



2014 AWARD Fellow

**Adeola Oluwafunmiso
Olajide**

Position	Lecturer
Institution	University of Ibadan (UI)
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Agricultural Economics, University of Hohenheim, Germany, 2005
Mentor	Professor Janice Olawoye, Head of Department, UI
Research Area	Use of farming systems approach to examine gender relations and impact on output, income, and household food security of farmer-adopted adaptation and mitigation methods.

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Adeola Oluwafunmiso Olajide grew up in Lagos, as one of six children. Her parents championed the idea that girls could be high achievers, and she studied at one of the foremost public secondary schools in the country. Early on, she became interested in the intersection of economics and agriculture, particularly as it affects women farmers.

Olajide recalls an inspiring moment that changed her career direction. As an undergraduate student in agricultural economics at UI, she was researching links between gender, poverty, and productivity in rural Nigerian farming and fishing communities. During interviews with women farmers, she was impressed by how they could continue talking and working, while calculating prices and profits in their heads. One farmer commented that she wished her children could opt out of farming and be more like Olajide.

“I realized something needed to change,” she says. “These women farmers were smart and skilled, but they saw no opportunities for themselves or their children.”

Olajide began to look for solutions that could improve incomes and options for female farmers. During her MSc research at UI, she examined the technical efficiency of women cassava producers in Nigeria—the world’s largest producer of cassava, where it is a staple food.

Olajide compared the income and productivity of women working alone with those who were members of cooperatives. In both cases, they used semi-manual technologies to process the cassava. She found that the cooperatives generated more income for women, due to greater efficiencies in production and pricing. Surprisingly, she also learned that home-based processing machines also created additional income, but not for the women. “We discovered that the men quickly took over the

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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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technology, charging others a fee to process cassava,” she explains.

For Olajide, the findings drove home the importance of fully considering household gender dynamics. During her PhD research at the University of Hohenheim in Germany, she analyzed gender relations and food security among rural households in southeastern Nigeria. She applied a systems-based approach to understand the development of the farming families’ current situation in order to design interventions and future strategies that would enhance their food security status and living standards.

The study showed that gender roles had changed over time, and that resource-poor, male- and female-headed households both had low living standards and were food insecure. The farming and rural systems approach provides the philosophy, concept, and strategy for developing and introducing solutions offered to families, as well as communal and regional decision-making bodies, to solve problems at the farm, household, family, village, and regional levels. It considers the fact that the family owns resources and makes decisions about the farm and household in light of their problems and objectives. This approach is being applied in understanding how adaptation or mitigation measures are affecting resource ownership, gender roles, decision making, and vulnerability to food insecurity of smallholder farmers.

“The household functions as a farming system, so interventions that only target individual aspects, like income generation, will miss the mark,” Olajide notes.

Olajide applied statistical and econometric analyses to reveal existing household dynamics, resources, and climate-change awareness or adaptation within 100 households, as well as to model the potential impacts of different interventions. She also used participatory methodologies to include farmers in identifying problems and solutions. “The farmers must be part of the dialogue, with men and women on the same plane, to help create and run with new ideas,” she says.

Olajide suggests that households need a complete package of interventions to build their assets and exit poverty. “They need technologies, links to markets, and access to credit and infrastructure,” she explains.

Currently, Olajide is looking at the longer-term socio-economic effects of climate change adaptation, the limited reach of microfinance, and ways to help farmers move from agriculture to agribusiness in the face of outmigration from rural areas.

She hopes to become an internationally recognized full professor and development economist, playing a leadership role in national and international development policy. She sees the AWARD Fellowship as helping to build her visibility, skill sets, and networking in order to reach her goals and translate her research findings into development activities. “AWARD is empowering social scientists like me not just to promote our own careers, but also to make a difference on the ground, which will have a visible impact on smallholder farmers,” says Olajide.