



Solomon Tifsehit Tesfaye

2021 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Associate Professor of
Entomology

Institution

Wollega University (WU),
Ethiopia

Country

Ethiopia

Education

PhD, Entomology, Hawassa
University, Ethiopia

Mentor

Dr. Andnet Bayileyegn, Senior
Advisor, SNV Netherlands
Development Organisation,
Ethiopia

Research Area

Entomology.

Solomon Tifsehit Tesfaye works as an associate professor in the biology department at Wollega University in western Ethiopia. An entomologist, she recalls having a passion for science even as a child. "I had an opportunity to proceed in the direction of the business, but I decided to go with what I was most interested in," she says.

She got her BSc in crop science and then her MSc in horticulture with a focus on tissue culture. Later, after marrying and having two children, she completed her PhD in entomology from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia.

Curious by nature, she recalls dissecting a frog in elementary school and says she was very interested to know what was going on in nature.

"What drives me is to solve problems, especially when it comes to farmers," she says. "They work very hard to feed us, and I believe that we as agricultural scientists have to do something to help."

Solomon is currently working in the area of insect pests on vegetables, pesticide safety, its application, and termites.

"Farmers are not aware of the effects of pesticides," she says. "I see them applying without following the proper procedure.

I began to develop a research proposal about pesticides in order to understand the situation and suggest possible solutions." Climate change is having an impact, "and insect pests are taking advantage—we need to do something."

Solomon says there are devastating agricultural production problems in her area. "If we take fruits and vegetables produced there, they have been under a variety of insect pest attacks, and the damage is intolerable."

She says termites are another major insect pest devastating the area, expanding from time to time, increasing the impact on crops, houses, and any wooden construction or materials. The change in climate has made it easy for them.

Her current focus is on research, so she is not working directly with rural communities right now. "Although when I develop proposals, I gather information regarding the existing problem in their area by discussing with them," she says.

"Besides, my plan after finalizing the research is to communicate the results with them so that they will benefit."

She has always thought she wanted to be an excellent scientist to solve problems and reach the community.

Solomon's research focuses on rehabilitating termite-degraded land through integrated management methods in western Ethiopia, where termite infestation has been a significant problem.

"There has been a lot of research, but its practical implementation is missing," she says. "If you go to the farmers, much of it is not based on research results. Plus, I need to be a good leader who leads by example in the agriculture sector. We still import food from other countries though we also export some. Many people don't eat three meals a day. I want to solve these problems. I want to be the best scientist and the best leader as well."

Solomon heard about the One Planet Fellowship from an organization for women in science and development known as OWSD.

"I started to read about the program, and I became very interested and then applied. I am very happy that I was selected—it has boosted my confidence."

She is confident that the training she will get as a One Planet Fellow will enhance her technical and leadership skills. "I also expect to improve my technical writing, my data analysis, and presentation skills, plus my networking skills. I need to excel in scientific abilities to develop grant-winning proposals," she says.

In her institution, she is the first to win such an award, and this "made me realize that I have the ability," she says.

Solomon cites challenges as a woman from the time of early education and says surviving has not been easy.

"When I joined the university, there were very few women and few graduates from university. I had to travel 1,440 kilometers to go to university for my BSc, which was very difficult because

it was the first time that I had traveled. My PhD was also challenging—balancing family and study was demanding. Raising kids while studying was tough."

Solomon Tifsehit Tesfaye 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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