



## Semira Mohammed Beyan

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

### Position

Managing Director

### Institution

Gate for Opportunity (GO)

### Country

Ethiopia

### Education

PhD, Agriculture  
(Dissertation on Soil  
Microbiology), Tshwane  
University of Technology,  
South Africa

### Mentor

Professor Sheleme Beyene  
Jiru, Professor, Hawassa  
University

### Research Area

Agricultural innovation  
systems

Semira Mohammed Beyan was a beneficiary of the Postdoctoral Fellowship on Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions (IMMANA) in 2016-2017. The programme aims to develop a crop of emerging leaders in agriculture, nutrition, and health research.

Driven by the desire to find the link between agriculture and nutrition, Beyan undertook a study on the relationship between soil micro-nutrient level and the nutritional status of women and children in southern Ethiopia under the fellowship.

Her findings established that malnutrition in children was as a result of poor dietary diversity than nutrient content of diets/soils.

It is the interaction with families during her study on nutrition that aroused her interest in working with women and children to help them find solutions to the myriad problems facing them. She started looking for an opportunity to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whom she felt were in more contact with the grassroots.

Her prayers were answered through the Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Association, a consortium of NGOs supporting women and children, where she worked as an M&E Officer.

The organization worked with women at the community level to build their economic capacity.

At a personal level, the experience at the association helped her understand how the NGO sector works and expanded her understanding of the issues facing women. "This is the motivation I needed to decide to act upon my desire and passion for starting an NGO," said Beyan.

Through her research projects, Beyan was able to interact with smallholder farmers in rural communities and experience firsthand the challenges they were facing. This interaction led her to develop a new passion to improve their conditions.

In July 2019, Beyan founded and registered the Gate for Opportunity (GO), an NGO whose goal is to improve the livelihoods of women and children through agriculture, health, education

and human rights. The NGO has its office in Addis Ababa, and she is currently raising funds to fund the projects, specifically smart agriculture technologies that men and women smallholder farmers can develop to change their situations.

She is also planning to set up a social enterprise whose profits will be channelled back to the community for the sustainability of the development initiatives.

Beyan learned about the One Planet Fellowship through the AWARD Facebook Page that she has subscribed to. She was attracted by the programme because it combines climate change with gender, in her view, the two greatest issues impacting on agriculture in Africa. Women are most affected by climate change because they are the ones that fetch water, firewood, and carry the burden of ensuring their families are fed.

The mentoring component of the fellowship will also allow her to learn from her mentor in a structured way. She is also looking forward to learning the soft skills such as interpersonal relationships and share her experiences and network with others.

While she has experienced some challenges as a woman such as in getting certain information from institutions for her research or to establish GO, her mantra has been not to personalise things.

Beyan founded Gate for Opportunity (GO), a non-governmental organization whose goal is to improve the livelihoods of women and children through agriculture and raise awareness on smart-agri technologies that can transform the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

“The stereotypes are there but it is up to you to accept or reject them. I don’t allow someone else reaction to discourage me,” she said. She advises fellow women (and men) to be bold and ask for what they want. “Be confident with what you are doing,” were her closing words.

**Semira Mohammed Beyan** 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](mailto:oneplanet.award@cgiar.org)