

AWARD- Dr. Virginia Wang'ondu and Ms. Catherine Kitonde

Dr. Virginia Wang'ondu and Ms. Catherine Kitonde from School of Biological Sciences, University of Nairobi (UoN) are among 70 women scientists from 11 African countries chosen for the prestigious fellowship African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) 2013.

The two outstanding women scientists who were selected from among an impressive cadre of 1,094 applicants will benefit from AWARD's two-year career-development program that is focused on building their science and leadership skills. The fellowships are granted on the basis of each scientist's intellectual merit, leadership capacity and the potential of her work to improve the livelihoods of African smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.

Generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, United States Agency for International Development, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, and Agropolis Foundation, AWARD is a professional Development Program that empowers African women in agricultural science to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While receiving the award, Dr. Wang'ondu, a Lecturer in Microbiology and Marine Ecology at the School of Biological Sciences encouraged fellow scholars at post bachelors, masters and doctorate level to apply for the highly competitive International AWARD Fellowship thus help maintain the University as a centre for academic excellence not only in Sub-Saharan Africa but also globally.

She is a researcher in the field of Aquatic Sciences prioritizing in improvement of the livelihood of the coastal people through sustainable resource utilization and development of alternative livelihoods to decrease pressure on the mangrove ecosystem which is an important resource and a carbon sink helping in climate change mitigation. She is also passionate in mentoring students both at undergraduate and post graduate level in training and supervision of research projects.

Ms. Catherine Kitonde is a Graduate Assistant, involved in optimal delivery of lectures and practicals in the section of Microbiology, at School. She is a PhD Botany student in the field of Microbiology and Economic Botany, focused on improvement of the livelihood of smallholder farmers, especially Maasai women in North Narok in Kenya, by encouraging and training them to use affordable and environmentally friendly bio-pesticides in the management of fungal pathogens affecting wheat production, to increase yields and maximize their income and therefore reduce hunger and poverty. She is the first graduate from Kajiado Children's Home, a home that supports and raises the less fortunate in Maasai Community.

Ms. Kitonde hopes to be a role model to many and engage in mentoring willing and talented young scientists to be responsible leaders and citizens. She is also willing to collaborate with researchers from different disciplines and policy makers to share ideas, experience, and expand her research area for the benefit of the society.

The University congratulates Dr. Virginia Wang'ondy and Ms. Catherine Kitonde on this achievement.