



2014 AWARD Fellow
Maureen Nanziri Mayanja



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Position	Assistant Lecturer, Department of Biosecurity, Ecosystem and Public Health
Institution	College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity, Makerere University
Country	Uganda
MSc	Agricultural Development, Aberdeen University U.K., 1998
Mentor	Dr. Juliet Kiguli, Senior Lecturer, Community Health and Behavioural Science, School of Public Health Makerere University
Research Area	Food Security and climate variability in rural livestock keeping communities.

Maureen Nanziri Mayanja loved animals as a child, which influenced her decision to study veterinary medicine at Makerere University. However, after more than 10 years of working with livestock as a public veterinarian in Uganda's Mpigi and Wakiso districts on the western shores of Lake Victoria, she became increasingly interested in their human keepers.

"I realized that animal disease or low production had a lot more to do with the people taking care of them than with the animals themselves," she explains. "It was not that the pathogens or production problems could not be treated, but there was something about the way the livestock keepers managed the animals that required more attention."

Mayanja saw that different livestock farmers lacked either the skills, knowledge, or the resources to more effectively manage their animals. She helped them by introducing programs, including those within her own organization, that could provide funding and support for training, vaccination, and other animal health and production improvement services.

As a veterinarian, Mayanja was also exposed to public health issues, including the need to prevent disease transmission from animals to humans. She learned about socio-economics, development, and agricultural extension, while completing a master's degree in Agricultural Development at Aberdeen University. For her PhD research in Food Security (Public Health) at Makerere University, Mayanja is bringing together her diverse academic and professional

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experiences to investigate food security among Ugandan pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the context of climate variability.

Studying food security and climate variability appealed to Mayanja because of their potential practical applications. The results of her research are meant to enhance community-based resilience and adaptation initiatives, and inform policies to curb the effects of climate variability on food and health security.

"I did not want to conduct research that was purely scientific," she says. "I wanted to concentrate on a more applied issue, which would have a direct effect on people."

Mayanja is comparing the food security status among pastoralists, who rely mainly on livestock for their livelihoods, and agro-pastoralists, who also undertake other agricultural activities to meet their food needs. She is looking at both their short- and long-term strategies for coping with the effects of seasonal fluctuations and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

With data collected from a baseline survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a series of seasonal household surveys, Mayanja is analyzing issues such as diet diversity and animal product consumption. She is considering questions about how climate variation affects household food use as a component of food security and the relative intensity of household food insecurity by livelihood, gender, age, and ethnicity of household heads.

Mayanja appreciates the multidisciplinary nature of her research, and the way it crosscuts the social and natural sciences. "Much of agricultural science eventually targets human welfare, and the uptake of research and extension recommendations depends on people's attitudes and behaviors," she notes. "So linking the natural and the social science aspects is key—and the stronger those links, the greater the potential benefits from innovations in agricultural development."

Mayanja anticipates that the AWARD Fellowship will help to hone both her science and social science skills, build her leadership capacity, and expose her to a wider community of multi-skilled and multi-disciplinary professionals. She expects it will help to propel both her work and influence to a greater national and international scale, while also benefiting livestock-keeping communities, her home institution, and her students.

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