

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Technical Advisor in Public Relations

#### Institution

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

#### Country

Madagascar

#### Education

MSc in Social Marketing, Higher Institute of Communication, Business and Management, Antananarivo (2010)

#### Mentor

Ms. Carole Rakotondrainibe, former Managing Director of Nexta, Head of Business Development at Axian Group, and Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Economy and Finance

#### Research Area

Communication, public relations, social marketing, and agricultural technologies

### Holy Razafindrandretsa 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"We want to make women economically self-sufficient and to help them take on greater responsibilities in agricultural and livestock activities. We intervene in Madagascar's poorest regions."*

Holy Razafindrandretsa came to agriculture in a roundabout way. In 2008, she obtained a BSc in Communication, Languages, and Interculturality at Antananarivo University and an MSc in Social Marketing in 2010. Eager for experience, she worked in various business sectors. Her short stint at the International Trade Board of Madagascar, which works with Malagasy producers, was "brief but decisive," according to Holy. In charge of finding business leads for producers, transformers, collectors, and exporters, she discovered the industry and began to imagine a career in agriculture and the environment.

After working at Alliance Voahary Gasy (2015-2017), a prominent environmental organization in Madagascar, Holy joined GIZ, the German Agency for International Cooperation. As a Public Relations Advisor, her duties included monitoring and evaluating agricultural projects, acting as a focal point for gender issues, communication, and agricultural entrepreneurship support.

The German agency endeavors to set up Farmer Business Schools and Cooperative Business Schools, encouraging producers to form cooperatives to boost their inclusion in agricultural value chains. "We provide advice and look for business opportunities. We intervene across the entire value chain, from producers and exporters to collectors and transformers," Holy explains. "One of our goals is to make women economically self-sufficient and to help them take on greater responsibilities in agricultural and livestock activities. We intervene in Madagascar's poorest regions."

Part of her job is meeting producers in the field. Men's preconceived notions about her can be disconcerting. "They look down on me and judge me because of my young age. Sometimes, they tell me to be quiet. I need to prove that I have the right to express my point of view. I can be stubborn if that is what it takes," she affirms.

Holy is also active in community life. In 2016 and 2018, she was a member of Jeune Chambre Internationale (JCI), a non-profit organization of young professionals eager to help their communities. Holy focused on urban agriculture and technologies. "We worked with mobile network operator Orange to set up a digital center for young girls as part of the e-Hianatra project [hianatra means "to learn" in Malagasy]. The center, which provides IT equipment for learning purposes, is geared to girls in Antananarivo," she explains. Holy is also a Women in Tech Madagascar member, a women's technology association. "I had the idea to develop agricultural technologies to provide farmers with practical information about their activities."

Her dream is becoming a reality: GIZ has designed a system that offers farmers up to five free calls to obtain a wide range of real-time advice, such as weather forecasts, or information regarding the cultural event calendar. "We have worked with our partners to provide content based on prerecorded messages," explains Holy, who participated in adapting messages to local cultures.

She was quick to apply when she found out about the GRASP Fellowship. "I read about it on Facebook and sent in my application. Madagascar needs strategic agricultural and food policy. We need to draw inspiration from others," she says. "Madagascar's national policy regarding organic agriculture is the envy of African countries. Its promotion, however, still requires work," she adds. Holy believes that organic agriculture is an important driver for development in Africa.

Holy hopes her experience as an AWARD Policy Fellow will broaden her horizons; she wishes to join networks of African women leaders in the agricultural industry. She is particularly eager to create a platform for women who will develop increasingly resilient agricultural systems. She hopes to profit from the expertise of her mentor, Carole Rakotonirainibe, former Manager Director of Nexta, a platform dedicated to fostering and empowering Malagasy entrepreneurship.

*Holy Razafindrandretsa 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).*