserve vegetables through solar drying so they are available throughout the year. "When vegetables are not in season, they are too expensive for nutritionally vulnerable households to buy, and women have to travel long distances in search of food," explains Ethangatta.

To connect the two projects, the youth will be empowered as community change agents, sharing their training and successes with women's groups.

Ethangatta has devoted much of her career to achieving her long-term career goal of seeing healthy children. Her personal goal is to reduce the time mothers spend in search of food. "I want to teach them to add value to the food they grow through preservation, so that they can commit the time saved to improving the quality of life for their entire households, especially children," she says.

Ethangatta plans to share the knowledge she gains as an AWARD Fellow with her institution. "As director, I will use my AWARD experience to build capacity in gender-responsive research through student and faculty seminars within the institute," she says. "I also want to mentor rural women to help them appreciate the importance of linking health and food security with their own well-being."