

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile

**Position**

Associate Partner

Institution

Sahel Consulting Agriculture
and Nutrition Ltd.

Country

Nigeria

Education

MBA, Energy Management,
University of Aberdeen (UK),
2021

Mentor

Mr. Uko Ekott, Country
Representative, Cuso
International, Nigeria

Area of Interest

Harmonization of national
gender policies through inter-
ministerial collaboration

Aisha Hadejia

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"I want to ensure various gender policies work together towards a common goal and are not just fragmented and disconnected."

"I have always been interested in science. It made sense to me: you can see the cause and effect," says Aisha Hadejia, a medical scientist turned agricultural consultant.

After completing an undergraduate degree in Medical Sciences at Leeds University in 2008, Aisha began her career as a laboratory scientist. However, after observing the high level of public mistrust around vaccination in Kano State, Nigeria, she was inspired to focus on public health concerns. In 2009, Aisha completed her Master's degree in Control of Infectious Diseases from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and proceeded to work for the Society for Family Health in 2012. There, she worked with women and girls in the areas of reproductive health and maternal, infant, and child nutrition.

During this time, Aisha quickly realized that the nature of development work is sometimes reactive.

So, she decided to undertake roles where she could drive proactive approaches to issues around food and agriculture. "A lot of issues that we have come from the food that we eat. It made more sense that I move into food and agriculture because, at that earlier point, you can be more proactive. You're not talking about nutrition deficiency or hunger, you're addressing the problem," Aisha explains.

To further progress her career, Aisha moved from fieldwork into strategic program design of development projects, where she encountered a new challenge. She realized that the technical 'language' spoken by programmers and financiers was very different. To build her skills, she decided to pursue a Master's in Business Administration at the University of Aberdeen. This provided her with the necessary skills and awareness required to transition from operational field work to business operations. "My studies helped me understand the business of agriculture."

After completing her Master's in 2021, Aisha joined Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition Ltd, where she is currently leading a project to build capacity amongst policymakers at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). The program includes study tours to countries where inclusive policymaking has been successful, so policymakers can get a greater insight into what policies make a difference and how they can be localized.

As Aisha reveals, her career trajectory has not been without its challenges. For instance, "I faced biases about my capabilities as a woman," she states. "I also have to balance conflicting priorities among stakeholders." To overcome these challenges, Aisha has learned to speak intelligently and confidently and maintain transparency.

Aisha is passionate about promoting gender equality in agriculture, especially as women provide over 70% of the labor force but are often excluded from high-value businesses in the sector. And, to build on her work at Sahel Consulting, Aisha's focus is to advance the inclusion of women in agriculture further. She believes that Nigeria's national gender policies should be harmonized, and there should be inter-ministerial collaboration toward achieving this. "I want to ensure the various policies work together towards a common goal and are not just fragmented and disconnected."

After learning about the GRASP Fellowship from her supervisor at work, Aisha decided to apply – and is thrilled to have been accepted. "I'm ecstatic about being selected for the Fellowship," she smiles. Aisha values cross-learning and sees the Fellowship as a way to connect with women from around the world who can provide resources from different perspectives. She is also especially looking forward to being mentored by Mr. Uko Ekott. "The Fellowship's focus on mentoring is great as it provides an accountability partner," she asserts. "My Mentor is a strong advocate for the development and growth of social enterprises and women-focused initiatives. I am eager to learn from his expertise in strategy."

Aisha Hadejiav is among a growing number of women selected for the Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship. GRASP Fellowship is a career development program growing a pool of confident, capable, African women to lead the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies in Africa. The Fellowship is an initiative of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).