



2011 AWARD Fellow
Devotha Mchau

Position	Research supervisor
Institution	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Country	Tanzania
BSc	Agricultural economics and agri-business Sokoine University of Agriculture, 2010
Mentor	Claude Maeda, Agricultural economist, IITA

Research area: Conducting research on cassava and other important tropical crops, such as cowpeas, soybeans, and banana, for poverty reduction and income generation across several sub-Saharan countries, with the goal of developing and influencing adaptation of newly improved varieties of different crops with high yield and resistance to disease.

Since earning a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and agri-business, Devotha Mchau has conducted research on cassava and other important tropical crops across sub-Saharan Africa. Tanzania produces about 6.8 million tonnes of cassava annually, according to the FAO, which is 5.5 percent of total world cassava production and 14 percent of Africa's.

"The main aim of my research is developing and influencing the adoption of newly improved varieties of high-yield and disease-resistant crops," she says. "Cassava production and processing have become of particular interest, because it presents an immediate solution to climate change and food insecurity in many African countries, although more research is still needed to find a permanent solution to the problem. In Tanzania we are not taking advantage of other opportunities for cassava use."

At her workplace, Mchau is involved primarily in database management. "I participate in data collection and analysis, completion, and summarizing, and I produce reports for ongoing research projects within the organization." She is also working with rural communities, conducting surveys and analysis. "Farmers are ready to adapt, but they are limited by financial constraints. I'm working with them to help create support groups and conduct training."

Her long-term goal is to get a PhD in agricultural economics, and to see the impact that her policies will have on farmers.

Mchau says there are only three women out of a staff of 20 at her workplace, which presents a bit of a challenge. "As an AWARD Fellow, I am most looking forward to increasing my visibility and learning to communicate well. I will also have a chance to participate in workshops and conferences, and exchange ideas with other fellows."

Mchau is one of a growing number of African women 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
