



2013 AWARD Fellow  
**Kitty Mngoli**

<b>Position</b>	Volunteer Program Assistant
<b>Institution</b>	Eagles Relief and Development Programme
<b>Country</b>	Malawi
<b>BSc</b>	Nutrition and Food Science, University of Malawi, 2010
<b>Mentor</b>	Dr. Agnes Mwangwela, Lecturer Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

*Research area: Promotion of cultivation and consumption of indigenous foods at household level to curb micro-nutrient deficiencies and nurture the environment.*

As a secondary school student, Kitty Mngoli was profoundly influenced by an awareness event organized by a group of college students, where she heard disturbing statistics comparing the level of malnutrition in Malawi to that of war-torn countries.

“Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 30 percent of under-five children being malnourished, and an infant mortality rate of 229 per 1,000 live births,” says Mngoli, who is resolved to do something to help change the situation, inspired by her parents and encouraged by her older sister, an AWARD Alumna. “My long-term vision for agricultural research is to promote the consumption of indigenous foods at the household level. Most people don’t realize that the indigenous crops are more nutritious, less expensive, and environmentally friendly.”

After attaining a bachelor’s degree in Nutrition and Food Science from the University of Malawi, Mngoli began working on a project sponsored by UNDP and coordinated by the Lilongwe City Council, which partnered with Bunda College of Agriculture, Four Seasons Nursery, and two local NGOs dealing with sustainable agricultural waste management. “The objective of this project was to create employment opportunities for smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, and help to improve their livelihoods,” says Mngoli. Her responsibilities included mobilizing local communities to make compost from their garden waste, which, the Four Seasons Nursery bought for use in their commercial gardens and to market.

“Women don’t normally have a say in the family’s finances, but having their own money made a huge difference,” she says. “Many built houses, paid their children’s school fees, and bought food for their households. They became socially empowered by bringing an income into the family.”

She also trained the women on permaculture, teaching them how to use the land on their homesteads productively to sustain their livelihoods. “Rather than growing only flowers, I encouraged them to also grow vegetables for household consumption to improve nutrition. They applied the compost they made

to the vegetables and other food crops they grew, which gave them a good harvest.”

The five-year project was deemed a success, Mngoli says, given that waste was measurably reduced in the area, as well as incidence of diseases like malaria and cholera. Although she joined this project only at the evaluation stage, Mngoli found it a valuable learning experience, which helped to solidify her future plans. “It was a privilege to work for Bunda College on such an influential project,” she says.

Mngoli would like to pursue an MSc in public health nutrition, and eventually work in the area of gender-related issues in Malawi. “I hope to join a leading organization or a government body in order to influence policy to protect women, and deal with climate change,” she says. “I would also like to train women on nutrition education, concentrating on promoting indigenous vegetables. They grow on their own like weeds, and are easy to maintain and resilient to drought.”

Mngoli sees the AWARD Fellowship as a strong motivator that will help her reach her career goals. “I’m so glad I won this fellowship. I’ve been encouraged to develop and put in writing a life purpose career goal,” she says. “I have already met so many women and men—fellows and mentors—who have brought the message that I can do anything I put my mind to.” As an AWARD Fellow, Mngoli looks forward to conducting a role-modeling event and to influencing young girls to consider a career in agriculture.

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*Mngoli is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. 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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