

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Enterprise Development
Specialist

Institution

Plan International Ghana

Country

Ghana

Education

MSc, Agriculture Economics,
University of Western Australia
(Australia), 2016

Mentor

Mrs. Fouzia Tua Alhassan,
Gender Specialist, Right to Play
Ghana

Area of Interest

Tackling gender-based barriers
– including limited access to
fertile land and inputs and the
burden of unpaid care work – at
the family and community level

Rose Aawulena

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

“When you get to work with rural people, especially women, and you’re able to make the needed impact in their lives, the smile alone on their faces brings some fulfillment.”

Growing up in the rural village of Nandom, in Ghana’s Upper West Region, Rose Aawulena wanted to become a nurse. She admired her aunty and wanted to follow the same path. However, her aspirations soon changed after encountering some agricultural extension officers who visited her community to engage farmers on best practices to improve their yields. “I had an interest right from the word go that, when I grew up, no matter where I reached in educational level, I definitely wanted to work with real people, right from the grassroots,” she states.

Following her newfound interest in agriculture, Rose obtained an undergraduate degree in Agriculture Technology from the University for Development Studies in Ghana before earning a Master’s degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Western Australia.

Currently, Rose works at Plan International Ghana as the Enterprise Development Specialist for a Global

Affairs Canada-funded project called ‘WISE’ – Women’s Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises. The project aims to help improve women’s social position and create economic opportunities for them. As well as increasing women’s access to and control over fertile land and resources, WISE also seeks to tackle gender-based violence and increase women’s decision-making at the household and community levels.

Over 12,600 women across different locations have been selected for self-development, financial literacy, and gender relations training to develop their self-confidence and improve their communication and business development skills. For Rose, even the smallest rewards can feel significant. “When you get to work with people, especially women, and you’re able to make an impact in their lives, the smile alone on their faces brings fulfillment,” she enthuses.

The project also targets traditional and religious leaders to use their platforms to galvanize support

for women's economic empowerment. Men in the communities are also being reached, as they are the primary custodians of fertile land. "We are working with women's spouses and male relatives to see how they can support the women by releasing fertile land to them to undertake their farming activities," Rose explains.

Rose applied for the GRASP Fellowship to develop her lobbying and advocacy skills. "This will support my work and help provide me with the requisite skills and knowledge I need to be able to engage with the public sector stakeholders I work with," she reveals. She also wants to understand how gender norms, agency/power dynamics, and the different forms of gender-based violence affect men's and women's ability to assess and adopt agricultural innovations.

She hopes that the skills and knowledge she will obtain as a Policy Fellow can help her raise awareness among rural communities about the 2019 Land Bill. The bill allows women interested in commercial farming to access arable farmland through a customary land transfer and will receive a signed contract and then obtain legal access within the contract period. "I strongly believe that following the sensitization that I will undertake in the rural communities, all the parties targeted will have a fair idea of how the bill works," she says, excitedly.

Working in a male-dominated environment has proven challenging at times, but support from fellow women colleagues has been invaluable. "For the past three years, I've had an awesome supervisor who I call my 'superwoman'," Rose smiles. "She believes the sky is big enough for all of us to shine, especially as women."

She has seen how her GRASP Mentor, Fouzia Tua Alhassan, is able to mobilize, engage, and motivate other team members to deliver quality and timely results. "My Mentor is a great leader because of her effective communication, listening, and interpersonal skills. Therefore I wish to gain better listening skills, negotiation skills, and networking skills from her to enable me to engage with stakeholders in my research work after the GRASP course," she says.

Rose is also looking forward to mentoring a younger colleague. She wants to encourage other young women to have self-confidence and be dedicated to succeeding in their chosen professions. "If you commit and dedicate yourself to work, you can become whoever you want to," she concludes. "I tell myself every day that I can succeed: I overcome self-doubt and have the confidence to take action and get things done," she asserts.

Rose Aawulena 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).