



2013 AWARD Fellow
Marian Lupapula Mwanza

Position	Agriculture Research Officer
Institution	Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI)
Country	Zambia
BSc	Ecology, University of Zambia, 2006
Mentor	Dr. Mweshi Mukanga, Chief Agriculture Research Officer, ZARI

Research area: Promotion of sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture among smallholder women farmers.

Marian Lupapula Mwanza grew up in the capital city of Lusaka in a family of four. Her mother, a teacher, encouraged her children to get an education. Mwanza enjoyed her classes, and went to the best schools on merit. "I love science so I decided to pursue a career in agriculture because you work directly with communities to alleviate poverty and food insecurity." She eventually won a bursary to go to university, where she studied for a BSc in Ecology.

Mwanza started her research career as a biologist studying tsetse fly control, providing rural communities with chemicals and traps. In her current position as an agriculture research officer, her work involves the collection, conservation, and distribution of indigenous varieties of seeds to farmers.

"Our aim is to improve the food security and livelihoods of local people through diversified and sustained crop production among small-scale farmers in Zambia, with a focus on female-headed households," explains Mwanza. "We want to increase the availability and accessibility of selected local crop varieties, and support their on-farm conservation and management." The program involves 413 farmers, including 35 percent women farmers, who are producing maize, groundnuts, sorghum, cowpeas, and beans.

Mwanza is enthusiastic about her research because it allows her to work directly with communities, sharing information about crop diversity and the use of plants' genetic resources for conservation. "It's exciting because I get to see people becoming knowledgeable about their crops. Education is the only thing no one can ever take away from you, and it is a passport to a better and brighter future."

Mwanza says she enjoys applying her knowledge to help improve other people's lives, especially rural women. She says they face many challenges in escaping poverty due to some cultural practices, which are gender insensitive and keep women from realizing their full potential as equal partners in development. "Knowledge is power. We need to educate farmers on how to use the resources they already have so that they can work to alleviate their own poverty and develop food security," she says. "We also need to recognize the gender imbalance because solutions to poverty will come from women."

Mwanza hopes to one day fill a senior management position within her institution. She says that AWARD has already helped her realize that she needs a concrete plan in order to accomplish her goals. "I will be more serious about working towards my career goals and accessing opportunities that I did not take advantage of previously," she asserts. "This fellowship will empower me with knowledge, leadership, and scientific skills. It is a driving force and has given me a push in the right direction and the tools to get where I want to be. Zambia, here I come."

Mwanza is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. 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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