

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Director of Sustainable
Development

Institution

Sahanala

Country

Madagascar

Education

Higher specialized diploma in
Business Administration, National
Institute of Accounting Sciences
and Business Administration,
Antananarivo (2004)

Mentor

Mr. Pierrot Andriantiana, Agronomist
and National Coordinator of the
Development of Inclusive
Agricultural Sectors Program

Research Area

Business administration, financial
inclusion, rural development and
agribusiness

Hobisoa Raharimboahangy 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

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In 2010, while working at Positive Planet, a non-governmental organization focusing on microfinance, Hobisoa promoted savings and credit schemes for farmers in the Antananarivo Province and the north of the country. She also helped implement a mutual health plan for vanilla producers in the Diana Region in the north and Antananarivo. "We based our work on the following observation: in the event of illness, people have trouble accessing proper healthcare. As a result of their vulnerability, they sometimes lose money or are forced to sell their land to see a doctor. Some farmers choose not to seek treatment," she explains.

Hobisoa's next project was to drive financial inclusion in conjunction with banks and microfinance institutions and through mobile money transfers. While working at a private company that sells vanilla, one of the most expensive spices in the world, she supervised implementing a holistic program for vanilla planters.

The company funded projects about access to healthcare and water, financial management, promotion of modern growing techniques, youth employment, female empowerment, and financial inclusion. "The goal was to improve the livelihood of producers. They are the ones who make this lucrative industry thrive," says Hobisoa.

She is just as driven while working as Sustainability Manager at Sahanala Madagascar. Founded in 2010, the company's main objective is to strengthen local communities by promoting business skills and integration into a federation that can meet international market demands. The company also supports initiatives to preserve biodiversity in producer regions.

Sahanala operates in 13 of the island's 24 regions and conducts business in industries such as vanilla, agrifood, fishing, tourism, and annuity products.

“We work closely with farmers. Getting women farmers more involved and giving them more responsibilities are integral to our company policy,” explains Hobisoa as she stresses the importance of considering cultural factors when considering gender issues.

As Sustainability Manager, Hobisoa often deals directly with farmer organizations. “I have always been interested in development issues. We provide support to workers in the field. It is essential to be aware of their situations and needs. It is very important,” she declares. She adds that her work environment consists almost exclusively of men.

When Hobisoa found out about the GRASP Fellowship on the homepage of the U.S. Embassy in Madagascar, she promptly applied.

“Gender is always an issue in the agricultural world that I live in. I want to better my knowledge on the subject and put it into practice in my field. I want to go beyond statistics, beyond the gap between women and men,” she confides.

“Gender and social inclusion always go hand in hand. The GRASP Fellowship stresses the importance of negotiation and public relations. These are areas I want to improve in,” and she adds that she expects help from her mentor.

Hobisoa Raharimboahangy 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).