

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Consultant in Civil and Hydraulic Engineering

Institution

International Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE)

Country

Burkina Faso

Education

MSc in Civil and Hydraulic Engineering from the International Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE) of Burkina Faso, 2016

Mentor

Aissata Delphine Bama, Senior Specialist in Irrigation and Drainage, World Bank Office in Burkina Faso

Research Area

Water Security and water conservation techniques for agriculture

Vanessa Rosette Kaboré 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"As a young female engineer, I often supervise older men. Establishing proper guidelines can be a challenge. My way of dealing with it is to lead by example."

Vanessa Kaboré was born in Ouagadougou. Her mother, a Rural Development Engineer, passed on her passion to Vanessa, who, at a young age, accompanied her on field trips. "My love of rural development comes from my mother. Appreciative farmers were always present at project handovers. When we visited villages several years later, we saw their quality of life improved. I realized that my mother's work was very useful to the community," says Vanessa.

In 2011, Vanessa enrolled at 2iE, the International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering, in Ouagadougou. In 2016, she obtained an MSc in Civil and Hydraulic Engineering and started working as a consultant. She used her expertise to ensure that hydraulic construction projects met the needs of producers. Six years later, she returned to school to complete a water management and sustainable agriculture thesis.

Her most recent consulting assignment concerns the Sahel Irrigation Initiative Support Project. Funded by the World Bank, the project focuses on rehabilitating the area's irrigated rice lowlands. As an independent Consultant, Vanessa supervised and ensured construction conformity and safeguarded the needs of the project's beneficiaries. For example, the project stipulates that 30% of beneficiaries must be women.

However, her experience in the field has taught her that gender equality in agricultural projects is always a challenge. "Eighty percent of people whom I deal with during my consultancy assignments are men," she deplores. That means a risk, according to Vanessa, that the rehabilitation project will focus solely on the concerns of men, given that women are not always present to give their opinions.

She believes that a job as a Rural Development Consultant is challenging for women. "Assignments are sometimes long, and locations lack access to sanitation services. "It was difficult for me at the beginning. But I learned to overcome problems. I would think of the women who lived in the area and tried to live how they did. I thought, if they can do it, so can I," she recalls.

Vanessa has been working on her thesis at 2iE since July 2022. She divides her time between work with students, the laboratory, and research in the field. She was the national champion of "My thesis in 180 seconds", a competition organized by the Franco-phone University Agency, and finished third in the international final. Every experience, she believes, is an opportunity to enhance her skills.

Vanessa found out about the GRASP Fellowship call for applicants on social media. She immediately felt it was a good fit for her, particularly since it involved having a mentor. "At this point in my career, I need to be inspired by individuals with extensive experience in my field of study," she declares.

She wants to benefit from her mentor, Aissata Delphine Bama, an Irrigation and Drainage Expert, and acquire negotiation and consultancy skills, which are useful in agricultural policy processes. Vanessa is interested in agricultural water management, focusing on water conservation techniques. Her goal is to solve crop losses due to increasingly long droughts.

Vanessa Rosette Kaboré 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).