



2011 AWARD Fellow  
**Ebinimi Joseph Ansa**

<b>Position</b>	Centre Manager/Chief Research Officer
<b>Institution</b>	African Regional Aquaculture Centre
<b>Country</b>	Nigeria
<b>PhD</b>	Fisheries and hydrobiology, University of Port Harcourt (UPH), 2006
<b>Mentor</b>	Aduabobo Ibitoru Hart, Professor, UPH

*Research area: Integrated fish-farming methods for rural African women and marginalized fish farmers to produce prawns, oysters, and tilapia, as a response to climate change.*

Born in Port Harcourt a month after Nigeria's civil war ended in 1970, Ebinimi Joseph Ansa was named "all is well" (after the war) or "even a female child is okay" by her well-known father—a paramount chief and hobby poet—who hoped for a boy after having eight daughters.

Ansa lived up to her name: she sailed through school, skipping several grades due to her excellent performance. She always wanted to experiment with science, and remembers picking up a caterpillar chrysalis and watching it hatch into a butterfly. Her family often went to their farm in Tombia, a river community that was then only reachable by motorized dugout canoe. "Every two years, the whole community would gather to harvest the fish from the big ponds," she recalls, which awakened her interest in pursuing a career in aquaculture.

Since 2008, Ansa has observed the challenges of women harvesting sought-after river prawns, an increasingly dangerous business due to rising water levels, which she blames on climate change. Her aim is to develop brood stock for freshwater prawns to allow prawn farming, currently only practiced at the experimental level. So far, her attempts, and those of scientists at the Lagos headquarters' hatchery, have been frustratingly futile: after seven days, all of the larvae die. However, it is an important step toward a sustainable livelihood for these fisher women to be able to buy fully developed juvenile prawns, so they can start farming and sell them when they are mature at six months.

Not one to give up easily, Ansa is working on a solution. After trapping juvenile prawns in traditional funnel-mouth baskets, she transfers them into a pond at the research station, where they successfully grow to maturity. "The women currently harvest the wild prawns in the flood plains during the rainy season, and practice crop farming during the dry season," she says. "Year-round safe prawn production would provide them with much-needed reliable income, but I need to figure out how to make the larvae survive in order to sell juvenile prawns that are ready for farming."

It gives Ansa great joy to see some research experiments turn out well, such as protecting valuable oysters by wrapping the cages with netting imported from India. The fisher women have not yet adopted this technol-

ogy, and still cut the mangroves where oysters are attached, destroying the environment, so Ansa has made it her goal to work on the issues that are potentially preventing the up-take.

As a volunteer member of the now defunct board of the Niger Delta Seafood Company, established by the Bayelsa state government, Ansa raised funds for tilapia farming, and was involved as a volunteer expert in a joint collaboration between Rivers state and an Israeli company to establish a tilapia fish farm. Her institute provides fish farmer training three to four times a year, with one session specifically targeting women fish processors.

Apart from providing practical solutions for fisher women, Ansa is also involved in curriculum development for aquaculture training at Nigeria's universities. In partnership with anglophone and francophone countries, she has assisted in forming a consortium of universities, since her research institute is affiliated with the Rivers State University of Science and Technology for the award of postgraduate diplomas and master's of science degrees in aquaculture.

Ansa and her husband, a lecturer in agricultural science at Rivers State University of Education, both enjoy farming on their homestead, where they raise poultry and conduct fish farming in small tanks, producing giant snails, as well as growing pineapples, plantains, bananas, papayas, and leafy African indigenous vegetables.

As an AWARD Fellow, Ansa expects to strengthen her leadership and science skills and to compete for an AWARD-sponsored research attachment. She is the current editor of the *Nigerian Journal of Fisheries*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Fisheries Society of Nigeria. She also plans to build her professional network and visibility. She is a member of the World Aquaculture Society and plans to present at a conference in Australia. Ansa is also looking forward to learning more about work-life balance and how to become a better negotiator for gender equity in the workplace.

*Ansa is one of a growing number of African women agricultural 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. AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development. For more information, visit [www.awardfellowships.org](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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