



Isigi KADAGI

Home Country: Kenya

Degree: PhD in Interdisciplinary Ecology

Expertise: Fisheries and Aquatic Science

Research Focus: Management of Billfish in the West Indian Ocean

Host University: University of Florida, United States

Fellowship Awarded: 2016

Isigi Kadagi was born and raised in a village in Western Kenya. In her community, resources were limited and education for young girls and women was not a priority. She understood from an early age that learning would allow her to escape the clutches of poverty, and in the final year of high school was one of only five girls among the 120 students to study combined math, physics, chemistry and biology. She is the first person from her village to pursue a PhD.

Hard work earned Isigi the opportunity to study towards a BSc in Applied Aquatic Science at the prestigious Egerton University in Kenya, where she was one of only two girls out of the thirteen students on the course. In 2009 she graduated at the top of her class and joined the African Billfish Foundation (ABF), a charity that supports sustainable fishing and conservation of Billfish species. Here, she pioneered billfish research in Kenya and the Western Indian Ocean region and was the only local female researcher and only black woman with an open water diver certification. In 2014 she gained an MSc in Biomathematics at North Carolina State University, United States.

Isigi's PhD research at the University of Florida builds on her long term involvement with fishing communities along the coast of East Africa and the Indian Ocean Island Nations. She is committed to enhancing the availability of baseline information and data on billfish and expanding interdisciplinary research to ensure the management of sustainable populations. She considers her work to be critical for guiding future resource use and developing sound government policies.

After completing her PhD, Isigi plans to return to the faculty of Egerton University and continue her research on marine fisheries in collaboration with the ABF. She hopes to inspire and empower youth, especially young women and girls, to overcome adversity and embrace STEM subjects and careers.