



2010 AWARD Fellow
Bosede Lawal

Position:	Senior research fellow
Institution:	Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (IART)
Country:	Nigeria
PhD:	Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2003
Mentored by:	Dr. Janice Olawoye, Professor Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development University of Ibadan

Research area: Promotion of quality protein maize varieties in different agro-ecologies of Nigeria.

Bosede Lawal is convinced that the nutritional status of women and children in farm families must be improved. She also believes that children must be attracted to agriculture if Nigeria’s food security is to improve. That’s why this researcher spends a lot of time in the field working with rural women and children.

“Farmers are retiring, but young people in Nigeria are running away from agriculture as a career. They’re moving to the city for education and jobs,” says Lawal. “However, even if they become doctors or teachers, they can still have a backyard vegetable garden or raise small animals or poultry. Everyone can contribute to food security.”

Children and youth enjoy the fun, hands-on workshops and future farmers’ clubs that Lawal organizes. “We recently taught kids in IART-adopted villages (Oniyo and Moloko-Ashipa in southwestern Nigeria) how to domesticate rabbits and grass cutters (an African rodent)—what kind of cages to use and what to feed them,” says Lawal, a mother of three who inherited her love of teaching from her parents, both of whom were educators.

Lawal explains that many young boys in these communities drop out of school to drive motorcycle taxis, a job they think provides enough income. With some simple agricultural skills, they can earn more and feed their families better. “We show them how to grow vegetables during the dry season and how to produce organic fertilizer by composting the waste from cassava processing,” she explains.

Lawal enjoys bringing new ideas and technologies to rural women. She is introducing farmers to varieties of quality protein maize recently developed by IART, which contain twice the limiting amino acids (lysine and tryptophan) compared to conventional maize, and can be used to contribute to improving child nutrition. Her team promotes the new maize to female and male farmers through field days and training plots demonstrating best practices.

Lawal serves on a research team studying the use of soybeans among rural mothers in Oyo state. Soybeans were successfully introduced here about a decade ago, but consumption has dropped dramatically in recent years. Lawal wants to discover why, and is looking for ways to encourage mothers to reintroduce this protein-rich food to their children's diets.

Lawal is passionate about her educational work, but laments that funding is not available to expand much-needed programs. She plans to improve her proposal writing skills through the course offered by AWARD, in order to access international grants. She is also anxious to learn how to use electronic libraries so she can connect with scientists who share her passion for agricultural extension. And Lawal has clear academic aspirations. "I want to be a professor and eventually have my own NGO so I'll be in a position to lobby for better policies benefiting women farmers and children, thereby helping to improve their food security."

Lawal 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
