



2010 AWARD Fellow Alda Tomo

Research area: Analysis of adoption of 1-2 vaccine in the control of Newcastle disease in Mozambique, and research in gender and market issues for adoption of common bean varieties and bean seed system analysis.

Position:	Research assistant, Socio-economic Research Studies Center
Institution:	Agricultural Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM)
Country:	Mozambique
MSc:	Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 2009
Mentored by:	Dr. Rafael Uaiene, Agro-economist IIAM

Alda Tomo is engaged in researching a range of agriculture-related socio-economic topics, such as evaluating technology adoption and assessing program impact—considering the changing political, social, economic, and environmental contexts. She is also involved in the analyses of financial and economic profitability of alternative technologies. “Socio-economic research in agriculture is needed to complement conventional biophysical research, so we can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public investment in research oriented toward poverty reduction,” she says.

As a socio-economic researcher, Tomo wants to have a positive impact on the production of food and technology in Mozambique. “I work closely with other scientists to determine when to release a certain technology. We go to the field to conduct diagnostic research to establish needs and to discover whether policy or research interventions are called for.” She participated in a team that ran training sessions for farmers on many issues, including conservation agriculture, water and natural resources management, post-harvest food processing and conservation, and market access.

The first person in her extended family to attend university, Tomo has always excelled academically, beginning with winning a city-wide Grade 11 math competition in Maputo. She was invited to attend the International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI) — a prestigious annual computer science competition for high school students—in South Africa in 1997 and in Portugal the following year.

Tomo wrestled with the choice of studying software technology or agronomy. She opted for the latter, and was awarded an AusAID/Government of Mozambique scholarship for BSc studies in Agronomy at Eduardo Mondlane University. In her third year, she worked as an assistant in the economics section, which shaped her path toward socio-economic research.

Upon graduation in 2005, Tomo joined the IIAM as a research assistant. “Some of the projects I worked on included priority setting in agricultural research and analysis of the financial and economic profitability of cassava technologies,” says Tomo.

In 2006, Tomo won a full scholarship from the Michigan State University Food Security Project for her MSc in Agricultural Economics. She returned to the IIAM to continue her research work with local farmers. "I am currently involved in analyzing the adoption of 1-2 vaccine in village poultry production," she says. As the national coordinator of the market group for the Pan-African Alliance for Bean Research in Africa, she is involved in value-chain analysis of common beans. She is particularly interested in gender and market issues for adoption of common bean varieties and bean seed system analysis. Given the increasing concern about climate change, Tomo would like to research the socio-economic aspects of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

As one of the first researchers in her institute's newly created Socio-economic Research Studies Center, Tomo wants to enhance her leadership skills. "There are few other experienced agricultural economists in the center who I can learn from to build my career," says Tomo. "AWARD is exposing me to a diversity of experts and other professional women in my research area. It's great to share experiences and find opportunities for cooperation."

Tomo also hopes to increase her visibility among her peers, and looks forward to the AWARD Science Writing, Communication, and Presentation Skills Course. "I want to be heard. I need to learn to articulate—technical skills are not enough if you don't know how to communicate, and this training will help tremendously."

Tomo 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, please visit www.awardfellowships.org
