

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile

**Position**

Nutrition Specialist

Institution

Food and Agricultural
Organization of the United
Nations (FAO)

Country

Zambia

Education

MSc, Public Health, University of
Lusaka (Zambia), 2018

Mentor

Dr. Chisoni Mumba, University
of Zambia

Area of Interest

Enhanced food safety
through improved policy
implementation and food safety
regulations enforcement, and
increased awareness on food
handling

Andela Kangwa

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"While good policy documents are being written, there is a gap when it comes to implementation – and it's important to learn how to close this."

Andela Kangwa envisioned many career options: medicine, computer science, and engineering. Essentially, she reveals, "I wanted a career that would allow me to socially interact with people. I love fieldwork and have the desire to impact the lives of others." So, when she came to apply to university, she was accepted into the Natural Sciences course at the University of Zambia.

However, her eyes were opened after talking with a fellow student during her first year of study. "We discussed food science and how it had some economics, engineering, and computer science-related courses," she recalls. As longstanding areas of interest for Andela, she became intrigued and decided to switch to the food science course in her second year. "When I look back now, I realize that's what I wanted," she states. "I don't think I would have been as satisfied by any other profession as I am with being a food scientist."

After graduating in 2010, Andela held positions in both the private and public sectors and completed a Master's in Public Health from the University of Lusaka in 2018. She took on her current role as a Nutrition Specialist for the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2021. There, her work revolves around nutrition education, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and food systems, behavior change communications, food security, and food safety. The overall aim is to help reduce malnutrition in pregnant and breast-feeding women and children under two years of age through improved dietary diversity and quality.

Throughout her career – particularly while working for Zambia's Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock – Andela has gained experience in the policy arena. "I have engaged with policies at different spheres," she shares, "and I have noticed that while good documents are being written, there is a gap in

implementation – and it's important to learn how to close this."

Andela notes that, as a woman in the workplace, she has faced numerous gender-related barriers during her decade-long career. "Working in male-dominated environments, I discovered that, as a female, one has to apply themselves much more for their input to be appreciated," she laments. Furthermore, adds Andela, being single means that, sometimes, she finds herself with higher workloads as "we are considered as having more time on our hands compared to married women."

Fortunately, having supportive colleagues has helped Andela push through such barriers. "I have had understanding supervisors who have been supportive of my career growth," she reveals. "I feel it's really important to highlight this because I believe that the attitude of superiors can make or break your growth."

Andela first learned of the AWARD GRASP Fellowship through the Zambian chapter of AWARD, Zambian Women in Agricultural Research and Development (ZAWARD). She was overjoyed to be accepted into

the program as "I feel the Fellowship will help me grow and build on the interest that I have in policy issues," she states. In addition, she hopes it will boost her confidence and enhance her network so she can make a real impact in the policy space.

Andela's policy focus is on enhancing food safety through improved policy implementation and food safety regulations enforcement, as well as increased awareness of food handling from farm to fork. "We have some good regulations, but still see food quality and safety being compromised," she notes. "For instance, we see fresh fish being sold in open spaces without proper refrigeration or cold chain facilities. Meanwhile, consumers see nothing wrong in buying food not handled according to food safety guidelines."

Andela believes she can learn a lot from her Mentor and other GRASP Policy Fellows in the program as she strives to achieve her food safety goals. Ultimately, she says, "I want to be seen as a policy expert in all food safety issues and to make a difference in my country and Africa as a whole."

Andela Kangwa 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).