AWARD
African Women in Agricultural Research and Development

Profile

2014 AWARD Fellow
Olaitan Olubunmi Olajuyigbe

Position	Senior Research Officer
Institution	Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research
Country	Nigeria
MSc	Microbiology, University of Ibadan (UI), 2007
Mentor	Professor Bamidele Omitoyin, Aquaculture and Fisheries Management, UI
Research Area	Bioconversion of agricultural waste to produce fish and livestock feed to reduce costs of feed and pollution, ensuring long-term food security and food safety, and improving farmer livelihoods.

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Olaitan Olubunmi Olajuyigbe, the firstborn of four children, developed her leadership skills at an early age, as she was left in charge of her younger siblings when her mother went back to school. "A lot was expected of me as the eldest," says Olajuyigbe, who today is determined to complete her PhD and become a university lecturer.

Olajuyigbe used to visit the UI campus with her father, who worked there, and she longed to stay in the university hostel. Inspired by an older cousin who completed her PhD in animal science before getting married, Olajuyigbe chose to attend the same university for her undergraduate degrees as well as her doctorate.

Olajuyigbe's planned PhD project was investigating the antimicrobial and water treatment properties of *Moringa oleifera*. However, she started working at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research and modified her research topic to fit the institution's mandate. She is working on bioconversion of shrimp waste as an alternative to fish meal, the protein component of fish feed. Bioconversion involves using microorganisms to increase the release of protein from shrimp waste.

Aquaculture is one of the fastest growing industries in Nigeria, but the yields from fish farms are low. "The problem is that production costs are very high because the major ingredient in fish feed is fish meal, which is imported and therefore very expensive," Olajuyigbe explains. "To reduce production costs and increase profits, we have to find less expensive alternatives to fish meal."

Olajuyigbe's career goal is to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, through training in fish production and value addition, which will reduce postharvest losses and boost profits. "After I find the best way to replace fish meal, I will transfer the knowledge by training smallholders on how to do it." She plans to share her results with other organizations working with farmers to help disseminate the information more widely.

Olajuyigbe feels that women are overlooked for senior assignments in the workplace because it is believed that their family commitments make them less reliable. She has worked hard to dispel this myth, and has successfully balanced her work and family life. She hopes to work at a university when she completes her PhD and become a professor and consultant of fish microbiology, focusing on fish nutrition, value addition, and safety.

Through AWARD, Olajuyigbe wants to learn how to become a good role model and to help make her institution become more visible as colleagues tap into the experience she gains from the fellowship program. "I have developed a proper career road map that will help me focus on achieving my goals," she says. She wants to develop additional skills and expects that the science skills course will help her publish her work and become more visible.

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AWARD is a career-development program that equips top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills through tailored fellowships. AWARD is a catalyst for innovations with high potential to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of African smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.

AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org