

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Principal Agricultural Economist

Institution

Ministry of Agriculture

Country

Zambia

Education

MSc, Agriculture and Rural
Development, Hankyong
National University (South
Korea), 2013

Mentor

Dr. Ndashe Philemon Kapulu,
Programmes and Principal
Research Officer, Zambia
Agriculture Research Institute,
Ministry of Agriculture

Area of Interest

Interventions to increase
household resilience, food
security, and nutrition among
smallholder farmers

Precious Makunka Mwalungali 2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"The GRASP Fellowship is a platform in which I can immerse myself and tap into innovative skills regarding the formulation of impactful gender-responsive policies."

After obtaining an undergraduate degree in Library and Information Studies with Development Studies from the University of Zambia, Precious Makunka Mwalungali "never dreamt of ever working as an agriculturalist, nor did I dream that my career would end up so well woven in agriculture." However, everything changed when she began her first job with the Conservation Farming Unit (CFU). This NGO provides small- and medium-scale farmers with knowledge and practical skills to help them. "As an Analyst at CFU, I instantly but unknowingly fell in love with and developed an interest in agriculture," smiles Precious. She then obtained a Master's in Agriculture and Rural Development from Hankyong National University in South Korea in 2013.

Today, Precious works as a Principal Agricultural Economist in the Ministry of Agriculture – and her career thus far has afforded her around a decade of experience in the policy arena. Alongside producing policy briefs, her work in this field has involved

coordinating and creating agricultural statistics for the Ministry to foster evidence-based decision-making in the sector, including the generation of the national food balance sheet (FBS). Information from the FBS, along with other key agricultural statistics, is used to inform data-driven decisions around production support, trade policy, and stock management by governments; business decision-making and investment by the private sector; and food aid by donors or emergency response organizations.

Precious believes undertaking this work has played a vital role in her professional development. "As an FBS focal point person at a regional level for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) – I have been exposed to regional networks," she reveals. "Further, I have come to appreciate experiences from other countries which have helped me sharpen my skills and execute my duties even better." Other policy-related career highlights, notes

Precious, include contributing to the in-country review of the 2007-2009 HIV/AIDS workplace policy in various Zambian provinces and the 2004-2015 National Agricultural Policy, Implementation, and Strategic Plan.

Yet, despite her successes, Precious explains that she has faced gender-related challenges in the workplace, often being overlooked in favor of her male counterparts. “When I joined the Statistics Unit, I was heavily pregnant. And, for quite some time, I felt ignored,” she states. “To overcome this, I took advantage of some male colleagues’ non-availability when called upon for certain assignments, and always made myself available, which helped me gain the trust and confidence of my superiors.”

Precious first learned of the GRASP Fellowship through her workplace and the AWARD Zambian country chapter, Zambian Women in Agricultural Research and Development (ZaWARD), and is overjoyed to have been selected as a Fellow. “The Fellowship is a platform in which I can immerse myself and tap into innovative skills regarding the formulation of impactful gender-responsive policies,” she enthuses. “Coupled with efficient implementation strategies in

my job setting, I can contribute to enhancing food security and building resilience among smallholder farmers.” She also views the Fellowship as an opportunity to enhance her resilience and leadership skills.

Following on from her Master’s degree, Precious’ research focuses on interventions within the Ministry of Agriculture to increase household resilience, food security, and nutrition among smallholder farmers. She also aims to drive proactive, gender-responsive measures in this area. Doing so, she envisages, will positively contribute to achieving Zambia’s National Development Plan’s strategic objective of reducing poverty and vulnerability.

The networking opportunities that come with the Fellowship are another area of appeal for Precious, as these will enable her “to keep abreast with the latest innovations regarding policy formulation and implementation.” While she is excited to learn from others, she is also keen to pass on her own knowledge and expertise to those starting out in the agricultural field through her role as a mentor.

Precious Makunka Mwalungali 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).