



Zombe Kapata Nalupya
2015 AWARD Fellow

Position	Seeds Officer
Institution	Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
Country	Zambia
BSc	Agriculture (Plant Science), University of Zambia (UNZA), 2013
Mentor	Richard Chanda, Principal Seeds Officer, SCCI
Research Area	Training of small-scale seed growers in seed multiplication and entrepreneurship in Zambia.

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Zombe Kapata Nalupya spent most of her childhood in a rural village where her father worked as a teacher. Here, she noticed the challenges facing smallholder farmers, such as inadequate food supply and limited resources to meet household needs. “Why is it that farmers cannot have food like we do —can’t a father buy shoes for his children like ours does?” she wondered.

In secondary school, Zombe learned that there were agricultural technologies aimed at alleviating poverty. She also became the first production unit prefect in charge of the school’s coffee plantation, vegetable garden and piggery. At 19, after completing secondary school, Nalupya got a job in the Ministry of Agriculture as a clerk. She then earned a diploma in Crop Science at the Natural Resources Development College, which is affiliated to UNZA, after which she was promoted to seed inspector at SCCI.

Nalupya notes that there are two parallel income streams for smallholders and large-scale commercial farmers involved in seed production, with the scales tipped in favor of the latter. “Smallholder farmers are not really making it in seed production,” she observes. “Our people need access to quality seed. Seed is the key input in the agricultural sector. You can have fertilizer and land, but if you don’t have quality seed nothing can be realized.”

An opportunity to address this challenge came in 2012, when she went to UNZA on a government scholarship for a BSc in Agriculture. With her supervisor’s support, Nalupya obtained a transfer to the training department in SCCI’s seed systems and inspection section. She was also appointed technical manager for quality assurance in

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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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seed sampling, where she links Zambia to the International Seed Testing Association. “We use standardized seed sampling and testing methods, and this helps to facilitate international trade,” she explains.

“Zambia has a well-developed seed industry with established variety release systems, seed field inspection and seed testing but the challenge is that superior variety materials are not going to the intended farmers at the speed that they should,” she laments. Her work involves training smallholder farmers in seed production and marketing. “Seed is a viable business. Smallholder farmers can make money to improve their livelihoods once they treat seed production as a business,” says Nalupya. Working with partners, the SCCI has a mandate to ensure that farmers are supplied with quality basic seed as a starting point in their seed businesses. Her unit is promoting open- and self-pollinated crops such as legumes—often managed by women—because of their nutritional value.

Seed produced by these smallholders goes through the normal rigorous testing. “The farmers then sell the seed to the community, NGOs, seed companies or barter—barter trade hasn’t ended,” she smiles. This has improved livelihoods for farmers. “Some farmers pay fees with seed.” To help promote the increased adoption of certified seed, SCCI collaborates with extension workers to promote and create awareness through demonstration plots in farmers’ farms within the local communities and information sharing in public forums.

She has conducted research on the storability of soybean seed in different packaging materials. “Soybean is a very sensitive crop, which loses viability within a year,” she explains. She collected samples of different packaging materials and determined the germination percentage of the seed on a monthly basis over a 12-month period. She concluded that plastic stores better than sack material and made recommendations to the seed company to use the plastic packaging material when they expected to store for longer periods.

Nalupya’s career goal is to alleviate poverty and contribute to increased incomes for smallholder farmers by influencing policies that can improve the availability and accessibility of superior crop varieties. She would also like to share her knowledge with rural farmers who may not understand complex scientific concepts by using simpler methods to relay this important information. Through AWARD, she hopes to publish, gain visibility, pick up negotiation skills, and develop wider networks. “I feel that I can overcome any obstacles in providing answers to the rural areas that are affected by poverty,” she says.