



2011 AWARD Fellow
Ângela Manjichi

Position	Manager, Business Incubator Center
Institution	<i>Instituto Superior Politécnico de Manica</i>
Country	Mozambique
MSc	Environmental management University of Notre Dame, Australia, 2009
Mentor	Luisa Santos, Lecturer Faculty of Agronomy, Eduardo Mondlane University

Research area: Supporting smallholder farmers through value-chain analysis, capacity building, and the enhancement of market structures.

Ângela Manjichi remembers distinctly the day when, at age 16, her worldview changed, shaping her future as a gender advocate. "My father passed away, and his family said they would not support educating my two sisters and me past secondary school. They wanted me to quit and get married. Just like that, I had to grow up; it was my first encounter with gender issues."

Manjichi says her father had believed strongly in educating his daughters, a legacy that Manjichi's mother was determined to carry on. She went to work to pay for the girls' school fees. "My mom would say, 'As long as you have food and health, don't worry about other things,'" recalls Manjichi. "And she was right." A successful student, Manjichi won a scholarship to study agronomy engineering at Eduardo Mondlane University.

"I've always loved working with rural people, so I chose agriculture," says Manjichi, who soon became involved in campus politics as the vice-president of the Students' Association. "I saw that some of the female lecturers had to work so much harder just to prove themselves. When I talked about this, people called me 'gender girl.'"

Upon graduation, Manjichi was offered a job with the former Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education to help start up a college from scratch. "Until 2005, there were only two public higher education institutions in Mozambique outside the capital. The government wanted to start higher education in all of the provinces, and I was hired on to a team to establish the first one in Manica," she says. "Gender issues are really pronounced in rural areas, where girls often drop out before high school. I saw this as an opportunity to change the way people think, even in a small way."

At the newly formed *Instituto Superior Politécnico de Manica*, Manjichi did everything from "procurement to lecturing", thriving on the challenge and enjoying the tight-knit rural community that was now home. However, in 2008 Manjichi faced the difficult decision that many gifted, motivated African women encounter: choosing between family and career. "The Australian government offered me a scholarship, which meant leaving my husband and my then two-year-old daughter with my mother for two years," recalls Manjichi. "It was the hardest thing I've ever done."

Returning to the institute two years later with her master's in hand, including experience in rural extension, Manjichi was approached about starting the college's first business incubation center to help graduate students and local farmers launch small, sustainable agro-businesses. "My boss asked me because he knows I love a challenge, but I said to him, 'I'll fail!', and he said, 'That's fine, just get started.'"

Today, two years later, there are six associations with 95 member farmers in the scheme, 26 percent of whom are women, as well as 12 graduate students who have launched businesses, such as soybean production, poultry raising, and horticulture. "We help them develop a business plan and provide advice and capacity building," explains Manjichi. "We've made a lot of mistakes along the way, but we've learned a lot, too, and my boss remains very supportive."

Manjichi says the female farmers she has worked with are extremely hard working and accountable when given small loans for projects, such as soya flour bakeries. But as is too often the case, when they begin to make a profit, the men take over. "The women know what they want and how to get there, but they actually fear risking their marriages if they become too successful," laments Manjichi. "That is why education, including gender studies, is so important in rural areas. We have to break down these stereotypes at an early age."

In her own professional development, Manjichi says AWARD is helping her to identify her goals and priorities, and she expects to learn much over the next two years. "First, I think being mentored will help me build the academic and scientific competence to effectively and efficiently conduct research," she says. "What I learn will also help improve my performance as a lecturer, increasing the quality of my lectures and my extension and outreach activities, as well as the supervision of my students. Secondly, the leadership training course will enhance my managerial performance, and thirdly, AWARD will help me to broaden my networks, creating more opportunities for partnership and enhancing cooperation with other people and institutions."

Although Manjichi is ambitious, aspiring to eventually be the dean of her institution, she is determined that moving up won't mean moving away. "I want to stay close to the rural people here. You learn something from them every day," she reflects. "And there's nothing quite as rewarding as a farmer telling you that he has decided to send his daughter to your college."

Manjichi 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
