



**2010 AWARD Fellow**  
**Mutibo Chijikwa**

<b>Position:</b>	Entomologist
<b>Institution:</b>	Cotton Development Trust
<b>Country:</b>	Zambia
<b>BSc:</b>	Entomology and Parasitology, University of Zambia, 2007
<b>Mentored by:</b>	Dr. Catherine Mungoma, Director Seed Certification and Control Institute Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia

*Research area: Development and implementation of an integrated pest-management program that is practical and applicable to small-scale cotton farmers in Zambia.*

Mutibo Chijikwa's research is dedicated to helping farmers control the red bollworm that threatens Zambia's cotton crop. She is the first entomologist in Zambia to specifically work on management of this pest. "Most of the focus here has been on the American bollworm, which is also a problem," says Chijikwa. "However, I'm seeing in my research that the red bollworm is increasingly important and it's much harder to control."

Cotton was a major crop in Zambia until international prices plummeted several years ago. Up to 40 percent of the small-scale producers abandoned their fields, and cotton production declined to a record low over a period of five years. Many farmers decided to plant maize or vegetables instead. "These crops are not as lucrative, but they require far less weeding and are less vulnerable to pests as serious as the cotton bollworms," says Chijikwa.

Chijikwa is encouraging farmers to replant cotton and increase their yields through simple but effective pest-management strategies. She also hopes to empower women cotton farmers by helping them develop cottage industries to gin and spin the cotton after they have grown it. Zambia's two cotton-processing factories closed few years ago. This means that all raw cotton is exported, and expensive finished cloth is then imported from neighboring countries in the form of chitenges—the colorful, two-meter square wraps worn by Zambian women.

Chijikwa wants women to be more visible and have a greater role in producing cotton. "Women do the bulk of the work of cotton production, including weeding and pest management, but they are often excluded from decision making about it," she says. "It's mostly men who attend our farmers' training meetings, and if their wives do come, they won't say much, but it's the women who implement what you share with them. The men just say 'It's too complicated'"

Complexity does not deter Chijikwa. She currently manages the entomology department—the first woman to hold this position in the institute—and wants to launch an integrated pest-management manual for farmers as part of a World Bank project on which she is working. “After that, I’d like to spread my wings and eventually pursue my PhD. I want to be an expert in crop protection for other crops besides cotton, and to be recognized for my expertise in Zambia and abroad,” she says.

Chijikwa is grateful to her former supervisor, Dr. M.S. Khokhar, a World Bank consultant, who encouraged her professionally. “He helped me realize that my plans are not a pipe dream; I can actually do it.” As an AWARD Fellow, she looks forward to her mentor’s guidance. “Dr. Catherine Mungoma is considered a very accomplished woman researcher in Zambia,” says Chijikwa. “She is someone who will help me improve my planning and management skills, and I look forward to her advice.”

Chijikwa also welcomes guidance on juggling job demands and motherhood. “Sometimes I should go out to the main field station for a week but I can’t take my four-month-old daughter, so I have to stay home.” She appreciates AWARD’s family-friendly support for its fellows; travel and child-care costs are covered, enabling nursing mothers to bring their children to conferences and workshops. “Rarely do programs offer such opportunities,” says Chijikwa. “Most women scientists have to put their careers on hold until their babies are older. AWARD is making us feel that our contributions are worthwhile.”

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

---