



Akoua Tamia Kouakou

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Teacher-Researcher

Institution

Jean Lorougnon Guédé
University

Country

Ivory Coast

Education

PhD, Plant Ecology,
Jean Lorougnon Guédé
University, Daloa, 2019

Mentor

Dr. Yao Sadaiou Sabas
Barima, Teacher-Researcher,
Jean Lorougnon Guédé
University

Research Area

Remote sensing, geographic
information systems,
landscape ecology, cropping
systems and phytosociology

Born in the eastern region of Ivory Coast, Akoua Tamia Kouakou spent her childhood in "Tanda". A brilliant pupil, after her BEPC secondary school exams, she attended an excellent sixth form college in Bouaké.

She achieved her Baccalaureate series C (Maths and Physics). She opted to study Natural Sciences at the University of Abobo-Adjamé in Abidjan. Thanks to her excellent results, the Ivory Coast state awarded her a scholarship in 2005, from her second year at university up to her thesis.

However, the "politico-military" crisis in Ivory Coast would disrupt both her last year of sixth form and her university career.

Indeed, the closure of the universities forced her to interrupt her Diploma of Advanced Study (DEA - Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies) degree. Later, the Ivorian state operated a system change at university level, moving to the bachelor's/master's/doctorate system. It is within this evolving context that

Kouakou obtained a bachelor's degree in plant and environmental protection (2007) from the University of Abobo-Adjamé, a master's in "Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Ecosystems"

(2013) from Nangui Abrogoua University (ex Abobo-Adjamé) in Abidjan, and a doctorate in Plant Ecology (2019) from Jean Lorougnon Guédé University in Daloa. "She benefitted from an Ivory Coast state scholarship of one year for a doctoral internship in a laboratory in Belgium for work on landscape ecology.

A teacher-researcher at Jean Lorougnon Guédé University, her research focuses on the hypotheses according to which the expansion of cashew plantations in the Sudanian area of Ivory Coast leads to a degradation of traditional agroforestry parks thus affecting local biodiversity as well as the ecosystem services returned by them to the population.

Her passion for the environment was born from the lessons she was taught at the University. Understanding the harmful effects of anthropogenic activities on the landscape has aroused in her a desire to contribute by raising awareness among the population, in particular in rural areas.

This was a revelation! "I must campaign in this direction," she says with determination. Before becoming a scientist, she already loved botany thanks to an uncle who was a water and forest technician.

Kouakou is passionate about the environment. She is raising public awareness, especially in rural areas on the harmful effects of human activities on the landscape. "I have to fight for it," she says.

However, at the time, she did not have a clear vision for her future in the environmental sector. Today, the leitmotif of her career is to succeed in raising awareness. With this in mind, the most exciting research she has conducted is a study on the impact of the politico-military crises on the evolution of forest cover in Ivory Coast. "I am pleased to work regularly with rural communities in general, and currently in the far north of the country in the Ivory Coast's Sudanian region."

At the beginning of 2019, Kouakou applied for the position of teacher-researcher at

Jean Lorougnon Guédé University because she aspires to be a full-time teacher-researcher.

This position will allow her to share her knowledge with a wide audience, to develop research activities and quality training.

Kouakou was informed about the One Planet scholarship by a network of scientists within her institution. She is convinced that this scholarship will help, among other things, to widen her knowledge, achieve her research objectives, helping her assert herself better and have more self-confidence.

Within her institution, the One Planet Fellowship initiative will be doubly beneficial for students and her colleagues.

In her opinion, prejudices against women in research unfortunately persist, particularly with regard to field work in the environmental area.

On the strength of this observation, she set a challenge and her dream is to mobilize African women researchers. The main challenge to note and overcome is to demonstrate that being an African woman and a mother is compatible with scientific research and the achievement of results.

Akoua Tamia Kouakou 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