



Lilian Achieng Gogo
2015 AWARD Fellow

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Position	Lecturer
Institution	Egerton University
Country	Kenya
PhD	Food Science, Egerton University, 2012
Mentor	Professor Faraj Abdul Kipruto, Chair, Dairy and Food Science and Technology Department, Egerton University
Research Area	Improvement of postharvest food processing and value addition of farm produce through development of simple, fast, and effective tools.

Lilian Achieng Gogo was raised in a large family, the 6th-born of 13 children, and the only one her father educated successfully. “I didn’t drop out like my older siblings so he paid my fees,” she says. And she didn’t let him down, eventually obtaining a PhD. “During my PhD graduation my mother cried; she couldn’t believe what I had achieved,” she remembers with tears in her eyes. “After seeing what education had helped me achieve, my mother enrolled in primary school at age of 62 years and is now in class 3.”

After completing her bachelor’s degree, Gogo worked with a dairy company for a short time before starting an MSc in Food Science and Technology. Although a slight deviation from the dairy science and technology she studied as an undergraduate, she thought the course broadened her scope to include other foods. Her project involved developing high-protein yoghurt for use by people who require protein dense foods like the children, the elderly and the sick. The work was successful and her results were published in a scientific journal.

Gogo took a two-year break after she completed her master’s degree to raise her young children before winning a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship for PhD studies at Egerton University, where she had completed her first two degrees. Her research was on finding a safer alternative for processing cured meats. “I characterized organic compounds and antimicrobial properties of fermented cabbage juice and used this juice as a substitute (natural additive) for nitrates and nitrites—which are potential carcinogens—in the processing of cured meats,” she explains. She produced two publications from this work.

Now a lecturer at Egerton, Gogo’s interest is in value addition of foods and food safety. She has written a proposal to work on two traditional grain-based brews, chang’aa and busaa, that women produce as a source of livelihood. “Women raise and educate their children using proceeds from selling these brews, but they are not licensed, have no set quality standards, and are considered illegal

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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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brews," she states. These issues result in public-health problems for those who drink the brews and a loss of income to the poor women when their brew is impounded by the police. She therefore wants to develop a value-added scientific method for the production of these local brews to ensure that they are safe for human consumption. She hopes that the results of her work will inform policy makers to enable licensing of smallholder women brewers who have certificates of safe and quality liquor production. Once the drinks are licensed, communities can buy them directly from the brewers.

Gogo—who did odd jobs all through school and university to help pay fees for her younger siblings—donates half her salary to adopt women in her rural village because of what she went through growing up. She hopes to use the skills and knowledge gained from the AWARD Fellowship to help her contribute to her community becoming food secure, mentoring girls and women to believe in their self worth and become economically productive.

She looks forward to being a better role model, a better scientist and a better leader after the fellowship, as she works toward achieving her career-development goals.

Gogo aspires to be a member of parliament or a government cabinet secretary so that she can have a say in improving the livelihoods of people in rural communities in Kenya. "When I was growing up I encountered many of the problems rural people are still facing, and I want to be in a position to do something about it. Other women must also take up the challenge and spear head informing and influencing legislation that affects matters of agricultural development" she says.