

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position
Chairperson

Institution
Consortium of leading rural women's organizations in Burkina Faso

Country
Burkina Faso

Education
BSc, Gender, Population, and Development, Pan African Institute for Development-West Africa (IPD/AOS), Burkina Faso (2020)

Mentor
Dr. Pascaline Coulibaly-Lingani, Environmental sociologist at the Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research, Burkina Faso

Research Area
Gender-responsive agricultural policymaking

Laetitia Rahamata 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"As a consortium, we aim to conduct nationwide research on women in agriculture, and I believe this Fellowship will contribute to my ability to lead the study."

Laetitia Rahamata Koudougou is a campaigner for women's rights in Burkina Faso. For over 20 years, her work has focused on empowering women and girls in rural and peri-urban areas who suffer gender-based violence and are denied access to their own land. "Work on gender equality has been my driving force since I began my professional life, and I will continue the fight for equality," she says.

Since 2016, Laetitia has worked with a consortium of 27 leading rural women's organizations, which seeks to address, among other challenges, the low economic empowerment of women and girls and their low participation in leadership roles across 13 regions in Burkina Faso. Between 2016 and 2020, she served as a steering committee member and was involved in conducting advocacy in government to gain official recognition of the consortium.

While continuing to work with the consortium, she decided to strengthen her academic knowledge in gender and development further.

She graduated with a BSc in Gender, Population, and Development from the Pan African Institute for Development-West Africa (IPD/AOS) in 2020. Following this, in the same year, she took on the role of chairperson for the consortium.

Building awareness among member organizations on the role women can play in addressing the challenges they face is one way the consortium hopes to improve the well-being of Burkinabe women. The consortium is also engaging different stakeholders, such as the government and international organizations, to help find solutions to the issues facing rural and peri-urban women – such as gender-based violence.

As chairperson, Laetitia has focused the consortium's awareness-raising events on women's rights to own land. She has also worked to sensitize more than 500 heads of families and administrative authorities on the potential contribution of rural women to the economy through access to land.

These activities, Laetitia enthuses, are helping to change mindsets around women's rights – and are building the confidence of the consortium members who, Laetitia explains, are now more inclined to participate in development activities in their communities and apply for positions of responsibility within local government.

A key milestone in Laetitia's career as a women's rights campaigner was representing rural women's organizations in parliament in 2015. She says that her term in parliament gave her a wider platform to advocate for the rights of women and allowed her to defend the place and role of women in national laws – with a law on prevention, repression, and reparation of violence against women and girls and the support for victims being adopted by parliament in 2015. On November 11, 2016, she was recognized at the national level by the Pingkuni Association in Burkina Faso as a defender of rights for women and girls.

The GRASP Fellowship, which Laetitia discovered online, appealed to her due to its focus on gender and agriculture. As part of the Fellowship, she believes she will improve her ability to communicate land and agriculture policies to rural women. "My aim is for women in rural areas to understand land policy and agricultural systems – and their role in implementing them – so they can become part of the solution to the issues they face in accessing land," she says.

Laetitia also hopes to gain practical, comprehensive knowledge on developing gender-responsive policies targeting the agricultural sector – relevant skills that she can apply in projects for her current post. "As a consortium, we are aiming to conduct nationwide research on women in agriculture, and I believe this Fellowship will contribute to my ability to lead the study."

Laetitia Rahamata Koudougou 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).