

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Teacher-Researcher

Institution

University of Antananarivo

Country

Madagascar

Education

PhD in Engineering Sciences,
University of Antananarivo
(Madagascar), 2023

Mentor

Lilia Rabeharisoa, Full Professor at
the Higher School of Agricultural
Sciences, University of
Antananarivo

Research Area

Research and higher education on
the quality and valorization of
agricultural products

Vonifanja Ramanoelina 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"I am very excited to improve my skills in project design regarding food security policy and gender issues in Madagascar. There is a gap between research and current public policy."

As the daughter of two Agronomists, Vonifanja Ramanoelina grew up immersed in agriculture and research. Initially passionate about national parks and nature, she obtained a BSc in Agronomy at the Higher School of Agronomic Sciences in Madagascar and an MSc in Ecology and Biodiversity at Aix Marseille University III in France. Upon returning to Madagascar in 2017, she became a Research Professor at Antananarivo University. Vonifanja teaches Agronomic Science, primarily focusing on agroecology, biodiversity, and climate change.

In 2003, she obtained a PhD in Engineering Science concerning the quality and valorization of agricultural products. "Being back in Madagascar was a means for me to contribute to the development of the local agricultural industry," she states. For five years, as an auditor in an organization that certifies organic products, Vonifanja has participated in agricultural development.

Then, as a Professor at Antananarivo University, she incorporated her field experience into a learning module about the agricultural market. As a Research Professor, she can advance innovative practices and develop new methods adapted to climate change to preserve biodiversity. She believes teaching and researching innovation is key to furthering agriculture in Madagascar by training future agronomists on sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices.

Vonifanja is also interested in gender issues in agriculture. Working with farming cooperatives has shown her how women are marginalized, discriminated against, excluded from decision-making entities, and lack access to resources. She sees teaching as a way to ensure that students take gender into consideration when designing and implementing agricultural development projects in Madagascar.

Voninfanja is just as determined regarding her career, which she balances with her family life. Her thesis, which she completed while her children were very young, is a particular source of pride.

Concerning the grant, Voninfanja explains: “I see the GRASP Fellowship as a great learning opportunity, particularly since it takes gender issues into account. I applied knowing that it would involve networking, practical advice, and sharing that would help me grow as a person.” Voninfanja believes that the fellowship will also help her develop communication skills and have discussions with professionals and stakeholders from other business fields.

Finally, she hopes to enhance her methodology competencies to design and execute projects in Madagascar, particularly food security and gender policy. “I am very excited to enhance my skills in project design concerning food security policy and gender issues in Madagascar. There is a gap between research and current public policy,” she explains, adding that politicians too seldom confer with researchers when making decisions.

Voninfanja Ramanoelina 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).