



2014 AWARD Fellow
**Catherine Adebukola
Badejo**

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Position	Lecturer II
Institution	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Human Nutrition, University of Ibadan (UI), 2012
Mentor	Professor Joseph Olusoga Olusanya Deputy Vice Chancellor Home Economics and Hotel Management, Tai Solarin University of Education
Research Area	Management of severe acute malnutrition among children under age 5 using affordable and available food products.

Catherine Adebukola Badejo grew up in Lagos, Nigeria, where a manager of a multinational food technology company, speaking at a high school career talk, inspired her to pursue food science and technology for her undergraduate studies.

After her MSc, Badejo won a PhD scholarship from UI’s postgraduate school, where she focused on human nutrition. She realized that Nigeria lacks a database to convert food intake to nutrient intake, making it difficult to complete food consumption studies. “We need a new tool to do this conversion, because all of the available ones are out-of-date and the information is on raw rather than cooked food,” she states. “A further constraint is that these tools do not contain values for some nutrients that are important for public health.”

With help from a programmer, Badejo developed software to facilitate rapid analysis of food intake data to nutrient uptake. “The software can be used by individuals to calculate the nutrient content of the food they eat, and it helps dieticians provide effective counseling,” she says. “It is also useful to nutritionists studying food consumption.”

Badejo is currently working with mothers to manage severe acute malnutrition in children under age 5, using locally available food products. Although researchers thought this life-threatening condition had been eradicated in southern Nigeria, some cases remain, especially in rural communities. “Unfortunately, according to some traditional beliefs, children with severe acute malnutrition should be left to die, so many are not taken to hospital,” she explains. “Even when the children are taken to hospital, the literature shows that

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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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about 65 percent of them relapse after they return home.” The World Health Organization reports that malnutrition is directly or indirectly responsible for 35 percent of deaths of children under age 5.

Using the tool she developed during her PhD research, Badejo is developing a diet that deals with severe acute malnutrition using locally available materials, rather than depending on the diets formulated by international organizations such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WHO.

“I wanted to find out what the mothers are not getting right so we can reduce the number of children who become malnourished again,” Badejo says. One of the reasons for the high rate of relapse is that they lack the resources to access the UNICEF formula used in hospitals during the recovery process. The project also has a nutritional education component to ensure that mothers are empowered to continue feeding their children healthy diets.

Badejo’s long-term vision is to produce research outputs that will help improve the nutrition situation in Nigeria, especially among children. She is determined to be involved in research that will help to reduce the level of food insecurity in her country, which is currently at 76 percent. To achieve this vision, she needs to acquire additional knowledge and skills, which she expects to do through AWARD. The fellowship will also provide her with an opportunity to interact with researchers in her field from among the fellows and mentors, and thus expand her networks.

Badejo expects that interacting with her AWARD Mentor will enable her become an effective mentor herself. “The program will build my own capacity through training and mentorship so I can mentor colleagues and students and achieve my vision,” she says.