



2008 AWARD Fellow
Jean Mtethiwa

Position:	Vice Principal, Director of Programs and Training
Institution:	Natural Resources College of Malawi
Country:	Malawi
MSc:	Land and Water Resources Management Wageningen University, The Netherlands 2004
Mentored by:	Dr. Kenneth A. Wiyo Director, Centre for Agricultural Research and Development, Bunda College of Agriculture, Malawi

"I believe that, if women's needs concerning irrigation and water management are recognized and addressed properly, we will be closer to achieving our Millennium Development Goals of food security and access to potable water and sanitation for all."

Jean Mtethiwa understands just how critical water management is in Malawi - a landlocked, drought-prone country that is heavily dependent on subsistence rain fed agriculture. This sector employs about 87 percent of the work force.

The Malawi Government has placed a high priority on small-scale irrigation in an attempt to increase agricultural production and to enrich the livelihoods of resource-poor farmers. Malawi could potentially irrigate up to 400,000 hectares of farm land, but only 62,000 hectares have been developed, according to one study. The consequences of this have been frequent food shortages, poverty and a high prevalence of nutrition-related diseases.

In the late 1990s, simple mechanical irrigation pumps, such as the treadle pump, were introduced in Malawi. This human-powered pump can be used in remote rural areas because it does not use fuel or electricity. More than 120,000 treadle pumps have been distributed in Malawi in the past 20 years, along with other water-lifting technologies. However, little research has been done on the effect of these pumps on local communities and on indigenous methods.

Mtethiwa's research aims to establish a national inventory of indigenous and introduced water-lifting technologies. She plans to analyse their distribution and to document ownership of the equipment, with particular focus on gender. Factors such as gender and economics influence how readily farmers adapt new irrigation technologies.

Before studying for her MSc, Mtethiwa worked as an irrigation officer, responsible for promoting land and water conservation techniques. In her new position at the Natural Resources College of Malawi, she heads the 35-member training department. She says that she is passing on the leadership training and research skills that she is gaining through AWARD to fellow staff members and students.

Mtethiwa 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