



2011 AWARD Fellow
Vincentia Naa Ayele Hammond

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| Position | Senior research assistant |
| Institution | Department of Nutrition and Food Science University of Ghana |
| Country | Ghana |
| MPhil | Food Science, University of Ghana, 2011 |
| Mentor | Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa, Associate Professor Department of Nutrition and Food Science University of Ghana |

Research area: Value addition of cassava using cowpea fortification and co-fermentation into nutritious gari, a popular African food.

Vincentia Naa Ayele Hammond credits her personal interest in good nutrition with influencing her career path. Today, as a senior research assistant, she is particularly concerned about the nutritional content of cassava, which is consumed in Ghana as *gari*, a popular but protein-poor roasted meal.

“The majority of the rural population in eastern Ghana is malnourished, as a recent survey revealed,” she notes. “People consume very little animal protein, so they need enriched *gari*.” She is helping to develop a variation of *gari* that is made from cassava fermented with cowpea, which results in a more nutritionally balanced product.

Hammond says that after initial, small-scale sensory tests, she is concentrating on further developing the preferred *gari*, which includes a 10 percent addition of cowpea and tastes very similar to the original dish. Although the project is currently on hold due to funding constraints, she looks forward to training rural women in the fortification process. Traditionally, they roast and sell the fermented cassava flakes used to produce the *gari* base.

“The importance of a more protein-rich *gari* cannot be overemphasized,” says Hammond. “It is not only women who serve *gari* to their families, but students who live in boarding school also eat it as a snack, with milk, groundnuts, and sugar.”

Hammond faces a challenge in that the cowpea-fortified *gari* is a bit more expensive than the traditional dish. She is banking on rural women vendors promoting it to families and youth as a nutritious meal and/or snack. Given her good teaching skills, Hammond is confident she will succeed in transforming nutrition in Ghana.

Planning to publish five scientific papers from her master’s thesis and obtain a PhD within the next few years, Hammond says AWARD is already helping her to better focus her career. “I am now able to strategize and plan my roadmap toward becoming a university professor,” she says “AWARD will equip me with the tools I need to reach this goal, such as greater opportunities to network, enhanced visibility, and further developed science and leadership skills.”

Hammond also plans to use those newly acquired abilities to encourage and help youth and students, especially girls, at her university. "Knowing that I've helped someone move from one level to the next gives me great joy," says this young researcher, who is clearly on the move herself.

Hammond 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
