A game-changer: Empowering African women scientists to accelerate agricultural gains

The majority of those who produce, process, and market Africa’s food are women, but only one in four agricultural researchers is female. Even fewer—one in seven—hold leadership positions in African agricultural research institutions. (AWARD/ASTI 2009)

AWARD is a career-development program that since 2008 has, through tailored fellowships, equipped top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their science and leadership skills. AWARD is a catalyst for innovations with high potential to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of African smallholder farmers.

AWARD Fellows benefit from two-year fellowships focused on fostering mentoring partnerships, building science skills, and developing leadership capacity. Following a highly competitive process, the fellowships are awarded on the basis of intellectual merit and leadership capacity.

**AWARD Partnerships**

African women scientists from 16 countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal) have benefited directly as AWARD Fellows.

AWARD partners with more than 200 organizations and universities, including many national agricultural research institutions, and several private companies. Thousands of people (primarily female high school students) have also been reached through role-modeling events led by AWARD Fellows.

Nearly 50 percent of AWARD’s mentors are African men in senior positions. They play a key role in influencing organizational culture about the important role of African women scientists. Many mentors report that they are better leaders as a result of experience gained through AWARD.
“If science is a pathway out of African poverty, we must have a new generation of scientists who offer different perspectives, interests, and, above all, commitment. AWARD is the first network of its kind in Africa to empower the talent pool of women in agricultural research.”

Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina, former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria