

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Fisheries Inspector

Institution

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF)

Country

Uganda

Education

MSc, Food Science and Technology, University of Dar-es-salaam (Tanzania), 2009

Mentor

Ms. Joyce Ikwaput Nyeko, Ministry of Agriculture, Acting Director for Fisheries Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda

Area of Interest

Improving women's contributions to artisanal fisheries and aquaculture production by improving their skills and knowledge around post-harvest losses

Faridah Bukirwa

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"Equipping women with skills and knowledge to reduce post-harvest losses will increase how much they gain out of their businesses."

Growing up in the bustling capital of Kampala, a young Faridah Bukirwa might well have been destined for a career in business. Instead, she bucked expectations and set her sights on agriculture. This interest was fueled by time spent at her grandparents' house in rural Uganda. "My grandparents had large coffee plantations, and I vividly remember spending time in the fields with them. With a small backyard pond, they also kept small fish caught from the wild. It was a great experience, and I looked forward to being there every school holiday." After her grandparents' passing, agricultural and fish farming tasks on the farm were passed to Faridah's parents, and eventually involved Faridah herself. Her experiences drove her to study for an undergraduate degree in Aquaculture at Makerere University.

After graduating in 2006, Faridah was fortunate to work on several research projects coordinated by UN-Water – identifying capacity needs in the water sector among UN member states – while concurrently

studying for her Master's in Integrated Water Management at the University of Dar-es-salaam in Tanzania. In 2010, she took on a position as a Fisheries Inspector at Uganda's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF), where she continues to work today.

As part of her role, Faridah works with the central government to develop policies, regulations, and guidelines to improve the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Gender equality in the sector is a key interest for her, so she also works to develop policy interventions to support women's participation in the fisheries sector.

Alongside her work at MAAIF, Faridah is pursuing a PhD in Aquaculture with the University of Stirling in Scotland. She says that being awarded a prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship to undertake these studies is a career highlight for her. "A PhD has always been something I wanted to do," she smiles.

“When I got an opportunity to further my studies in aquaculture, I knew I was going to grow personally – but I also looked forward to gaining opportunities that will allow me to better contribute to the livelihoods of my African people.”

One of the key challenges Faridah has faced is “finding the balance between career and family. There is a lot that I have missed out or compromised on in the process of growing my career while managing a young family,” she admits. However, she adds, receiving support from her husband and extended family has been crucial in helping her juggle various demands.

Faridah heard about the GRASP Fellowship from a former colleague and is thrilled to have been accepted to the program. Building relationships and networks with the other Fellows holds particular appeal. “Being able to talk with women at the same level in our careers but facing similar challenges helps me realize I am not alone,” she smiles. “I know that, by the end of the program, I will be better in so many ways. I’ve already started implementing tips I’ve learned – including on developing my purpose, managing peoples’ expectations, and respectful communication – and it’s making a difference.”

Faridah’s policy focus is on improving women’s contributions to artisanal fisheries and their role in aquaculture. “Equipping women with skills and knowledge to reduce post-harvest losses will increase how much they gain out of their businesses,” she explains. “This improves their contribution to family incomes, strengthens communities, and reduces poverty, gender-based domestic violence, and other associated crimes.”

Faridah has two mentors from the GRASP Fellowship: Ms. Joyce Ikwaput Nyeko of MAAIF and Dr. Nattabi Kigongo from Makerere University. “These two individuals will be significant in shaping me into a strong leader,” she says. “I am looking forward to benefiting from their knowledge and experience.”

She is also taking her role of mentor to a younger colleague seriously. “I am a product of women who believed strongly in me, and it is how I am where I am today,” she affirms. “I would love to share that and help someone grow personally and professionally.”

Faridah Bukirwa 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).