

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Gender and Inclusion Program  
Officer

#### Institution

Christian Aid

#### Country

Ethiopia

#### Education

MSc, Public Health, University of  
Gondar, Ethiopia (2012)

#### Mentor

Baishali Chatterjee, Global Thematic  
Advisor: Gender Justice Specialist,  
Christian Aid

#### Research Area

Generating evidence on gender  
policy gaps in the agriculture sector

### Kalkidan Yimer

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"To understand agriculture, we must understand the gender dynamics within agriculture. I feel I have the right knowledge to contribute to this huge sector at the foundation of Ethiopia's economy."*

For over 10 years, Kalkidan Yimer has worked in government and development organizations – and, for seven of them, her focus has been on gender and inclusion, a path she never envisioned she would take growing up as her passion lay in public health.

After graduating with a degree in public health in 2012 from the University of Gondar in Ethiopia, Kalkidan was employed by the Ministry of Health as a medical director at Beddele Health Center in the Oromia region. Her job entailed overseeing the daily operations of the health center and managing staff, and the challenges she experienced – and her ability to overcome them – inspired her to apply for leadership roles. However, as a young woman straight out of university – and working in a conservative region, the majority of those she served didn't recognize her leadership on account of her gender. On seeking guidance from a senior female colleague, she told her to focus on being good and consistent at your job.

Kalkidan took up this advice and, on top of her responsibilities as medical director, dedicated herself to providing additional training to nurses and assistant health workers looking to improve their medical skills on their night shifts. Kalkidan's commitment saw her promoted to various positions within the Ministry, including within the disease prevention and control department, where she supervised the running of regional hospitals and assisted with developing national health guidelines.

After working in various positions in government, Kalkidan decided to move to the charity sector to see what more she could achieve. In 2017, she joined Save the Children International to work on community health projects. It was while working in this role that she identified the gaps in serving marginalized girls and women, including around gender-based violence.

The organization's country director noticed her interest and asked if she would be interested in becoming the gender focal point for the country program, a role she gladly accepted.

To enhance Kalkidan's work, the organization arranged for a training and exchange program with gender focal points from other countries, held in Nairobi in 2018. This was one of the many training courses that prepared her for the job.

"Following the training, I took the responsibility of ensuring that all projects implemented by the organization were gender sensitive," she says. As well as leading the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of gender projects, Kalkidan was responsible for developing grant proposals, monitoring project partners, and ensuring the alignment of projects with other company programs.

Working with her team, Kalkidan led and raised funding for a standalone gender-based project that aimed to enhance equal rights and opportunities for women and girls in the Southern region of Ethiopia. The project advocated for an end to violence against women and girls and empowered them to participate in decision-making. It reached over 49,000 vulnerable women.

"This was the turning point when I became completely focused on gender. With the wealth of experience and the training I had received, I knew this is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," she asserts. In May 2023, Kalkidan joined Christian Aid Ethiopia, where she now works as a gender and inclusion advisor. She ensures that gender and inclusion policies and strategies are mainstreamed across the organization structure and within projects and interventions.

Kalkidan is always looking for opportunities she can tap into to grow her expertise on gender issues. She found details for the GRASP Fellowship on the Funds for NGOs website. Her drive to apply was informed by her passion for addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture – an area she is keen to explore.

"Despite women's huge contribution to agricultural activities, agricultural policies have disproportionately benefitted male farmers and left women farmers at a disadvantage. The Fellowship will allow me to contribute to improving gender-responsive agricultural policies in Ethiopia through mentorship and networking," she explains.

Through her research with the Fellowship, she also hopes to generate evidence on how men and women are treated differently in agriculture and identify underlying assumptions and stereotypes about women that are embedded in policies.

*Kalkidan Yimer 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).*