

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Researcher

Institution

Mozambique Institute of
Agricultural Research

Country

Mozambique

Education

MSc, Veterinary and Livestock
Sciences, University of Chile
(2022)

Mentor

Alice Amós Cambula, Directorate of
Training, Documentation, and
Technology Transfer, Mozambique
Institute of Agricultural Research

Research Area

Enhancing the sustainability of
small-scale livestock production
systems

Nilda Rosa Francisco

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"As women researchers, we must seek to give more meaning to our role in society by constantly challenging the status quo and coming up with innovative and sustainable solutions that local farmers can embrace."

"My entire life, I have felt driven to find solutions to problems that affect vulnerable people who struggle to have their voices heard," says Nilda Rosa Francisco. This passion to advocate for others started when she was a teenager growing up in Nampula, Northern Mozambique. From an early age, Nilda wanted to become a doctor – but when it came to applying for university, she did not quite meet the qualifications required to pursue a medical degree.

While contemplating her next move, she thought about her father, who had worked as an agricultural extension officer. She greatly admired him and his efforts to overcome farmers' problems. Nilda made the decision to follow in his footsteps and, with his support, was accepted at Faculdade Arnaldo University in Brazil in 2004 to study veterinary and livestock sciences.

On completing her course in 2009, despite plentiful work opportunities in Brazil, Nilda decided to return to Mozambique.

"I felt that my people would benefit more from my services, and I had to be there for them. I had very high expectations and plans for resolving their problems," she says with a smile.

In 2012, Nilda landed a job with the Mozambique Institute of Agricultural Research as a research assistant and has worked there ever since. She was promoted to the role of researcher in 2015 to act as the link between livestock farmers, researchers, and policymakers. She regularly interacts with farmers to understand their challenges and communicates these findings to policy and strategy development colleagues. The policy documents are then shared with government and private sector actors for implementation.

"At the Institute, I can help create technologies and improve services that provide solutions for livestock farmers and improve rural incomes," she enthuses. Such services include boosting the availability of livestock vaccinations to reduce disease and

connecting farmers to animal health specialists who advise them on livestock management practices, including optimal feed formulation.

While Nilda is proud of her career achievements, she has had to contend with setbacks. For instance, in Mozambique, livestock farmers are predominantly men. As a female, she struggles with farmers who refuse to accept her advice because of her gender. Such encounters, she says, make her feel hugely frustrated – as she has witnessed the loss of livestock that would have been avoided if the farmers heeded her advice.

To address this issue, Nilda hosts awareness training for women and men farmers to encourage them to treat professionals equally.

When colleagues at the Institute (one of whom is now her GRASP mentor) encouraged Nilda to apply for the GRASP Fellowship, she didn't think twice. She says some of those who motivated her had participated in the Flagship AWARD Fellowship and now hold senior management positions at the Institute, working to influence policies in the agriculture sector.

She aims to follow in their footsteps and hopes that participating in GRASP is a step towards achieving her ambition of influencing policies.

Nilda's key policy focus area is on enhancing the sustainability of small-scale livestock production systems. She hopes that partaking in the Fellowship will help her hone her skills in designing projects that enable livestock farmers – particularly women – to contribute their voices to livestock farming.

Nilda Rosa Francisco 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).