



2011 AWARD Fellow
Olubukola Victoria Oyerinde

Position	Senior lecturer
Institution	Department of Forestry and Wood Technology Federal University of Technology
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Forest resource economics, Federal University of Technology, 2011
Mentor	Oluwatooyin F. Osundahunsi, Associate professor Department of Food Science and Technology Federal University of Technology

Research area: Working with climate change mitigation through sustainable natural resource management approaches involving rural dwellers, and evaluating the vulnerability of forest communities, adaptation strategies, and mitigation mechanisms.

As a senior lecturer at the Federal University of Technology, Victoria Olubukola Oyerinde is concentrating on climate change mitigation and the assessment of vulnerabilities among the people living in Nigeria's forest communities.

Oyerinde wants to work toward reducing poverty and improving food security by introducing a range of non-timber resources, such as mushrooms, snails, bush meats, fauna, and medicinal plants. "In Nigeria, 70 percent of the population depends on firewood for cooking," she explains. "This is causing severe deforestation."

Oyerinde says it was her father who encouraged her to pursue a career in agriculture. "My dad was a big-time cash-crop cocoa farmer," she says. "He said to his 16 children, 'How I wish one of you would study agriculture.'" Oyerinde took this as a challenge, achieving an undergraduate degree in forestry and wood technology and later a PhD in forest resource economics. Despite the fact that Oyerinde's mother never went to school, she provided the most support. "My mother was a role model for me, encouraging me to work hard and insisting that I would make it."

Oyerinde's current research focus is on evaluating forest community dwellers' perceptions and responses to climate variability, exploring their vulnerabilities, and looking at their coping strategies and adaptation needs. "Most of the work I've done so far is on the socio-economic characteristics of forest communities," she says. "I have discovered very high vulnerabilities among the people here. They depend so much on the forest resources. However, their levels of education are very low, as well as their incomes, due to a shortage of ways to make a living."

She is also working on gender analysis, looking at how people see the issue of climate change. "Men see climate change, but women see the results more clearly since they have to go farther to get food, firewood, and water," she explains. "I'm looking at how they are coping with the rate of deforestation and how this is affecting their livelihoods."

Oyerinde's long-term goal is to be a university professor. "My field is male dominated—I was the first and only female appointed as academic staff at the university," she continues. "Males didn't see me as someone who should be there. Also, my supervisor wasn't in my field, so I had to mentor myself."

She wants people to know that the field of forestry is not just for men. "There are tremendous opportunities for women in agricultural science, especially in forestry. The issue of the environment is coming on strong, and women are known to recognize problems and propose solutions."

Oyerinde expects the AWARD Fellowship to help her in a number of ways. "The announcement that I won the fellowship has already enhanced my visibility," she says.

Oyerinde 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
