

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Technical Collaborator

Institution

Ministry of Agriculture and
Livestock

Country

Madagascar

Education

BSc in Agricultural Engineer,
Higher School of Agricultural
Sciences, University of Antanan-
arivo (2016)

Mentor

Dr Gaudiose Mujawamariya,
AfricaRice Country Representative
in Madagascar

Research Area

The design of agricultural strategies
and policies, the empowerment of
women, and the professionalization
of producers

Hasina Ralalason

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"Taking gender and other socio-cultural aspects into consideration at the design stage of an agricultural development project is a major factor for its success. We must consider women in all our activities and ensure that initiatives are specifically designed for them."

Hasina Miharisoa Ralalason's interest in Madagascar's rural world and its producers began at school. Born and raised in Mahajanga, an agricultural region in the northwest of the country, Hasina recalled: "At school, we were taught that nearly 80% of Malagasy people are farmers or producers living in rural areas. I used to dream of what I could do for Madagascar," she says.

After obtaining her baccalaureate, she was accepted to the Higher School of Agronomic Sciences at Antananarivo University due to a nationwide merit-based competition. Hasina chose to specialize in Tropical Agriculture and Sustainability, Biological Soil Processes, and Environment. "My childhood dream clearly influenced my decision," she adds.

In 2016, after obtaining her agronomy degree, she worked as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for the Integrated Actions in Nutrition and Food (AINA) project in the southeast of the island. Run by the

non-governmental organization SAF-FJKM, the initiative aims to improve food security in this region, one of the poorest in the country. In 2018, Hasina joined the public sector as Manager of a support division for plant production, headed by the Regional Directorate of Agriculture and Livestock in Menabe (DRAE Menabe), in western Madagascar. She subsequently became District Manager for Agriculture and Livestock in Morondava, the region's capital. "I worked with several governmental services and other rural entities," she proudly states.

Hasina explained that her new job entailed new responsibilities and difficult experiences. She recalled one in particular that left a profound impact: "One day, I was to represent the DRAE Menabe at an official ceremony. All the other speakers were men and much older than me. I felt small compared with them. And yet speaking publicly before them was an honor and a challenge."

Since 2020, Hasina has worked at the main offices in Antananarivo as a Technical Assistant to the Director of Planning and Monitoring/Evaluation at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. This cross-departmental position has granted her a more extensive vision of the ministry's projects and programs. Hasina has participated in setting forth agricultural strategies and policies and monitoring and reporting on the ministry's activities and the projects and organizations it heads. "Some people doubted my ability to handle the job, given that I am a young mother. But she sustains that she is eager to excel and do what it takes to prove I am capable," she affirms.

Hasina is particularly enthusiastic about the autonomy of women, access to finance in rural areas, and upskilling of agribusiness producers. "Taking gender and other socio-cultural aspects into consideration at the design stage of an agricultural development project is a major factor for its success. We need to consider women in all our activities and to ensure that initiatives are specifically designed for them," she declares.

A friend who benefited from support from AWARD told Hasina about the GRASP Fellowship. "The training program is in keeping with my desire to advance my career. GRASP will surely help me to gain new skills," hopes Hasina. She has learned that "life is a learning process; every day is an opportunity to learn." Thanks to help from her mentor, Dr Gaudiose Mujawamariya, Country Representative of AfricaRice in Madagascar, Hasina hopes to develop communication and fund-raising skills. She also wants to learn how to promote the best business-oriented upskilling for people in the agricultural industry, such as practical training in their chosen fields and support to expand their business activities at regional, national, and international levels.

Hasina Ralalason 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).