

# RUFORUM MONTHLY

## IMPACTING LIVES OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS - A STORY OF A KENYAN YOUNG SCIENTIST

Where education was concerned, I was always ahead of the pack since nursery school. My dream to achieve the best in education started way back in first grade (standard one) and my parents encouraged me to do the best I could. They were prompt in paying school fees and ensured that I lacked nothing. When I passed my O' level exams and secured a place at Kenyatta University to pursue a B.Ed Science course for my undergraduate studies, I knew that I was halfway to achieving my lifelong dream.

I fell in love with Biological sciences (Botany/Zoology) at the University and worked hard. Towards the end of the program when my colleagues were struggling with job applications, I just sat back wearing a smile of satisfaction. I knew what I wanted and told anyone who cared to listen. I was going back to school for a masters degree in Plant pathology.

School fees was hard to come by; the elevated costs for the M.Sc program were hard for my parents to raise. My dream lay in wait as I pondered my next move. I tried working to raise the fees but the pull to look for other alternatives became greater. I also had an inner conviction that work would distract me from pursuing my dream. After seeing the passion, resilience and optimism in me, my parents decided to secure a bank loan to cater for my tuition. I applied and was accepted for the masters program where I was to join Kenyatta University in September of 2009.

The bank loan matured 2 days before the school reporting date. However, the amount awarded was too little to cover the required tuition for the first semester. In addition, a financial crisis occurred at home. Though sadly, I did not hesitate to allow the money to be used to avert the crisis. Little did I know that it was a blessing in disguise. In my mind however, my dream was at stake again and hope became my fortress. I formally postponed the registration date at the University and started a small utilitarian business in the school neighborhood.

By January 2010, I had not raised any money and in my mind, I kept pushing the dream further. Around mid February, I received a text from Dr. Maina Mwangi informing me of the sponsorship asking me to contact him promptly if interested. At first, I thought that one of my friends was playing a hoax on me. Nevertheless, I contacted Dr. Maina who set up an interview for me on the afternoon of the same day.

He explained to me that he had obtained my name from the University's data base on students who had postponed their studies due to financial difficulties. After interviewing me, I qualified for the partial sponsorship from RUFORUM which would cover for my tuition fees. I was elated and

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Above: Carolyn W. Wangungu

- *RUFORUM Monthly* provides information on activities of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture.
- This *Monthly Brief* is available on the last week of every month ■

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The International Food and Agribusiness Management Association 23rd Annual World Symposium. June 19 - 20, 2013, Atlanta, Georgia. [Read more](#)

International Conference on Agriculture and Biotechnology. July 15 - 16, 2013, Stockholm, Sweden. [Read more](#)

Africa Agriculture Science Week 2013. 15-20 July 2013. Accra, Ghana. [Read more](#)

More information on RUFORUM activities can be accessed on the RUFORUM BLOG at <http://ruforum.org/a/ruforumblog/>

For more information about the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Contact: The **Newsletter Editor**, RUFORUM Secretariat, Plot 151 Garden Hill, Makerere University Main Campus, P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda. Fax: +256 414 534153; Tel: +256 414 535939; E-mail: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org); or visit the RUFORUM Website at [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org).



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couldn't wait to break the news to my family. The semester started and within a week I was in class. I couldn't believe the turn of events.

The course under which I was admitted (MSc Agronomy) was different from what I had originally applied for and I was also required to change faculties to the School of Agriculture and Enterprise Development. This was however fully compatible with my choice course; I even worked on a research project which encompassed plant pathology. A question however arose on where I would get funding for research. A call for proposals for a competitive grant by the Kenya National Council for Science and Technology came through. With the help of my now supervisor, I applied and received a Ksh 200 000 grant.

It is now 3 years down the lane; I have completed my course work, research work and submitted my thesis for examination. In 2 weeks time, I will be defending my work and I am positive about graduating in June 2013. I have published more than 10 articles (a journal paper, e-book chapter, conference proceedings and abstracts) and have attended several regional and national conferences/workshops and seminars. I have presented my work orally, online and via posters.

Through the program, I have met a lot of people that have impacted my life positively. I have been able to share other people's life experiences and especially those of model scientists. I have exchanged contacts with countless people with whom I share knowledge regularly. My presentation skills have also undergone a transformation; based on feedback, old wine couldn't be better and I hope to apply the acquired skills during my thesis defense. I have also travelled widely – within Kenya and outside – and had wonderful experiences. The way in which I process thoughts and present my opinions and the manner in which I react to other people's opinions have also changed for the better.

I have started a small project (based on knowledge that I

acquired from the research project) where I intend to introduce passion fruit farming in my home area of Nyandarua County in Central Kenya. The region is conducive for the highly lucrative business, yet it has no prior history of passion fruit farming. I intend to hold intensive training sessions for trainers of trainees (TOT's) who will be crucial in training interested farmers prior to starting the project and during the first 2 years. I have a small nursery where I already have about 3, 000 (2 months old) passion fruit seedlings which I intend to establish a 5 acre orchard with. The orchard will double up as a demonstration farm as well as a personal business enterprise. I aim to install a larger nursery where I will raise disease free seedlings to sell to the community for establishing their orchards at an affordable price. With the proceeds from the enterprises, I intend to expand my farming enterprise to encompass cut flowers and other high value horticultural products. On education, I plan to start applying for scholarships for my doctoral degree soonest.

Dreaming big? One may ask but yes, I have learnt through these experiences that a dreamless person has no sense of direction in life. I have also dared to dream before and I am reaping the fruits of those dreams. The RUFORUM sponsorship has endorsed my lifelong goals and has brought me closer to attaining self actualization. My parents are so proud of me and I can only hope that my community will benefit from my achievements. I now feel that I am playing a very important role in the agricultural sector and always align my objectives to Kenya's vision 2030. This enables me to be a team player in the overall nation building.

Thank you RUFORUM. By educating me, you enriched my family, my community and my country Kenya. God bless every heart that is RUFORUM.

**Source: Appreciation notes from Carolyne W. Wangungu, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: [cwwwangungu@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cwwwangungu@yahoo.co.uk); [wangaridavies@gmail.com](mailto:wangaridavies@gmail.com)**

## IMPACTING LIVES OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS—THE FAPA PROGRAM

Just to thank you as a person and RUFORUM as an organization for identifying me to participate in the review meeting among many students. Thank you for making me who I am today. RUFORUM has added value to me by sponsoring my Msc., facilitating my Field Attachment to work with the little children in primary schools. Over this period of time, i have developed more passion to work with these little ones and i am trying to develop a concept to advance school gardening best practices to well wishers. Best wishes, Stella Apolot- Msc. Makerere University.

Stella Apolot is one of RUFORUM Field attachment beneficiaries under the Field Attachment Program Awards (FAPA)

## PROFILING BOTSWANA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE (BCA) - PROFESSOR ELENIMO B. KHONGA

Elenimo B. Khonga is Associate Professor of Plant Pathology in the Department of Crop Science and Production (CSP) and the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at the Botswana College of Agriculture (BCA), an Associate Institution of the University of Botswana. He holds a BSc (Biology & Chemistry 1978) from the University of Malawi, MSc (Plant Pathology 1981) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA and a PhD (Plant Pathology 1987) from the University of Guelph, Canada.



He started his academic career in 1978 when he joined the University of Malawi, Chancellor College, as a Staff Associate and was promoted as Lecturer in 1981 and as Senior Lecturer in 1991. He served as Head of Department of Biology at Chancellor College from 1988 to 1994. He left Malawi in 1996 and joined BCA as a Senior Lecturer in Plant Pathology in the CSP Department and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2007. He served as Head of CSP from 1999 to 2002, as Deputy Dean from 2004 to 2008. He has served on various departmental, faculty and senate committees of the university Malawi, BCA and University of Botswana.

Elenimo has served as external examiner of undergraduate

and postgraduate programs for Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), University of Swaziland, University of Lesotho, Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Zambia and Lupane State University in Zimbabwe. He has supervised undergraduate and postgraduate student research projects in Malawi and Botswana. He has published 36 papers in refereed journals and conference proceedings and presented papers at local and international conferences in the areas of Plant Pathology and Mycology. His major areas of research interest are biological control of fungal diseases, mycotoxigenic fungi and mushroom production.

Elenimo is a Malawian with a permanent residence status in Botswana. He is married to Alepha with three grown up daughters. Elenimo is the National Coordinator for the Gideons International in Botswana and an Elder in the Open Baptist Church in Gaborone. He loves to participate sports such as soccer and darts and has participated in the first Gaborone City Marathon held on 18 April 2010. He can be contacted at: Botswana College of Agriculture, P/Bag 0027, Gaborone, Botswana. Tel: +267 365 0330; Fax +267 3928 753, Email: [ebkhonga@bca.bw](mailto:ebkhonga@bca.bw) or [ebkhonga56@gmail.com](mailto:ebkhonga56@gmail.com), Website: [www.bca.bw](http://www.bca.bw)

## PROFILING BOTSWANA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE (BCA) - PROFESSOR SHALAUANI JAMES NSOSO

Prof Nsoso joined the Botswana College of Agriculture (BCA) in January 1991 as an Assistant Tutor after completing a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture from Lincoln University, New Zealand. He completed a PhD in Animal Science specialising in Animal Breeding from Lincoln University, New Zealand in April 1996. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in November 2001, Associate Professor in February 2007 and Professor in October 2012. He was appointed Head of Department in March 2011, a position he still holds. As Head of Department, Prof Nsoso provides strategic leadership for effective delivery of course content and proper training of agriculture personnel, mentoring junior colleagues, building cohesive teams to perform university teaching duties, selecting as well as recommending academic and technical staff for promotion and further training. Prof Nsoso has developed and taught several undergraduate and graduate courses in Animal Breeding and Genetics and general Animal Production for slightly over 16 years. He has also supervised final year research projects and MSc thesis at the College. He has also had the opportunity to co-supervise a student enrolled in a regional university. He was appointed external examiner by the Department of Animal Science of the University of Zimbabwe in 2011 and he will complete his stint in June 2013. He also served as an external examiner for two local tertiary institutions for over

two years. Prof Nsoso's research focuses mainly on animal breeding and production. His research interest is in characterisation and utilisation of local genotypes and developing their production standards, crossbreeding and characterisation of locally available feed resources for improved animal productivity. He is also interested in the application of molecular genetics and biotechnology to improve animal productivity in both communal and commercial farming. He also has interest in the control of internal parasites using genetic variation in local genotypes as a strategic research area, which may see farmers reducing dependence on inorganic drugs and promote sustainable management of parasites. In addition Prof Nsoso is interested in exploring the continuum of genetic effects on lean tissue development, growth and milk production. He had coordinated research projects funded by the College. He has also collaborated with colleagues in the Department and other sister institutions in the country to carry out research on various animal science projects. Prof Nsoso has published 51 peer-reviewed journal papers, 29 of which he was the first author. He has also published 7 referred abstracts, 19 refereed and 8 non-refereed conference papers. He has presented his research results in national, regional and international conferences through oral and poster presentations.

## CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Theme: Natural Capital, Resilience and Sustainable Development in Eastern Africa

Date: 9th – 11st October 2013 Venue: Nairobi (venue to be communicated)

**Deadlines, for receipt at ESEA Secretariat**

- April 30th 2013 Abstracts
- October 30th 2013 Full papers (e-mail)

Email: [conference@ecsea.org](mailto:conference@ecsea.org) or [info@ecsea.org](mailto:info@ecsea.org)

## OPPORTUNITIES: JAPAN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) has commenced the annual search for awardees to receive the "Japan International Award for Young Agricultural Researchers 2013."

The purpose of the program is to increase motivation among young researchers contributing to research and development (R&D) in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and related industries in developing countries, which is being promoted by Japan for the benefit of these countries. For detailed information, including the Guideline, Instructions and Application Forms of applicants, please visit the website as follows: [http://www.jircas.affrc.go.jp/english/young/yi2013\\_index.html](http://www.jircas.affrc.go.jp/english/young/yi2013_index.html)

## MAKERERE UNIVERSITY MSc PROGRAM SECURES FUNDING

The MSc program in Plant Breeding and Seed Systems at Makerere University will benefit from a new grant to support Cassava improvement. Cornell University is the lead Institution in this USD 22 Million; collaborating Institution are IITA, NaCRRI/Makerere University and NRCRI- Nigeria. Through this grant (title Next Generation Cassava), 8 MSc scholarship for students from East and Central African sub-region, including Southern Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya in the Plant Breeding program will be available. The grants totals to about USD 809, 567 over three and half years.

This grant will enable the implementation of a cohort IV of the MSc program (2014-2017). The Project is on has been approved and Prof. Paul Gibson and Dr. Richard Edema will be travelling to San Diego for the launch/convening in January 2014 although the expected recruitment of the students to join the program will be done in August, 2014. During the visit to San Diego, the team will also attend the Plant and Animal Genomics (PAG) meeting along side.

Under the MSc program in Plant Breeding and Seed Systems, cohort 1 16 students have all completed, in cohort II (19 students; all writing due to submit Dec 2012 on-wards: cohort III (21 students; in coursework, drafting thesis proposals): cohort and the next cohort IV has been secured under the funding. **Source: Dr. Richard Edema, MSc program Coordinator Makerere University.**

## OPPORTUNITIES: TWO NEW DUTCH FUNDING INSTRUMENTS ON FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES WERE LAUNCHED

Food & Business Research aims at addressing persistent food security challenges in Low and Middle Income Countries. It focuses on the urgent and growing need for adequate knowledge and solutions for regional and local problems related to food security. Food & Business Research consists of **two funding instruments**: the Global Challenges Programme and the Applied Research Fund. Both are part of the Food & Business Knowledge Agenda of the Ministry of the Dutch Foreign Affairs.

[Food & Business Global Challenges Programme \(GCP\)](#) This programme provides grants to research that generates insights into the functioning of the global food system. The **closing date for submitting preliminary applications is 9 July 2013**. Proposals should be submitted by consortia of research organisations and various public and private organisations from both the Netherlands and at least one Low and Middle-Income Country (LMIC). Dutch enterprises are especially encouraged to participate.

[Food & Business Applied Research Fund \(ARF\)](#) This Call for proposals invites consortia composed of private and public practitioners organisations and research organisations, from the 15 Dutch development partner countries and from the Netherlands, to submit project proposals for applied research for innovation. Of the 15 partner countries for Dutch international cooperation, following countries are from Africa: **Benin, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan, Uganda**. A grant amounts to a minimum of 50,000 euro (for six months) to a maximum of 300,000 euro (for 36 months). Proposals can be submitted continuously during the course of this first Call for proposals. This Call closes at 15 April 2014. Proposals received will be collected and assessed in three different rounds. Read more on this call by clicking here <http://paepard.blogspot.be/2013/05/launch-of-two-dutch-funding-instruments.html>