From Aspirations to Achievements through TWAS-CSIR Fellowship

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My story begins as a physics enthusiast from Ivory Coast, where I pursued my master's degree in physics at Nangui Abrogoua University in Abidjan. Little did I know that my academic journey would soon lead me on an extraordinary adventure of research and cultural discovery.

My academic path took an unexpected turn when I decided to delve into the challenges facing the rubber industry in my homeland. *Hevea brasiliensis*, the rubber tree, had long been a cornerstone of Ivory Coast's economy, but its profitability was dwindling. Driven to explore innovative solutions beyond conventional rubber production, I embarked on my thesis.

The turning point arrived when Dr Assanvo Edja, a mentor and scholar, approached me. Dr Edja had received a prestigious scholarship for a four-year doctoral internship at the CSIR laboratory and encouraged me to explore the TWAS-CSIR Postgraduate Fellowship. This opportunity opened a door to possibilities I had never imagined.

I contacted various CSIR laboratories, and the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST) in Kerala, India, welcomed me enthusiastically. Under the mentorship of Dr K. Narayanan Unni, my application for the scholarship was accepted in March 2019, setting the stage for a transformative journey.

As I set foot in Kerala, India, I was not only entering a new realm of research but also immersing myself in a rich tapestry of culture and diversity. My perception of India, influenced by stereotypes, was soon dispelled as I encountered the warm and helpful Malayalam people. With its vast cultural heritage and diverse languages, India revealed itself as a land of endless fascination.

CSIR laboratories starkly contrasted the limitations I had encountered in my home country. Equipped with state-of-the-art instruments and resources, they offered an unparalleled research environment. However, my initial challenges included securing a residence permit - a process that extended over two months and establishing a bank account to receive my monthly stipend.

Despite these hurdles, I was fortunate to work alongside a dedicated team, with guidance from Dr Suraj Soman and Dr Narayanan Unni and the unwavering support of Dr Ajayaghosh, then Director, CSIR-NIIST. These interactions and collaborations led to significant research achievements.

Interactions with fellow students, not only from India but also from countries like Japan, Cameroon, and Nigeria, expanded my horizons and enriched my academic and personal growth. I honed invaluable research skills in thin-film design and dye-sensitised solar cells (DSSCs) while benefiting from comprehensive training seminars.



Today, as an Assistant at Peleforo Gon Coulibaly University (UPGC) in Physics, my CSIR experience has profoundly influenced my professional career. I now teach courses on solar cell functioning, construction, and characterisation. I also contribute to ongoing research in organic semiconductors and natural dyes for solar devices and light-emitting diodes.

Reflecting on my journey, I propose several improvements to ease the transition for future international students. These include facilitating the process of obtaining a bank account upon arrival, offering diverse dining options for international students, and enhancing laboratory equipment and data processing capabilities.

Moreover, language barriers can be addressed through language learning programs, promoting better South-South cooperation. I advocate for establishing CSIR and TWAS offices in African universities to raise awareness about these scholarships among West African Francophone countries.

In conclusion, I thank the TWAS-CSIR fellowship for supporting students from African nations. This support enables us to pursue our research ambitions under the best conditions and achieve doctoral success. My journey from Ivory Coast to India has been a deeply personal and transformative experience. It has not only broadened my horizons in terms of knowledge and research but also enriched my understanding of diverse cultures and perspectives.

As we move forward, let us embrace the spirit of cooperation, cultural exchange, and shared knowledge that transcends borders and fosters innovation for a brighter future.