



2010 AWARD Fellow
Monica Yesaya Josia

Position:	Community development officer
Institution:	Tabora Municipal Council
Country:	Tanzania
BSc:	Food Science and Technology Sokoine University of Agriculture, 2002
Mentored by:	Rukia E. Mgumia, Agricultural extension officer Tabora Municipal Council

Research area: Vegetable preservation and indigenous fruit processing to increase the income and household nutrition of rural women.

One of Monica Yesaya Josia's earliest childhood memories is of seeing a woman in a lab coat, and aspiring to be a scientist herself. Today, the specialist in food sciences and nutrition (in the white lab coat) is helping smallholder farmers to increase their yields and improve their postharvest handling. "As a food scientist, my role is to sensitize farmers about food wastage. From the field to the table, food should not be wasted," she says.

Agriculture is the foundation of the Tanzanian economy, accounting for about half of the national income, and three quarters of merchandise exports. It provides employment opportunities to about 80 percent of Tanzanians. Agricultural GDP has grown at 3.3 percent per year since 1985, the main food crops at 3.5 percent, and export crops at 5.4 percent. Considering that the overall GDP growth target for halving abject poverty by 2010 is in the range of 6-7 percent, this performance falls short of the needed growth. "The farmers need scientists," says Yesaya Josia, who works closely with smallholders as community development officer with the Tabora Municipal Council in central Tanzania. "They need help to develop and get on the right track."

Irrigation in Tanzania is very limited and most agriculture is rain-fed; livestock and crops are adversely affected due to periodic drought. "The area's short rainy season presents trouble for women, who are responsible for feeding their families," she explains. She is teaching them to sow a large amount of vegetables, such as cowpeas, eggplant, and beans, for use during the dry season, and is training them in vegetable preservation and indigenous fruit processing. "This will reduce the time they spend looking for food, and ensure the availability of nutritious food for their families."

Yesaya Josia plans to start a master's program this year, and her ambition is to get a PhD. She is excited to be among the AWARD Fellows. "It is an honor and a privilege. It will help me to develop my leadership skills, and will enhance my networking skills. I have already made a lot of friends thanks to AWARD, and I now know where to go for help. This is sure to make me more effective in my work," she says.

Yesaya Josia 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
