

NAPB-APBA International Borlaug Scholarship



2025 Cohort



Thierry Hodehou

Thierry Hodehou is a PhD student in Plant Breeding at Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, conducting his research at the Regional Center of Excellence for Drought Adaptation (CERAAS) in Senegal. He holds a B.S. in Agronomy and an M.S. in Biotechnology and Seed Production from the National University of Agriculture, Benin. His research focuses on uncovering the genetic basis of adaptive traits that confer grain mold avoidance and yield stability across diverse climates, using QTL analysis, enviromics, and genomic prediction. He also supports the sorghum breeding program by applying breeder-friendly molecular markers to ensure the successful introgression of key traits. Aside from his sorghum research, Thierry contributes to a broader mungbean project in Benin, where he analyzes genetic data and trains M.S. and PhD students. Looking ahead, he aims to advance plant breeding and genetics by developing resilient crop varieties capable of withstanding environmental stressors and enhancing global food security.



Zelege Keimeso Lango

Zelege Keimeso Lango is an Ethiopian plant breeder and geneticist with over 11 years of research experience at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR). He has played a pivotal role in developing and releasing highland maize varieties that strengthen Ethiopia's food security and led initiatives under the Modernizing Ethiopian Research on Crop Improvement (MERCI) project, refining breeding product profiles and modernizing national breeding pipelines. Zelege has shown strong leadership as the focal person for pulses, oil, fiber, and horticultural crops, and as Coordinator of the AARC Workers' Recreational Club, promoting teamwork and community well-being. He holds an MSc in Plant Breeding from Jimma University and a BSc in Plant Science from Hawassa University, Ethiopia, and is pursuing a PhD in Plant Breeding at PAULESI, University of Ibadan, through the African Union scholarship. His doctoral research, in collaboration with CIMMYT, applies genomic selection to enhance tropical maize hybrid performance under stress conditions. Zelege is dedicated to advancing innovative breeding strategies for sustainable agricultural transformation across Africa and beyond.



Irene Mughi

Irene is a dedicated plant breeder and seed systems professional, passionate about improving smallholder farmers' access to quality seeds. Growing up in a farming community in arid Eastern Kenya, Irene witnessed the impact of improved seed varieties firsthand, which sparked her mission to transform subsistence farming. Her career spans roles at KALRO, Alliance for Biodiversity/CIAT, and the IFDC where she focused on crop breeding and agribusiness development. Currently, as Vice-President of Programs for East and Southern Africa at Seed Systems Group, Irene oversees seed sector development across 15 countries, bridging science, policy, and farmer impact. Her work aims to empower farmers through better seed and sustainable innovation. Irene holds a BSc in Agriculture from the University of Nairobi, an MSc in Plant Breeding and Seed Systems from Makerere University and is pursuing a PhD in Plant Breeding and Genetics at the University of Nairobi. Her current study focuses on engaging farmers and market actors to prioritize their preferred traits in vegetable pigeon pea and integrate these traits in pigeon pea varieties using modern genomic technologies.



Eric Nduwarugira

Eric Nduwarugira is a senior bean researcher at the Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Burundi (ISABU), where he has served since 2009. He holds an MSc in Plant Breeding from Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Tanzania (2011–2013), and is currently pursuing a PhD in the same field at SUA since November 2022. From 2014 to 2021, he served as Director of the Bukemba Regional Research Station and concurrently led Burundi's National Bean Research Program (2015–2021). During this period, he coordinated several CIAT/PABRA-supported research and development initiatives funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Syngenta, the Transforming African Agriculture Technology (TAAT) program, and the Rapid Cooking Bean Project (RCBP). Mr. Nduwarugira chaired the East and Central Africa Bean Research Network (ECABREN) Steering Committee from 2019 to 2020. His research focuses on the genetic improvement of common beans, nutrition and resilience. His leadership has contributed significantly to strengthening Burundi's bean value chain and promoting sustainable production. He has published in both national and international journals and is married with three children.



Omotola Dorcas Olaoye

Olaoye, Omotola Dorcas is a Nigerian Doctoral Researcher at the West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), University of Ghana and a Doctoral Research Fellow at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Cassava Breeding Program specializing in plant breeding and genetics. Her research focuses on integrating genomic selection and high-throughput phenotyping with machine learning to improve product quality traits in cassava. She holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Ahmadu Bello University and a master's degree in Crop Genetics and Plant Breeding from the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. She possesses advanced expertise in R and a strong foundation in quantitative genetics and data-driven breeding. Dorcas has published journal articles from her master's research and actively participated and presented in four scientific conferences during her PhD program, winning the best Oral presentation at the 15th International Society of Tropical Root Crops-Africa Branch's conference in 2025. Beyond academia, Dorcas has demonstrated leadership and a commitment to knowledge sharing. She has facilitated training sessions for over 500 youths across agribusiness value chains and developed training manuals. Mrs Olaoye is passionate about contributing to sustainable agriculture through science.



Abdou Mouizz Salaou

Abdou Mouizz Salaou is a PhD candidate in Plant Breeding at Egerton University, Kenya, under the GENES II Intra-Africa Mobility Project. His doctoral research focuses on enhancing drought tolerance in mungbean (*Vigna radiata*), a climate-resilient opportunity legume, through the integration of conventional breeding, photosynthesis traits phenotyping, genome-wide association studies, and genomic prediction. He holds an MSc in Biotechnology and Plant Breeding from the University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin Republic, where his thesis focused on improving leaf yield in *Gynandropsis gynandra*, a nutrient-rich African leafy vegetable. Abdou has served as a research assistant at the Genetics, Biotechnology, and Seed Science Unit (GBioS/UAC), contributing to Research & Development projects, project management, and resource mobilization. Beyond academia, Abdou Mouizz has worked with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a United Nations Volunteer and has interest in science communication and capacity building. He serves on the organizing committee of the African Plant Science Symposium, a student-led initiative fostering research collaboration, leadership, and skills development for addressing food security challenges across Africa through webinars and symposia organization.



**The 2025 International Borlaug Scholars at the
2025 African Plant Breeders Association Conference
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**