



Lydia Mosunmola
Adeleke
2015 AWARD Fellow

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Position	Lecturer II
Institution	Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA)
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Resource Economics, FUTA, 2014
Mentor	Oyedapo Fagbenro, Professor, Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology, FUTA
Research Area	Adoption of capture-based aquaculture for maximum fish production and food security for livelihood diversification in the coastal communities of Ondo State, Nigeria.

Lydia Mosunmola Adeleke was born into a large family in Benin City in southern Nigeria, where her father ensured that everyone got a good education. Her bachelor’s and master’s degrees are in economics-related Agricultural Technology, but for her PhD she focused on Resource Economics, specializing in Fisheries. As part of her doctoral studies, Adeleke was awarded a visiting scholar fellowship at the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

“For my PhD work I looked at how artisanal fisher folk—that is, small-scale fishers—are adapting to climate change in Ondo State, which has Nigeria’s longest coastline at 108 kilometers,” she says. “My study showed that these folks need to increase their fish production. They are poor, and I’m trying to encourage them to diversify their livelihoods to improve food security and increase their standards of living.” The solution she is proposing is capture-based aquaculture.

Capture-based aquaculture allows fish to be caught in a confined area. “This differs from normal aquaculture, which deals with controlling the full breeding cycle of farmed species in pens on land,” she explains. “The concept of capture-based aquaculture is that fish migrate during some seasons, so we capture them and feed them in a confined area right in the sea, until they reach table size, then they are good for food. Thus, species with high market value or those that are readily available naturally can be farmed without the need to develop hatcheries or breeding programs.” They are dealing with a genus of catfish called *Clarias*.

Adeleke’s research has concluded that climate change is really happening in Nigeria. “It’s affecting the fisher folk’s production,” she asserts. “Rainfall, temperature of the surface and water, tides—fish depend on all of these elements. Now, you can’t predict rainfall, and this is affecting fish life.” She relied on satellite data for her analysis, studying temperature and rainfall.

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AWARD is a career-development program that equips top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills through tailored fellowships. AWARD is a catalyst for innovations with high potential to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of African smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.

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Most of the fisher folk she works with live in coastal villages where fishing is a way of life. These people are often marginalized due to their geographic location. The current project is being piloted in two communities in the region before it is expanded to 20 villages.

Adeleke wants to continue focusing on women’s livelihoods, teaching them how to improve their lives culturally and socially. “The cultural aspect is important as there are some taboos that don’t allow women to fish,” she explains. She works hard to build trust and communicate with village leaders. “When women change, the world will change,” she says. “The men may be agile, but the power to influence is inbuilt in women.” She also wants to look at value addition instead of merely production straight to market, in an effort to increase their incomes.

As an AWARD Fellow, Adeleke expects to gain more insight into her work and is eager to increase her knowledge. “AWARD will enable me to go to a science conference, which will allow me to meet other researchers, and gain access to a database,” she says. “And the advanced science training will be invaluable.” She is committed to sharing what she learns at her institution by holding workshops to try to involve other colleagues.

Adeleke, a mother of two, understands the challenges facing professional women. “If you are not properly focused it’s hard to combine family and career due to the demands of time—you will need to sacrifice one. It’s important to adapt.” She is grateful for the support of former AWARD Steering Committee Dr. Stella Williams, who wrote directly to the university to encourage them to groom her as a fisheries specialist. “She also introduced me to AWARD so I am very happy about that,” she says.

She enjoys her role as a lecturer at FUTA, and appreciates the support of her husband and children. “My family is very helpful, even when I’m writing at night. And last year I got an award as the ‘friendliest lecturer’, and that’s a real gift.”