



2010 AWARD Fellow Meaza Melkamu Abawari

Research area: Gender-responsive capacity building in agriculture, natural resource management, and agriculture for food security improvements and economic growth in Ethiopia.

The complex causes of poverty in Ethiopia demand complex solutions, says Meaza Melkamu Abawari, a horticulturalist who works with World Vision Ethiopia, a relief and development organization. In her work with smallholder farmers, Abawari stresses the importance of integrating improved agricultural methods with other disciplines, including natural resource management, demographic studies, gender issues, and cultural practices.

“The population rate is increasing, while agricultural production is decreasing. Where I work in Wallo district, farmers are raising as many as 18 children on half a hectare of land,” observes Abawari. “New technologies are important, but they must go hand-in-hand with innovations in other sectors. We have to address farmers’ attitudes about the environment as a whole.”

Although she was raised in Dire Dawe, a city of 250,000 in northeastern Ethiopia, Abawari is passionate about promoting rural women. “In many areas, women are not seen as productive members of society, despite the back-breaking labor they conduct from sunup to sundown,” she says. Abawari would eventually like to be involved in policy advisory work so she can advocate for women smallholders.

“When there are food shortages, men have their own coping mechanisms: they can migrate and sell their labor. Women are often left behind with the children on degraded, unproductive land.”

Abawari is as practical as she is passionate about helping women. “Small interventions can make a big difference in people becoming more self-reliant,” she says. For Abawari, that means improving horticulture practices, such as tomato production. Her master’s research project, examining means to reduce the high rate of postharvest tomato crop loss, was published as “Effects of Different Cultivation Practices and Postharvest Treatments on Tomato Quality” in the *East Africa Journal of Science*. Abawari plans to publish more articles and to pursue a PhD in natural resource management.

Position:	Manager, Development Grant and Private Non-Sponsorship Grant Department
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As an AWARD Fellow, Abawari is looking forward to the strategic career-development support that AWARD offers women scientists. "As a young female manager who is supervising older men, I sometimes deal with gender dynamics. I will really benefit from the leadership skills training that AWARD offers."

Abawari also wants to build her science skills and plans to compete for one of about 20 research attachments sponsored by AWARD, in partnership with leading international universities and research institutes.

A gifted traditional singer, Abawari intends to record some songs as a teaching tool in her work with farmers.

Abawari is one of 180 African woman scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org
