

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



**Position**

National Project Coordinator

**Institution**

International Labour  
Organization (ILO)

**Country**

Ethiopia

**Education**

MA, Rural Livelihood and  
Development, Addis Ababa  
University, Ethiopia (2008)

**Mentor**

Abinet Tassew, Acting Deputy  
Director of the Dender, Youth,  
and Livelihood/Food and Water  
System Team, CARE, USA

**Research Area**

Addressing women's low ownership  
of land, commercial farms, and  
livestock in rural areas

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### Zeritu Nida

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"In agriculture, there is still much we can do to uplift our farmers and grow the sector."*

Zeritu Nida grew up in the rural northern region of Ethiopia at a time when girls did not attend school – as they were expected to stay at home, take care of family chores, and eventually get married. So, when her father went against societal norms and supported her pursuit of an education, Zeritu knew she had to prove herself. Upon graduating from Addis Ababa University with a bachelor's degree in business management and education in 2005, she became the first woman in her clan to attain a university degree.

After graduation, she secured a job as a lecturer at St. Mary's University College in Addis Ababa, where she taught business courses at the diploma and degree levels. However, she still strongly desired to further her education – so she enrolled for a master's degree in development studies and rural development at Addis Ababa University. Zeritu admits that attending classes during the day and teaching at

night was a tough balancing act, but she was determined to complete the course. She graduated in 2008.

After attaining her master's, Zeritu moved into the development world, where she has worked for many organizations across multiple disciplines. Her first role was as a training and communications officer for Save the Children UK's Productive Safety Net Program-Pastoral Area Pilot, which provided food and financial support to vulnerable households.

In 2011, Zeritu moved to the International Development Enterprise, working as a marketing and business development officer in their Rural Prosperity Initiative. She provided market-oriented training to smallholder farmers, farmer organizations, and cooperatives there.

“It is here that I gained experience about market-based agriculture and learned a lot about how markets can help rural smallholder farmers generate income,” she reveals. “I also experienced first-hand the kind of problems farmers were having in accessing markets – including exploitation by middlemen and poor farm gate prices.”

Zeritu started with Care International Ethiopia two years later as a livelihood and capacity-building advisor. She worked with farmers, government, and private sector actors to set up income-earning opportunities for farmers, such as establishing food kiosks and market stalls where smallholders could sell their produce.

In 2017, she was promoted to the role of senior livelihood advisor, leading the design and implementation of initiatives within the organization’s Development Food Security Activity project. After a short stint at TechnoServe as a senior program manager, Zeritu now works as the national project coordinator for a food enterprise development program led by the International Labour Organization (ILO). “In agriculture, there is still so much to do to uplift our farmers and grow the sector,” she enthuses. At ILO, she supports small- and micro-enterprises in the agribusiness sector by conducting training on how to access finance and business development.

Looking ahead, Zeritu says she wants to focus more on the policy aspect of the nexus between agriculture and entrepreneurship and help drive policies in a space where she has an extensive technical background.

Zeritu came across the GRASP Fellowship on LinkedIn and believes it is a timely opportunity since its policy-level focus will help her achieve her career goals. As a Fellow, she wants to focus on catalyzing private sector engagement in agribusiness because she feels private actors have a huge potential and capacity to influence the sector. Since joining the Fellowship in September this year, Zeritu has already been inspired to take on bigger projects – and is undertaking a GRASP-led Management in Leadership course for women. She explains that the course is helping her realize her strengths and weaknesses, something she says she couldn’t do previously.

*Zeritu Nida 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).*