

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Governance and Advocacy  
Advisor

#### Institution

SNV

#### Country

Rwanda

#### Education

MSc, Sustainable Agriculture,  
University of Liège, Belgium  
(2018)

#### Mentor

Dr. Polycarpe Nshimirimana,  
Team Leader & Program Manager  
Illuminate Small Scale Mining in  
Rwanda Project

#### Research Area

Policies favoring maximizing crop  
diversity (intercropping, crop rotation,  
fallow, Agro-forestry)

### Claudette Imanishimwe 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"I am passionate about increasing women's membership, entrepreneurship, and leadership in our cooperatives."*

Growing up in rural Rwanda, agricultural activities surrounded Claudette Imanishimwe, and seeing her parents' involvement in the sector inspired her to follow a similar path. "I was fortunate to grow up in a family of farmers," she says. "I remember spending countless hours attending to plants and watching them grow; that experience influenced my career choice."

Claudette first began studying agriculture at secondary school, then continued to do so at university – obtaining an undergraduate degree in crop production from the University of Rwanda in 2008.

After graduation, Claudette began her career working on the Integrated Pest Management project at the Rwanda Agricultural Development Board (RAB), a government agency responsible for research and development in the agriculture sector.

She initially worked as a project officer, where her primary role was to train farmers on pest and disease management. Claudette then held other positions on different projects at RAB, including as a researcher and agricultural extensionist.

To build on her previous learnings, Claudette applied for a master's degree. Leaving her job, she undertook a course in sustainable agriculture at the University of Liège in Belgium, graduating in 2018.

Focusing on sustainable agriculture enabled her to extend her knowledge of sustainable farming practices, which she believes smallholder farmers must adopt to improve their productivity, boost their income, and transform their well-being.

Following graduation in 2020, Claudette joined the non-governmental organization SNV Rwanda, which works with Rwandan farmers to increase crop yields

and exports while protecting soil for future generations. She first worked as an agronomist advisor before moving into her current position: governance and advocacy advisor. The project aims to promote regenerative agriculture in the country, and Claudette's responsibilities include generating research evidence to support the project's civil society organization partners in their advocacy activities.

Although Claudette's education and career had not focused specifically on gender, she is more than aware of related issues – especially in the agrifood system. Around 70% of Rwandans, many of whom are women, are employed in the agricultural sector. Yet, the number of women in decision-making roles within farmer-led enterprises remains remarkably low, which Claudette wants to change.

Claudette is passionate about women's entrepreneurship and supporting them in increasing their membership and participation in leadership roles in the cooperatives that work with SNV Rwanda under the regenerative agriculture project. "The inclusion of women in cooperatives is important for the development of farmer-led agricultural enterprises and to contribute more to sustainable agricultural production," she states.

Claudette first heard about the GRASP Fellowship through social media, and her desire to achieve greater equality in the agriculture sector motivated her to apply. During the program, she is keen to learn how gender-responsive policies can be developed, integrated, and implemented in the context of agrifood systems.

"I want to be trained on policymaking processes for agriculture transformation," she states. "As a governance and advocacy advisor, I believe this will help me provide effective advisory services to the local civil society organizations that we are working with, specifically for an enabling environment for adopting regenerative agriculture."

In addition to enhancing her policy-related skills, Claudette also hopes to strengthen her leadership and advocacy abilities to influence policy and gain skills in policy analysis, networking, and negotiation. "I am excited to be part of the Fellowship and to learn a lot from my mentor and other Fellows," she enthuses.

*Claudette Imanishimwe 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).*