



Ahuéfa Faridah Kegbe

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Scientific Assistant, Doctoral student

Institution

Laboratory of Applied Ecology, University of Abomey-Calavi (Benin); Laboratory of Botany and Biodiversity, Cheick Anta Diop University, Dakar, (Senegal)

Country

Benin

Education

MSc, Genetics, Biotechnology and Biological Resources, University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin, 2017

Mentor

Dr. Kolawolé Valère Salako, Teacher-Researcher, Faculty of Agronomic Sciences, University of Abomey-Calavi

Research Area

Valuation of neglected, underused and threatened species to fight malnutrition and adaptation of field crops to climate change.

A wife and mother, Ahuéfa Faridah Kegbe is a PhD student at the Laboratory of Botany and Biodiversity of the Cheick Anta Diop University of Dakar (UCAD) in Senegal. At the same time, she collaborates with the Laboratory of Applied Ecology in Benin where she is a Scientific Assistant. Kegbe was born in Porto-Novo where she spent her childhood and adolescence until the end of high school.

With a Baccalaureate series D (science), she planned to apply to study Medicine but this was not possible. So, she took a university course in Natural Sciences at the University of Abomey-Calavi in Porto-Novo. With a degree in Natural Sciences (2011), and a master's in Natural Sciences (2013), she received a scholarship from the state of Benin from her first university year through to her master's. When she started her second master's degree, both better oriented thanks to her teachers, and very supported by her classmates, she discovered the field of natural resources.

She then understood that she could also thrive in this field and, at the same time, began to develop her passion. This was how she focussed on natural resources, in particular Non-Timber Forest Products

(NTFPs) and endangered species. She achieved a master's degree in genetics, biotechnology and natural resources (2017). Those who supported her during her master's helped her to find a grant for her doctorate. "A university classmate pushed me to excel," she admits. "I am very grateful to him. And my teachers became my role models."

A doctoral student in "Knowledge, Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity" at the Cheick Anta Diop University of Dakar (UCAD), she benefits from a European Union mobility grant - Intra Africa.

Her lines of research can be summarized in key points such as the domestication of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), the promotion of neglected, under-used and threatened species like the wild relatives of cultivated plants that can be used to fight against malnutrition and the adaptation of field crops to climate change. Her current favourite subject is the wild relatives of cultivated plants.

In fact, several studies report that they have exploitable potentials to strengthen cultivated species, particularly in this new context of climate change.

Kegbe's research focuses on the valorization of neglected, under-utilized and endangered native plant species that can be used to combat malnutrition and the adaptation of field crops to climate change.

Kegbe also conducts her research in Senegal and Benin. And works in close collaboration with rural communities as part of both her thesis and laboratory activities.

Of course, she aspires to become a Professor in order to have a positive impact on young generations and she obviously wishes to offer her services and expertise to organisations and/or institutions working for the well-being and improvement of the living conditions of populations.

Kegbe hopes to make a significant contribution to the development of her community and beyond, to the development of West Africa and even Africa.

Kegbe learned about the One Planet Scholarship from several sources (fellow researchers and teachers) and the AWARD Facebook page. She is counting on this scholarship to help her achieve her goals. Being at the start of her career, this scholarship represents for her an excellent opportunity in terms of technical and interpersonal skills. "I find it hard to assert myself and I don't express myself well," she admits, "which is automatically incompatible with my career ambitions. In addition, this scholarship will influence my institution because I have the obligation to share any knowledge I acquire." And, "I will integrate, for example, the notion of gender in our research projects in order to benefit my community further," she confirms.

Kegbe recognizes that one of the major obstacles to the involvement of African women in research is the weight of society.

To be successful, a woman must spend twice the energy to prove herself, that is to fulfil the two roles which fall to her, both professional and family. However, for her part, she is well integrated and supported in her two institutions. And she considers herself privileged because she has great support from her family for her career.

Ahuéfa Faridah Kegbe is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa's smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Fondation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.

Do you have any further questions? Send an email to : oneplanet.award@cgiar.org

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