



2009 AWARD Fellow  
**Veronica Omenwa**

<b>Position:</b>	Research officer II
<b>Institution:</b>	African Regional Aquaculture Centre
<b>Country:</b>	Nigeria
<b>BSc:</b>	Food and Industrial Microbiology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria
<b>Mentored by:</b>	Olajunmoke Modupe Edun, Chief research officer African Regional Aquaculture Centre Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research

**Research area:** *Pollution reduction in an integrated aquaculture environment using probiotics with emphasis on clarias, tilapia, and giant African land snail breeding to enhance healthier fish and snails with improved immunity to disease.*

Veronica Omenwa's job involves developing technologies that will increase farmers' yields from integrated aquaculture through the use of biocontrol agents. Her work at the African Regional Aquaculture Centre has enabled her to liaise with senior lecturers at Nigeria's University of Port Harcourt, as she focuses on conducting research into potential probiotics such as *lactobacillus* and *acidophilus*, among others.

Omenwa anticipates using the skills acquired from the AWARD program to more effectively communicate with farmers, especially women farmers, so that the necessary knowledge on integrated aquaculture can be effectively used in their homestead fish farming and other agricultural practices. "It is my hope that the women farmers will be able to develop new skills and sources of income, thereby empowering themselves," she says.

Omenwa says the exposure, leadership, and research skills she has gained as an AWARD Fellow will keep her research focused on poverty reduction, food security, and environmental sustainability. "I have already increased my networking and I am applying many of the skills taught at the Mentoring Orientation Workshop. I have more self-confidence and greater visibility among my co-workers." She also credits AWARD with helping her register with the World Aquaculture Society.

Omenwa says that having a mentor is a great benefit. "I meet with my mentor regularly for professional advice and updates on my research work. She consistently provides very useful information," Omenwa says. Mentoring, along with the science and leadership skills gained through the AWARD training courses, will go a long way toward strengthening her academic and personal skills and furthering her overall career development, believes Omenwa. "The opportunity to meet with other AWARD scientists from different countries is also very helpful."

Omenwa hopes to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Microbiology, and has already completed the required course work. She plans to follow this with a doctorate that will prepare her to promote the growth, development, and survival of fish, especially in the fry and fingerling stages. "My ultimate goal is to become an expert in the use of potential microbes for pollution control in aquaculture systems," she explains.

*Omenwa 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, visit [www.awardfellowships.org](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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