



Dorothy Birungi
Namuyiga
2015 AWARD Fellow

Position	MSc Student
Institution	Makerere University
Country	Uganda
BSc	Agribusiness Management, Makerere University, 2011
Mentor	Professor Johnny Mugisha Agribusiness and Natural Resource Economics, Dean, School of of Agricultural Sciences, Makerere University
Research Area	Choice of soil fertility improvement technologies in Eastern Uganda and Western Kenya, linking farmers to markets, platform strengthening, and assessment of selling/purchasing arrangements through common bean research.

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Dorothy Birungi Namuyiga and her three siblings were raised by their mother, a second-hand clothing vendor in Uganda. She excelled in secondary school and obtained a government scholarship to study Agribusiness Management at Makerere University. “I made sure I did well at every stage because my mother worked hard to send us to school,” she says. “I was the best student in the science class in high school and with a first class honors, which all called for a celebration at home.”

Namuyiga worked briefly in an administrative capacity on an AGRA project before and winning an AGRA Fellowship for her master’s degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics at Makerere University. She conducted her MSc research using secondary data on the use of fertilizer, conservation agriculture (CA), and organic input in two districts in western Kenya and two districts in eastern Uganda. Conventional fertilizer is costly in the region, thus many smallholder farmers cannot afford to depend on it for soil fertility improvement. “Farmers use the little conventional fertilizer they can buy combined with organic manure, and CA practices such as minimum tillage, mulching, and intercropping,” explains Namuyiga. “We should find ways to integrate the two, knowing the pros and cons of both approaches.” Namuyiga is currently completing her master’s thesis, and she hopes to graduate in January 2016.

Between 2013 and 2014, Namuyiga worked with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) temporarily, where she was involved in several projects, including data collection, entry and analysis for a survey of Ugandan cross-border bean trade. “There is

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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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a lot of informal cross-border trade,” she says. “The research was so interesting. It is good to know which country is producing what, and in what quantities.” The project also showed the extent of lost revenues by government through the informal trade.

In collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Organization, Namuyiga has also worked with over 1,000 women farmers to increase production of a new climbing bean variety—Namulonge Bean 12C—in southwestern Uganda. “The research indicated that the variety does well in highland areas,” she explains. “It is high-yielding, fast-maturing, has good canning quality, is highly nutritious, swells on cooking—and the farmers love it.”

Farmers began growing the variety on small pieces of land in a rocky terrain, and production was very high. A group of 20 to 30 women farmers would harvest over 10 tons a season. The project also planned to link the women to high-value markets on a national, regional, and international scale. The variety has improved the incomes of the women who grow it. “This is one of the highly priced beans in the market,” notes Namuyiga. “It sells for about 3,500 to 4,000 Ugandan shillings per kilogram, compared to other varieties that go for about 2,500 (3,000 Ugandan shillings = US\$1).” Bulking centers have been set up in Kabale and Kisoro, to enable the farmers to sell the beans collectively. “Farmers have also been trained to package and treat the beans,” she adds. Namuyiga has also worked on a Ford Foundation-funded innovation platforms project where the team conducted a survey to establish how farmers were buying inputs and selling their products.

Namuyiga’s goal is to improve the incomes of smallholder farmers, especially women, through capacity building in agricultural produce markets in Uganda. She would like to see farmers cut out the middlemen and get better prices for their produce. The AWARD Fellowship has helped her focus her career goals, and she hopes to network widely and share what she learns with her colleagues.

Success stories from the field give Namuyiga the greatest satisfaction: “It makes my day when a smallholder farmer tells me that before growing and selling the beans, she used to sleep on the floor and had no blankets, but now she has bought a mattress and is hoping to buy more things when she sells next season’s harvest,” she says with a smile. Such moments make her feel that she is contributing to higher incomes and changing livelihoods.