

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Full Professor and Community Activist

#### Institution

Higher School of Agricultural Sciences, University of Antananarivo

#### Country

Madagascar

#### Education

PhD Life Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, University of Antananarivo, 2016

#### Mentor

Michelle Andriamahazo, Agro-environmentalist, Agriculture and Climate Change Consultant, National Expert on Greenhouse Gases for the Agricultural Sector

#### Research Area

Teaching, agricultural research, and research and development projects

### Volatsara Baholy Rahetlah

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"I hope that the GRASP Fellowship will give me access to knowledge to develop agricultural policies consistent with environmental, ecological, and food security in Madagascar."*

As a Tenured Professor at the Higher School of Agronomic Sciences of Antananarivo University and a corresponding member of the Malagasy Academy since 2022, Volatsara has nearly 20 years of experience in university teaching and applied and participative research. Her work's priority is to support small farms and forestry businesses regarding agroecological transition and advance resilience to socio-economic and climatic shocks. This will promote sustainable, resilient, and inclusive agricultural and food systems. In addition, since June 2021, Volatsara has been the Administrative Manager of the Agroecology, Biodiversity, and Climate Change Major at the Higher School of Agronomic Sciences.

Volatsara is also a founding member of the National Platform for Women, Sustainable Development, and Food Security, which has been in operation for ten years and has over 1,500 members nationwide. She is key to the elaboration and implementation of research and development projects and to

enhancing members' technical, technological, sales, and managerial abilities to further the platform's goal: to create sustainable food security in communities and boost their resilience to climatic risks.

Between 2019 and 2022, Volatsara represented Madagascar on the Centre for Coordination of Agriculture Research and Development board of directors for the Southern African Development Community as a member of the committee for research planning. In 2018, she was named Woman Researcher in Agriculture for Development, a prestigious regional prize granted by AWARD.

As a result of her involvement in academic and social activities, Volatsara has identified multiple challenges at the root of discrimination against young people and women, especially regarding gender and generational issues. She emphasizes that in the workplace, it is often difficult for senior and experienced employees to make room for

women and young people at the table and to give them more managerial responsibility.

Volatsara learned about the GRASP Fellowship call for applicants on social media. She applied, hoping to enhance her experience in policy processes and social relationship management. She is eager to improve dialogue and knowledge transfer between researchers and policymakers, especially in advancing smart farming to face regional and national climate challenges.

She finds the policy aspect of the GRASP Fellowship interesting. She has previously helped elaborate, update, and implement agricultural policy regarding seed legislation, sustainable management, and conservation of phylogenetic resources for agriculture and food, as well as scaling up smart farming for climate-related challenges in Madagascar. She hopes to hone her skills to help develop agricultural policies consistent with environmental, ecological, and food security.

*Volatsara Baholy Rahetlah 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).*