

## Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

### Fellow Profile



#### Position

Gender, Youth, and Social  
Dynamics Lead

#### Institution

FH Ethiopia

#### Country

Ethiopia

#### Education

MA, Gender and Development  
Studies, Bahir Dar University,  
Ethiopia (2012)

#### Mentor

Habtamu Tsegaye Amare, Fertilizer  
Program Team Lead, USAID  
CATALYSE Market Systems for  
Growth, Ethiopia

#### Research Area

Promoting gender-responsive  
policies in extension services

### Tinsaie Yitayew Birhanu 2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

*"I want to introduce gender-responsive policies in extension services that ordinary people will feel and enjoy."*

As the second born – and only girl – in a family of six, Tinsaie Yitayew Birhanu developed at an early age the tenacious and passionate qualities that now fuel her career. As a child, societal and cultural expectations dictated that she managed family chores while juggling her school studies – and these same norms also saw her married while she was still at secondary school.

However, Tinsaie's desire to learn remained unhampered, and upon leaving school, she went on to pursue an undergraduate degree in business management at Bahir Dar University. "It was quite a challenge trying to complete my education with a young family because I had just had my son, but I was determined to complete my studies," she recalls.

Upon graduating in 2008, Tinsaie joined the Family Planning Association of Ethiopia as a training officer, where she worked for two years.

However, she knew she wanted to influence policies and work directly with people to change their lives. To enhance her skillset, Tinsaie enrolled in a master's degree in development studies at Bahir Dar University, which she completed in 2012.

She entered the development world in 2013, where she first secured a role working as a training officer with IIR Ethiopia, an organization seeking to empower women entrepreneurs. During her three years at the organization, she trained women small business owners on how to grow their enterprises, win more customers, and manage their profits.

Tinsaie's next role saw her working as a gender and nutrition specialist for the Small Scale and Micro Irrigation Support Project in 2015, a Government of Ethiopia project promoting affordable irrigation technology for smallholders for men and women. While working in this role, Tinsaie developed a training book on crop diversification for farmers using irrigation technology.

She also worked closely with female farmers to encourage them to take leadership roles in farming groups. “By the time the project ended after five years, I had women who had traditionally shied away from being leaders appointed in management and dispute resolution committees and shaping the operations of farmer groups,” she enthuses.

Today, Tinsaie works as a gender, youth, and social dynamics lead at Food for the Hungry (FH) Ethiopia – a position she has held since 2022. The food security initiative she leads covers 11 administrative units in the Amhara Region and involves working with farmers on innovative ways to grow food and sustain their household incomes. Tinsaie is also responsible for managing a door-to-door team promoting FH Ethiopia’s ‘Food for All’ campaign, which aims to enhance access to healthy and nutritious foods at the household level and provides sustainable access to adequate clean water and sanitation.

Tinsaie applied for the GRASP Fellowship after receiving details for the program from a friend via LinkedIn. She was particularly excited about the program’s focus on policy support for women in agriculture. “Ethiopian extension services are predominantly male-dominated, and women have little or no say,” she says. “I want to change this cultural norm by encouraging more women to apply for roles in extension.”

Tinsaie adds that she is thrilled to have been partnered with mentor Mr. Habtamu Tsegaye Amare as part of the GRASP program. Amare is the fertilizer program leader for the USAID CATALYSE Market Systems for Growth in Ethiopia and has had extensive experience developing various value chains such as dairy, potato, and rice. Through this collaboration, she hopes to receive guidance in developing a road map for her research and projects on gender-based extension services and advice on formulating gender-responsive policies.

*Tinsaie Yitayew Birhanu 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).*