



Angela Bwalya

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Senior Agricultural Research
Officer

Institution

Zambia Agricultural
Research Institute

Country

Zambia

Education

MSc, Agronomy (soils),
University of Zambia

Mentor

Brenda Lwamba Chibulu
Mwamba, Agricultural
Research Officer, Zambia
Agriculture Research
institute (ZARI)

Research Area

Improving soil nutrient and
water retention levels to
enhance high crop yields

Angela Bwalya grew up helping on the family farm, which her parents required of their children, but she was not drawn to agriculture for a career. She dreamt of being a doctor, intending to follow her mother, a nurse, in the medical profession. What attracted Bwalya about her mother's work was the involvement with the rural communities, which she was exposed to as she sometimes accompanied her mother to work during school holidays.

Agriculture was the option available to her in college, though. Once she got going as an agriculture student, she realized to her joy that her interest to serve rural communities would still be satisfied because community involvement was an essential component of the profession. She also found out that in Zambia, agriculture drove the economy and that smallholders were the backbone of agricultural production, meaning that her research would contribute to addressing some of their challenges.

Now as a climate scientist, Bwalya knows that her research will impact farmers' lives and help them stay healthy, and that she is among the group that will drive the agenda to eliminate hunger in current societies and help contribute

to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Bwalya is keen to apply the gender lens to her climate change adaptation studies, without which their applicability would be questionable. She is involved in a landscape project that is mapping soils and landscapes of the Eastern Province of Zambia, conducting soil analysis for fertility levels, and developing soils maps to help make recommendations that are area specific.

She finds this work extremely exciting because it will make it possible and easy to determine the fertilizer type and quantity for a specific area. Currently very few location-specific guidelines exist in the country and fertilizer-use recommendations are blanket.

Conducting research that leads to policy development and implementation is the dream of every scientist, and Bwalya is not different. Her work with the Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committee in the provinces worst hit by drought disaster in the 2018–2019 farming season presented such an opportunity.

She was involved in collecting information on how the communities were affected and their crop harvest volumes, going

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house by house to collect demographic information. She drew satisfaction from this work because she knew that the household information would be used for decision-making and policy-making.

Bwalya has had her eye on African Women in Agricultural Research for Development (AWARD) for the last five years. She was enrolled as a mentee of an AWARD Fellow in 2013. Her attraction to the One Planet Fellowship was partly associated with her familiarity with what AWARD offers in terms of training in interpersonal, technical and leadership skills, about which she says, "I knew I would be different after the One Planet Fellowship training; in fact, even by just being selected for it." Even from her first two days at the Fellowship's training and mentoring workshop she is convinced that the Fellowship is what she needs to push her beyond her comfort zone and expose her to the best research in her field.

All these are essential to achieve her dream of becoming an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change advisor on climate change adaptation and climate-smart agriculture in the African context. The career and interpersonal skill-building components of the Fellowship will advance her science knowledge and boost her confidence, while networking, collaboration, proposal writing training and publishing opportunities will give her visibility. "I will become a leader and I will see myself in the position I just dream about now," she remarks.

The benefits from the Fellowship will also extend to Bwalya's institution, where she anticipates that her new

confidence will inspire colleagues and her achievement will be a source of pride for the institution and motivation to institute capacity building for the staff.

Bwalya will be keen to ensure that mentoring and networking opportunities will be extended to others. She is realistic about her expectations, though, as she is aware of the resource shortages that she has to contend with in her research. But she is also confident that through exposure from the One Planet Fellowship she will enrich her research experience by collaborating with adequately resourced research institutions in other countries.

Bwalya is conscious of the fact that being a wife and a mother of two young children can have adverse implications for her career, so she has a system to balance her home and work life. Having an understanding husband whom she involves in her career decisions and a mother who helps with the children helps. But it still hurts when she has to sacrifice sleep to complete a work assignment or be away from her family for weeks for field work.

Angela Bwalya 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