



**Position**

Senior Agricultural Officer

**Institution**

Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia

**Country**

Zambia

**Education**

MSc, Sustainable Agriculture,  
Charles Sturt University,  
Australia

**Mentor**

Dr. Elijah Phiri, Senior Lecturer,  
University of Zambia

**Area of research**

Promoting sustainable  
conservation, regenerative and  
permaculture agriculture farming  
practices among smallholder  
farmers.

## Kahilu Likonge

2020 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Kahilu Likonge understood the value of hard work from an early age. When he was still in primary school, losing his father handed him the responsibility of supporting his family when most children of his age would be living a typical kid's life. He would do petty trading after school to raise school fees and put food on the table.

Going to college was not in his periphery. Still, despite the heavy responsibilities, Kahilu excelled in school, earning himself a bursary that facilitated his schooling and enrollment to the University of Zambia, where he studied agricultural sciences. An Australian Awards Scholarship from the Australian government supported his master's degree in sustainable agriculture at Charles Sturt University in Australia.

Growing up in west Zambia, Kahilu was naturally drawn to nature, and it is no surprise that he is now a scientist. He believes that "those formative years were responsible for his passion in agriculture and shaped his focus on the sustainability of natural resources." His mission is to research with a holistic perspective, which will be transferred to his community.

Kahilu's career is anchored within the Ministry of Agriculture of Zambia's Government, where he is currently a District Agricultural Coordinator. Through the KULIMA project, Kahilu trained farmers from Burundi, Malawi, and Zambia.

These training events and associated activities exposed him to sustainable agriculture, which he realized farmers in his home district needed. He was drawn to this approach owing to its holistic nature of incorporating environmental, social, and economic aspects. While studying for his master's degree, his research taught him to integrate climate change solutions for farmers in his region.

As part of his extension work, Kahilu collects information on drought aspects in agriculture to understand farmers' challenges. He says, "I see farmers complaining of droughts, floods, and destruction of infrastructure. I want to conduct a social impact analysis using a combination of in situ measurements in field experiments, earth observation approaches, and climate and crop simulation models."

He promotes sustainable farming systems incorporating gender-responsive research and development programs, mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation in his routine work plans, and networking with stakeholders involved in climate-resilient programs.

Kahilu understands the magnitude of the research work required of him and his team. Their recommendations are currently based on anecdotal evidence, and the extended innovations are borrowed.

Kahilu is promoting sustainable farming systems by incorporating gender-responsive research and development programs, mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation in his routine work plans, and networking with stakeholders involved in climate-resilient programs.

Now, the recommendations are blanket and lack the support of local evidence. He says that if research is specific to an area, the solutions will respond to its community's needs. Climate change is insidious, and the approaches addressing it need to be localized and mainstreamed in planning.

Kahilu aspires to be a regional expert whose work drives change in people's livelihood affected by climate change nationally and regionally. His main goal is to find solutions that foster adaptation to climate change among smallholder farmers who produce 70% of the continent's food.

He believes that the One Planet Fellowship will contribute to his career goal by improving his research, interpersonal, and leadership skills and providing him the skills to mainstream gender in various aspects of his programs. Through networking opportunities and collaboration with other researchers in the Fellowship, he will gain exposure to the latest innovations and interventions in his area of research. The benefits of the Fellowship will extend to his institution since his position as a district agricultural coordinator will allow him to share his new skills and knowledge with his colleagues.

Kahilu recognizes funding shortage as a constraint for most African researchers. He underscores the significant impact it can have on the quality of research. Networks with experienced researchers are missing, as are grant writing skills. The opportunity presented by One Planet Fellowship to team up with other Fellows for research will improve the chances of success in his fundraising efforts and the quality of his research.

**Kahilu Likonge** 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)

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