

## **My 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to the Institute of Plant Science and Resources (IPSR), Okayama University, Japan – Mrs. Catherine Ngamau**

### **Official Invitation**

On 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011, Prof. Wataru Sakamoto on behalf of the Asia-Africa Scientific Platform Program (AASPP) officially invited me to IPSR to conduct research on banana endophytic bacteria in regard to their potential as biofertilizers. The visit period was from 30<sup>th</sup> August to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation to IPSR under AASPP having visited the institute last year (10<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2010). My gratitude goes to the JSPS-AASPP committee for offering me a second opportunity to participate in the AASPP program. My great appreciation also goes to the Japan Society for the promotion of Science (JSPS) for the financial support. I would also like to thank Prof. Sakamoto for taking the trouble to send all the relevant documents for visa processing and the Japanese Embassy in Kenya for their efficiency in processing the visa.

### **Arrival**

I arrived in Japan on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011 and was warmly received by my supervisor Dr. Akio Tani. I would like to take this opportunity to appreciate Dr. Tani for waiting for me at the Kurashiki train station and for the supper and breakfast shopping he had done for me.

### **Research Activities**

My research activities were well spelt out and they included the following:

- Isolates' endophytic habitat establishment.
- *NifH*-gene analysis.
- Plant hormones analysis.
- Foliar mineral nutrient analysis.
- Functional characterization – N-fixation, P-solubilization and siderophore production.
- Extensive literature search for thesis and paper writing.

I would like to sincerely appreciate the great support and guidance I received from Dr. Tani and his lab team as I carried out the above activities. Once again my appreciation goes to JSPS for financing the research activities.

### **28<sup>th</sup> IPSR International Symposium**

The symposium whose topic was "*Crop Production in East Africa and Innovative Plant Stress Science*" was held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at the Kurashiki Geibunkan AI-Theater. I thank the organizers for giving me an opportunity to participate in way of attendance and preparation of the most famous Kenyan meal known as "Ugali" for the symposium's mixer which was held at the close of the day. I admired the way the symposium was conducted and especially the time managed.

## Unit meetings

I also participated in the weekly Unit meetings organized by the Biotech Stress Unit under the leadership of Prof. Nobuhiro Suzuki. I got an opportunity to present my research progress and I received very good contributions from the Unit members.

## Visit to the Great Seto Bridge

My time in Japan was not only spent in the lab, I got opportunities to visit with my friends. One such great friend is Ms. Fujitani who used her car and time to take me and my Kenyan friend Emily to see the Great Seto Bridge. Thank you Fujitani san.



From left Fujitani's daughter, myself and Emily



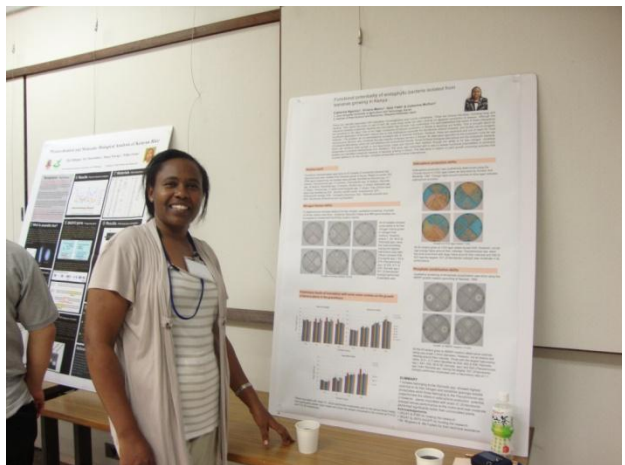
From left Fujitani's daughter, Fujitani and Emily

## IPSR Kenya Day

This year's Kenya day was on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 at IPSR. It was mainly poster presentations with 2 minutes flash talks. The participation was wide with a total of 15 posters presentations drawn from participants from Kenya and Japan. I was one of the presenters and my presentation was on "*Functional Potentiality of Endophytic bacteria of bananas in Kenya*". The day ended with a barbeque party sponsored by IPSR Shinko-Kai Association. We all greatly enjoyed.



Poster presentations in progress



Catherine standing next to her poster

## Boat ride in the sea

Another great activity out of the lab was a boat ride in the sea. My appreciation goes to Dr. Tani's lab team led by Ms. Fujitani for organizing this amazing outing and transporting the large Kenyan team of five.



The Kenyan team led by Dr. Akio Tani heading for the boat



The boat

## Visit to the Brown Swiss Hill farm, north of Okayama

This was the most exciting out-of-lab activity. The two months visit to IPSR included an excursion opportunity. I opted for a visit to the rural Japan contrary to most peoples' expectations. We visited the Brown Swiss Hill farm where the farmer and his family keep the brown Swiss cows for cheese production. We were very well received and they generously gave us their best cheese to eat and to carry. We also visited the Research Institute for Biological Sciences where we were warmly received by Dr. Kenji Oda. The institute is doing high level research with state of the art equipment. However, there were no students because the institute is far from town. How I wished we could have such a research institute in Kenya.



The Brown Swiss Hill farm



The Brown Swiss Cows for cheese production



## **Kurashiki Christian Church**

I'm a Christian and I would like to appreciate Prof. Sakamoto for introducing me to this Christian church in Kurashiki. Though the language of communication is Japanese, I always felt at home in this church.



Kurashiki Christian Church

## **Other activities**

I appreciate the many opportunities that we got to eat together and also the privilege of receiving Kenyan guests and giving them some orientation of IPSR and the Kurashiki town.

## **Departure**

Everything that has a beginning has an end. My visit to IPSR ended on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011. I opted to travel by bus from Okayama to Kansai airport and I truly enjoyed the sceneries. Japan is a beautiful country with so many hills and countless tunnels through the hills. Long live JSPS-AASPP program. Long live IPSR-JKUAT collaboration.

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