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NEWSLETTER OF THE DANFORTH CENTER

# WHD Legacy Society

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1: SPRING 2023

## “MEAT FOR THE POOR”

### *Scaling Up Improved Cowpea*

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) is a legume that more than 200 million people depend upon for their daily nutrition. Better known in the United States as black-eyed peas, cowpeas are protein-rich and grow in semi-arid regions around the world. A vital food security crop in West Africa, cowpea is literally called “meat for the poor” in the Hausa language. However, the crop was susceptible to the legume pod borer insect (*Maruca vitrata*) with losses up to 80 percent when attacked. To keep the insects at bay, farmers sprayed pesticides eight to ten times each growing season, often with no protective gear, at substantial expense and risk to health.

### *A Transformative Team Effort*

Realizing the potential benefits to farmers in West Africa, a group of organizations began

work on a pod-borer-resistant cowpea many years ago. Deploying an approach widely used in the US to control insect pests, they developed a Bt version of cowpea that demonstrated nearly complete protection against the pod borer.

Once the pod-borer-resistant (PBR) cowpea had been developed, it was field-tested in Nigeria for more than a decade while regulatory approval was sought. The project received a boost when the Danforth Center’s regulatory expert, Don MacKenzie, PhD, executive director of the **Danforth Center Institute for International Crop Improvement (IICI)** joined. The IICI was instrumental in securing final approval from the Nigerian government, moving a decades-long project over the finish line in 2019.

Today, the Danforth Center and its partners are working to scale up PBR cowpea

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**EASY WAYS TO PLAN YOUR GIFT**

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**“MEAT FOR THE POOR” cont.**

production, expand its range, and add other farmer-requested traits like post-harvest protection.

When you support the Danforth Center, you are helping find sustainable solutions to feed

the world and heal the planet. Planned gifts can create a legacy of support for projects with real-world impact. Call 314.587.1071 for more information. Or email [thissong@danforthcenter.org](mailto:thissong@danforthcenter.org).



◀ George Fonyo, WHD Legacy Society member

**LEGACY CREATOR: GEORGE FONYO**

“My motivation is simple: I have wonderful children, grandchildren, and friends. Any contribution that I can make to their future benefit, to me, that’s worth it.” George Fonyo is explaining why he decided to make a planned gift to the Danforth Center, thus joining the **WHD Legacy Society**.

He had been a supporter of the Danforth Center since the beginning and a member

of the Danforth Society since 2008. “I was already an annual giver, but I wanted to contribute beyond that. Planned giving is an investment for the longer-term health of the Danforth Center.”

George knows a thing or two about long-term health. Fonyo, age 96, is more active than others half his age, with multiple events a day. He dedicates the most time to the Danforth Center, crediting the Center’s mission for his zeal: **“Critical solutions can all be done through plant science.** If we’re not successful here, there’s going to be even more starvation than there already is. We owe it to the world.”



“Hunger is a complicated issue. It’s exacerbated by conflict, by climate change, but biotechnology gives us the tools to improve crops for better nutrition, yield, and resilience.”

**Don MacKenzie, PhD**  
IICI executive director



▲ **LEGACY SOCIETY LUNCHEON**

On Tuesday, October 11, 2022, President and CEO Jim Carrington, PhD, welcomed members of the Legacy Society to the Board Room for the annual appreciation luncheon. Principal Investigator Donald MacKenzie, PhD, the executive director of the Institute for International Crop Improvement, presented exciting developments in enhanced food security for Africa and Asia.

If you are thinking about updating your will and considering a gift to the Danforth Center, call **Tina Hissong at 314.587.1071** or email [thissong@danforthcenter.org](mailto:thissong@danforthcenter.org).



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To discuss your gift to plant science, sustainability, and a stronger St. Louis, call **Tina Hissong** at 314.587.1071.

