



Marguerite Niyibituronsa
2015 AWARD Fellow

Position	Researcher
Institution	Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB)
Country	Rwanda
MSc	Research Methods, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), 2013
Mentor	Dr. Svetlana Gaidashova, Principal Researcher, Eastern Agricultural Zone Division, RAB
Research Area	Improvement of community health and nutrition through food processing and boosting utilization.

Marguerite Niyibituronsa, raised in Burundi and married to a Rwandan, later moved to Rwanda with her family after the genocide. Now the mother of five lives with her family in Kigali, and keeps busy as a researcher at the RAB.

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Shortly after becoming a citizen of Rwanda, Niyibituronsa completed a BSc in Human Nutrition at the National University of Rwanda, and then began working as a technician at the RAB. Then, she embarked on a master’s degree in Research Methods at JKUAT. “I want to participate in educating people on the importance of proper nutrition,” she says. “I’m particularly concerned with malnutrition in children under the age of five, since health demographic surveys show that there is still a gap in this age group.”

Part of her work at the RAB involves developing programs to train smallholder farmers on the importance of cultivating a variety of vegetables, especially orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, which are an excellent source of vitamin A. “I am working with colleagues to promote postharvest nutrition in general,” she notes. “During a meeting with small-scale farmers, we emphasized the importance of vitamin A.” She has recently begun working on a fruit and vegetable study with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Central and Eastern Africa (ASARECA), and just received approval on another proposal to study tomato and mango, the aim of which is to improve the health of farmers and their families.

Niyibituronsa is collaborating on a project related to evaluating the existence of mycotoxin contamination in Rwandan maize and cassava. “This is a joint International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) project with Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda,” she explains. “Once the laboratory analysis is complete and the results entered and analyzed,

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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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we will organize a workshop to present our findings." She recently won a RUFORUM award, where she worked on a nutrition-education project with mothers at health centers in Rwanda, showing them how to produce soy milk and tofu. Subsequent to this effort, she has published two peer-reviewed papers in the African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development.

Niyibituronsa also participated in a Bioversity International project on how to produce and market banana beverages. Now at the data-entry stage, she and her team will write a proposal to determine the existence of any weaknesses. She plans to continue with her research, moving on to doctoral studies.

As an AWARD Fellow, Niyibituronsa is eager to learn from her mentor, who was her supervisor during her master's thesis. "I am looking forward to receiving training on leadership skills, on how to plan more strategically, and on how to present my results with confidence," she says. "And I know the proposal writing and scientific writing courses will be very valuable." She hopes to attend a conference to liaise with other specialists in her field, and is confident that her increased skills and productivity will rub off on her peers at the RAB. "I believe the skills I'll gain will result in more successful proposals, and I plan to share what I learn with my colleagues."

She has seen first-hand the benefits of higher education, since her salary doubled once she got her master's degree. She expects to go even further with her PhD, not only in terms of salary, but also by gaining skills in the more important areas of research and project management.