



Position

Principal Research Officer

Institution

Nigerian Institute for Oil-Palm
Research (NIFOR)

Country

Nigeria

Education

MSc, Public Health and Soil
Science, University of Ibadan (UI),
Nigeria

Mentor

Dr. Adeoluwa Oluseyi
Olugbenga, Associate Professor/
Reader, University of Ibadan (UI),
Nigeria

Research Area

Soil and water resources
management.

Geneva Evalee Anisiobi

2021 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Geneva Evalee Anisiobi always knew that she would pursue a career in the sciences, but didn't focus on agriculture until the second year of her undergraduate degree as she developed an interest in soil microbiology.

Currently a doctoral student at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, as well as a practicing soil microbiologist, her research is looking at using organic fertilizer to increase farmers' productivity while ensuring soil health.

After completing her first degree in applied microbiology, she went on to earn two master's degrees—one in public health, specializing in environmental health, and the other in soil science focused on soil microbiology—before beginning her current studies toward a PhD, also in soil microbiology.

Geneva says she has always taken an interest in environmental management. "I am keenly interested in food security, since that is a logical way to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers—and I am committed to helping them improve their yields," she asserts.

As a microbiologist at the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research—known as NIFOR in Benin City in Edo state—Geneva is working on an anaerobic technology in order to protect the environment and sustain agricultural productivity.

"The process of producing palm oil creates a lot of effluent waste," she notes. "I am exploring anaerobic methods, which will reduce the waste and convert it to organic fertilizer and an alternative energy source that farmers and palm-oil millers can use as a sustainable and economical alternative in their crop production and milling process respectively." She intends to teach them how to use it.

Geneva wants to make things better for future generations. She relies on extension workers to bridge the gap between innovative scientific research and smallholder farmers, and is confident with this approach.

In Nigeria, small and medium-sized palm-oil mills are scattered all over the country. Production is complex, involving a lot of steps, and palm-oil millers are currently using firewood in production. "This, of course, is contributing to deforestation, greenhouse gases, and overall environmental pollution," she points out. "We need an alternative energy source."

While Geneva was completing her MSc, she did a pilot study teaching the women in the NIFOR community technology using palm-oil mill effluent that helped them with their vegetable growing. "Stakeholders like chiefs and community leaders were brought on board, along with the rural women and smallholder farmers," she recalls.

Geneva's research seeks to exploit palm oil mill effluent as an organic fertilizer to curb the environmental challenges while providing an alternative renewable energy source for household use.

She plans to continue her work in training and empowering smallholder farmers and millers within Nigeria's palm-oil-producing belt by holding trainings and seminars. "My long-term goal is to work hard and become the executive director of my institute. As a woman in a competitive society, it will be a great achievement," she smiles. "I think it's important to become more visible so I can be a role model to younger scientists especially women."

Geneva also aspires to eventually gain a political appointment, such as Federal Minister of Agriculture or President of the African Development Bank "to make me more visible and empowered so I can make meaningful contributions to climate smart-technologies and gender-inclusive research."

Geneva is delighted to be part of the One Planet Fellowship, saying that once she became aware of the opportunity, she did an in-depth study of the program before applying.

She is confident that this will help to sharpen her research skills and broaden her knowledge of climate-change technologies. "One Planet Fellowship offers opportunities for me to develop my skills in data management and interpretation," she continues. "I also look forward to improving my scientific writing skills so I can prepare grant-winning proposals."

Geneva believes in giving back. "It is clear that farmers and palm-oil millers are ready to accept new techniques to improve the way we are practicing and disposing of things now," she says.

"I also intend to help younger colleagues via knowledge sharing, trainings and seminars so they will also be facilitators of change—I intend to be a role model."

She says that gender inequality exists in Nigeria, although it is mostly under the surface. "Fewer women tend to compete. But the Director-General of the WTO is a Nigerian woman, the first time that the organization has been led by both a woman and a leader from Africa—this inspires me and is a step in the right direction," Geneva concludes.

Geneva Evalee Anisiobi 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

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