



**2009 AWARD Fellow**  
**Msekiwa Matsimbe**

<b>Position:</b>	Program assistant, Regional Fish-node SANBio
<b>Institution:</b>	Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi
<b>Country:</b>	Malawi
<b>BSc:</b>	Aquaculture and Fisheries University of Malawi 2008
<b>Mentored by:</b>	Professor Emmanuel K.W. Kaunda Coordinator, Regional Fish Node-SANBio Bunda College of Agriculture

*"I want to increase women's participation in aquaculture and fisheries to improve livelihoods in Malawi."*

At 24, Msekiwa Matsimbe may be lean on professional experience, but her refreshing vision and enthusiasm for aquaculture inspire even her most seasoned colleagues.

Fish contribute more than 75 percent of people's protein source in landlocked Malawi. Fishing plays a critical role in the economy and is the main livelihood for people residing along the shores of Lake Malawi, the third largest lake in Africa and eighth largest in the world. Lake Malawi has the most diverse fish species in the world. Matsimbe is currently conducting research for her MSc, assessing the effect of land use and cover change on species diversity in the lake's tributary rivers. The project results will inform a government management strategy to increase yield and help prevent overfishing.

Matsimbe is also conducting outreach work with fish farmers in the Dowa district, demonstrating the use of plastic sheeting on the growth of *Oreochromis shiranus* (a common fish) in earthen ponds. Farmers can afford this simple, effective innovation and they see the potential results: a sustainable source of protein for their families and more fish to market.

"Fish can supply the protein that women and children need to prevent diseases caused by protein-deficiency," says Matsimbe, who wants to help rural families better understand the dietary benefits of fish. This is critical in Malawi which has one of the world's highest mortality rates among children under five years of age.

Matsimbe has clear career goals: she plans to obtain a scholarship to study for a PhD and conduct further research on improving food security in Malawi. Through workshops offered by AWARD, Matsimbe says she is learning how to strategically map her professional development with her mentor's support. She is also honing her networking skills which she hopes will help her access future research grants.

Matsimbe says her university strongly supports her involvement in AWARD. The University of Malawi currently has ten researchers in the program. "AWARD is giving young women scientists the support they need to move forward and it is beneficial for our institution as well," says Matsimbe's mentor, Professor E.K.W. Kaunda.

*Matsimbe 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, visit [www.awardfellowships.org](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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