



2010 AWARD Fellow
Paula Pimentel

Position:	Senior researcher
Institution:	Mozambique Agriculture Research Institute (IIAM)
Country:	Mozambique
MSc:	Animal Production, University of Pretoria, 1999
Mentored by:	Dr. Jemimah Njuki Poverty and Gender Group International Livestock Research Institute

Research area: Securing women's access to livestock assets and income in smallholder communities in Mozambique.

Paula Pimentel is involved in livestock technology transfer, and especially enjoys the field research as it brings her into direct contact with farmers. She is also a part-time lecturer at Eduardo Mondlane University, teaching ruminant husbandry to undergraduate students.

Most Mozambican farmers are very poor, and they lack the technical support to help improve their livestock. "Livestock-management practices are very traditional, and productivity is low," she says.

Pimentel wants to help improve farmers' knowledge, while recognizing their current resources and environment. "In this way, we may come out with some improved practices—that's really my aim," she says. "We have to make it clear that we are not bringing bags of money. I explain who I am, what power I have, and what they can and cannot expect from me."

Pimentel works with a group of colleagues who focus on female farmers. "One of our criteria is that at least 50 percent of the people we deal with must be women. For example, when I do community training, the woman must attend—her husband cannot attend on her behalf."

The only one of her family to have attended university, Pimentel has a heart for rural women. Her mother, although poorly educated, was a wise and supportive woman. She used to tell her daughter that things don't stay the same, but they will always get better—and Pimentel keeps this advice in mind.

"We may not see the changes we'd like to see in the timeframe we work in, but I have learned that change often takes time and it doesn't mean you give up," says Pimentel. She looks for a willingness to learn among the farmers as she explains how to improve their practices. "If I can get a farmer to understand, for example, that she needs to look after her cows properly, I feel I have done something. People may say it's not much, but lower livestock mortality has an impact on farmers' livelihoods."

Pimentel hopes to begin a PhD program, and will apply at the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University. "I want to progress in my research career, and hope to pursue gender studies at the PhD level within the next year or two."

Pimentel expects that the AWARD Fellowship will help her to focus on her career goals. "It has already helped me. This mentoring is very new in my life. Previously, I had to do it the hard way, by myself." At the end of her time as an AWARD Fellow, she hopes to emerge with stronger skills in research and networking.

Pimentel 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
