

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Lecturer

Institution

Maasai Mara University

Country

Kenya

Education

MSc, Development Studies,
University of Botswana
(Botswana), 2011

Mentor

Dr. Evelyne Nyathira Kihui,
Public Policy Researcher, Kenya
Institute for Public Policy
Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)

Area of Interest

Boosting value addition in
agro-based industries to
catalyze agricultural growth and
productivity

Ann Mumbi

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

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For the last 11 years, Ann Mumbi has dedicated her life to research and teaching at the Maasai Mara University in Kenya, where she predominantly focuses on Development Studies. Alongside teaching at the university, she also sits on various university research committees – on gender and social responsibility – and has been involved in proposals and grant writing. The aim of these is to fund various research projects that address issues such as FGM and early marriage and work to empower women and build capacity in agriculture and sustainable environmental management.

Ann’s career path was inspired by a desire to influence the thinking, research, and policy around value addition in the agriculture sector to boost farmers’ welfare, improve food security, and spur economic development. “I grew up in a wheat-growing area, and personally farm potatoes and green peas, which gave me first-hand experience of the frustrations of low market prices and farm losses,” she reveals.

“I see how much potential we have as a country in uplifting the lives of our farmers. They toil endlessly yet struggle to obtain income,” Ann laments. “The agro-based manufacturing sector also has huge potential to transform our economy and create jobs. That is why I wanted to focus on this area,” she says enthusiastically.

Prior to teaching, these convictions propelled Ann to pursue a Master’s in Development Studies at the University of Botswana, from which she graduated in 2011. She has since enrolled for a PhD degree in Development Studies, which she is working to complete.

As a Researcher and Lecturer, Ann is keen to address the gaps in the agriculture value chain – especially post-harvest losses and market forces, which result in farmers not receiving the money they deserve for their efforts. “What powers me is finding solutions – from grassroots to national level – that benefit the

daily lives of our people,” she asserts – and, in the process, “ensuring that we use research to make a difference.” For example, Ann says she looks forward to the day when Kenyan farmers and companies export finished products – rather than predominantly export raw materials, including tea, coffee, and cotton – and attract more stakeholders to invest in agro-processing. However, she adds, to achieve this, the country must invest in the right guidelines and policies – something that is currently missing.

But her journey has not been without hiccups. Ann reveals that she struggles to balance teaching and research in a tight schedule while also being expected to deliver research results with limited resources. She also highlights that discrimination and gender bias are rife in the research and academia space. “Sometimes, as a woman, you have to work twice as hard as your male counterparts to get noticed in your profession.”

According to Ann, the GRASP Fellowship could not have come at a better time. She first learned of the program from a former student, who said it was a perfect fit for her. Ann’s focus area is based on the huge gap that exists in Kenya with regards to gender-responsive policies on value addition. “The Fellowship provides the perfect avenue for me to advance my research, as my focus area during the program is similar to that of my PhD,” she reveals.

Ann is also particularly enthused about the mentoring process offered by the Fellowship. “It is structured in a way that allows mentors and Fellows to share personal experiences and lessons – which is something that cannot be found in a class setting,” she says excitedly. Her mentor was once a mentee in another AWARD program, which she believes has contributed to the great sessions and interactions they have so far been enjoying. “In my line and area of work, mentorship is greatly missing, and the Fellowship has offered the right avenue to share experiences and lessons,” Ann adds. “As mentees, we are able to connect, learn, and network.”

She is grateful for being offered an opportunity to develop her professional skills, and receive recognition for her work, and she looks forward to inspiring upcoming researchers using the knowledge she will acquire during the Fellowship.

Ann Mumbi 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).