

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile

**Position**

Senior Lecturer

Institution

University of Port Harcourt,
Rivers State Nigeria

Country

Nigeria

Education

PhD, Agricultural Extension,
Federal University of
Technology, Owerri (Nigeria),
2014

Mentor

Mrs. Ifeoma Anyawu, Deputy
Director (Head Gender), Federal
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development

Area of Interest

Gender-responsive climate
change adaptation policy

Clara Chinwoke Ifeanyi-obi 2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"It gives me a huge sense of fulfillment to know that, through my research, initiatives that improved livelihoods have been developed."

"Providence brought me to agriculture, as it was never my intention to study the subject," muses Clara Chinwoke Ifeanyi-obi, whose initial desire had been to study engineering. However, when she couldn't gain admission onto her desired course, a family friend suggested she explore a course in agriculture. The recommendation was life-changing for Clara, and she graduated best in class from her Agriculture Economics and Extension course from the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, in 2000.

From there, she undertook a Master's in Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology at the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Then she completed a PhD in Agricultural Extension at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Following her PhD, "I landed a post-doc position under the Climate Impact Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement (CIRCLE) program funded by UK Aid," reveals Clara. "I discovered that the

cocoyam crop is in decline, yet it is crucial for rural communities as a cheaper alternative to yam or cassava." She wanted to know if climate change was a reason for the reduction in cocoyam production. "My research showed that climate change had factored in its decline."

Clara realized that many farmers are aware of climate change but are reluctant to adopt adaptation strategies as they lack the knowledge to adapt. Using funds from UK Aid, under a CIRCLE research uptake grant, she hosted local training sessions to educate farmers on climate change adaptation strategies, leading to increased interest and participation in climate-smart farming systems. Clara says that supporting farmers to adopt environmentally-friendly farming systems, resulting in increased production and income, "is the highlight of my career."

She has also been involved in helping shape policies related to climate change in agriculture, engaging

in two policy discourses. “During the first, I noticed that climate-smart agriculture was not sufficiently addressed in the Nigerian Agricultural Promotion Policy, which was the current agricultural policy at the time.” Clara presented field-based facts to policymakers present at the discourse to demonstrate the importance of climate adaptation and why it is vital for agricultural intervention programs to include a climate-smart agriculture component. A policy brief to that effect was developed and submitted to the responsible government department.

Currently, Clara is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Development Studies at the University of Port Harcourt. As well as teaching courses on rural sociology and agricultural extension, her work continues to reflect her undying passion for community engagement and conducting research that solves climate-related issues affecting rural livelihoods.

Clara states that, as a working mother, “balancing work and home life can be tricky,” she laments. “But I am grateful to have a supportive husband who is very understanding and assists in the home at critical times.” However, Clara recognizes that many women in agriculture are not so fortunate to

have the required support and resources. “Most interventions in agriculture are male-focused, even though women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce. A lot of climate change policies are being developed, but are they gender-responsive?” Clara highlights. “Hence, my focus is on how we can develop and implement gender-responsive operational climate change adaptation.”

As a GRASP Fellow – an opportunity she learned about through a University of Port Harcourt Departmental WhatsApp platform – Clara is especially excited about working with her mentor, Mrs. Ifeoma Anyawu. “Ifeoma Anyawu has vast experience in mainstreaming gender into policies and programs,” enthuses Clara. “Her experience and knowledge will be critical learning points for me – and, with her help and guidance, I am sure I will acquire the knowledge I need to propel my work in the climate space.”

Clara Chinwoke Ifeanyi-obi 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).