

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Head of Blue Economy
Department

Institution

Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue
Economy

Country

Madagascar

Education

MSc Ocean Governance and
Fisheries Management, University
of Wollongong (Australia), 2019

Mentor

Ginette Tolahy, Teacher of
Geography and Environment,
University of Toamasina

Research Area

Fishing and the blue economy,
aquaculture, agricultural and
rural training

Julia Randrianarivelo 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"I advocate for improving rural women's livelihood in the farming, animal husbandry, and fishing industries in the Atsinanana region. I am constantly encouraging them and promoting the value of their work. It is a tremendous challenge!"

Julia Hanitriniaina Randrianarivelo was born, went to school, and works in Atsinanana, a region in eastern Madagascar that holds a special place in her heart. It is where she developed a passion for managing and promoting the marine industry and the people who depend on it. Julia has worked at the Ministry of Fisheries, doing various jobs. She currently heads the regional service for the blue economy. "Working for the blue economy, fishing is a calling. I am proud of the 20 years I have spent at the ministry!"

In addition to her career as a public employee, Julia takes advantage of every opportunity to enhance her technical and personal capabilities. Since 2009, she has completed several training programs with international organizations: technical planning, sustainable fish farming, marine pollution control, and statistical systems of fisheries.

Julia has dedicated herself to rural development, management of natural and marine resources, and improving the livelihoods of the people involved. Joining the regional committee for agricultural and rural training in Atsinanana was one of the proudest moments of her career. She has been actively involved in agricultural training for disadvantaged youth. Since 50% of the rural population does not know how to read or write, Julia has created and led literacy projects for young and out-of-school adults. In 2020, she was named Literacy Ambassador for Madagascar in collaboration with the World Literacy Foundation, which strives to combat poverty by improving literacy in rural populations. She secured funding to educate 100 fishermen's wives in the Toamasina II district.

Julia has nonetheless had to overcome numerous challenges. She explained that early on in her career, fishermen were often wary, and establishing direct dialogue was difficult. She decided instead to initiate discussions with women in female associations, realizing that empowering wives as mediators made technical and human relations with fishermen more effective.

As part of her job, Julia works on aquaculture development policy and gender issues. "I advocate for improving rural women's livelihood in the farming, animal husbandry, and fishing industries in the Atsinanana region. I am constantly encouraging them and promoting the value of their work. It is a tremendous challenge!" She leads various local initiatives to promote and facilitate artisanal entrepreneurship among women farmers. Julia is also keen to champion such projects in international circles – at the September 2023 Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi, for example – to demonstrate their economic and social benefits.

Naturally reserved, Julia sees the GRASP Fellowship as an opportunity to improve her communication ability to have a greater impact on her job. With support from her mentor, Ginette Tolahy, Geography and Environment Professor at the University of Toamasina, she is also eager to enhance her leadership skills. "I already hold a senior management position, but I want to be a woman who inspires others and supports future generations. As a better leader, I will have more of an impact at regional, national, and international levels." Julia is already thinking of how she can put her newly acquired skills into practice, such as in a blue economy project for women.

Julia Randrianarivelo 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).