



2011 AWARD Fellow Olubukola Bosede Osuntade

Research area: Influence of cassava value-chain development on the sustainability of smallholder livelihoods in southwestern Nigeria.

Position	Program officer (R&D)
Institution	Livelihoods Support and Development Centre
Country	Nigeria
MSc	Agriculture, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, 2009
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Olubukola Bosede Osuntade's current research entails examining the development of the cassava value chain and its influence on incomes, standards of living, and the general well-being of smallholder farmers, processors, marketers, and other service providers. "We call it converting waste to wealth," she says. "Many people in southwestern Nigeria are involved in cassava processing, but they discard the peels, thereby causing pollution. Why not dry this waste and feed it to livestock?"

Osuntade presented this idea to village stakeholders, "and they loved it," she says. They constructed a concrete platform, which farmers cover with large, black tarpaulins, upon which the cassava waste is spread. The tarps radiate the sun and speed up the drying, and yet are light enough for the farmers and others to carry. Osuntade and her team also came up with a micro-credit agricultural extension program to cover the costs of constructing platforms, as well as the purchase of goats and sheep.

"People are elated with the project and come to tell us so," says Osuntade. "Women who previously had nothing to do now have a good income, and it makes them feel independent." Some of the women have formed an association, pooled their profits, and bought a grinding machine for the community.

Osuntade's enthusiasm for agriculture is palpable. "As an agriculturist, you can have your own farm, you don't need to wait to find a job, and you can employ people," she says. "My husband has a farm, and where I work we have farms. I am truly in my element."

Currently working on her doctorate, Osuntade hopes to find a position as a university lecturer upon graduation. This determined young woman already has eight publications to her credit, and expects the AWARD Fellowship to enhance her skills in teaching, research, extension, and community development. "AWARD has already been an eye opener to me," she says. "There were things I felt I couldn't do before, but I already see myself as being able to achieve more. For example, I now see it as a plus that I like to initiate ideas, rather than viewing it as a disadvantage for fear that people think I am too forward."

Osuntade views AWARD “as a ladder, which will enable me to climb to my goal.” She looks forward to networking opportunities and to applying for AWARD-sponsored advanced science training at a regional or international research institute. “As a young researcher, I see the fellowship as an opportunity that will help me better conduct world-class research,” she says. “My philosophy is the sky isn’t the limit, it’s my starting point.”

Osuntade 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
