



**2011 AWARD Fellow**  
**Epifania Augustine Minja**

<b>Position</b>	Project coordinator, Women Fight Inequality and Destitution in Tanzania
<b>Institution</b>	Kilimanjaro Women's Information Exchange and Consultancy Organization
<b>Country</b>	Tanzania
<b>BSc</b>	Home economics and human nutrition Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), 2004
<b>Mentor</b>	Monica Eliezer Lyimo, Associate professor, SUA

*Research area: Production and marketing of value-added agriculture products by marginalized sections of society.*

Epifania Augustine Minja has a passion for seeing positive change in people's lives and is working to establish a sustainable network for small- and medium-scale producers of value-added farm products. "I want to see poor women realizing a profit and getting a fair return out of agriculture," says Minja, whose first name means "openness". "In one or two years, I've already seen a lot of improvement in people's situations, with their children now going to school and them able to make a living."

Minja's first job after graduation was at a rehabilitation center for children with disabilities, most of whom are malnourished. "I was there for only eight months, helping the children with exercises and providing dietary supplements, but it had a huge impact on me," she says. She then worked as a research scientist-lead facilitator for a Child Health and Social Ecology project under KCMC/Harvard Medical School for 10 months, and then took a position with the Salvation Army, where she coordinated an economic empowerment program. Now, she is excited about her job at Women Fight Inequality and Destitution in Tanzania, a project under the auspices of the Kilimanjaro Women's Information Exchange and Consultancy Organization.

"Our project provides small grants to women's groups," says Minja, who works with some 1,300 women, most of whom are farmers, organized in 54 groups. "We also network with other organizations, providing training and agricultural extension services, and we organize income-generating activities, such as buying and selling household items and second-hand clothing, and providing services like cooking and catering. Some women keep chickens and sell the eggs. The small support you give these women makes a huge difference."

Minja faces her own challenges in a patriarchal society as a working woman, wife, and mother of two young children. However, her supportive husband is encouraging her to continue with her education, and she hopes to get a full scholarship to begin a master's program. She plans to study pure sciences and aims to earn a PhD before age 35.

As an AWARD Fellow, Minja appreciates having a formal mentor for the first time. "Coaching and leadership training are very valuable," she says. "I know that I will gain a lot from these aspects of AWARD. My dreams that were dying now have new vision. I see that they are possible to achieve."

*Minja 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](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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