

## Global Development Awards Competition: A Case Study

Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) 2015:

**Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare**



### Mapping biodiversity of local forest food products to boost food and nutrition security in Benin

*Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare is an agricultural engineer, who works as an associate professor at the Université Nationale d'Agriculture in Sakété, Benin. She specializes in food science and nutrition. In 2015, she received a Japanese award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) of 10,000 USD to continue her research on local resources to improve food security.*

### Starting research on food products in Benin

Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare believes in the potential of local food to solve local food security problems. Therefore, she started focusing on the topic of food science and nutrition, already during her studies in agricultural engineering and her Master's degree in food science, nutrition and food technology. From her PhD graduation at Wageningen University onwards, she has worked as a lecturer and researcher at the agricultural university of Benin. She has continually studied how to improve food security and

nutrition through locally available food resources. She particularly focused on food products from the Baobab tree and on how to optimize them for better nutrition, because this topic had not been explored yet and held great potential for securing sustainable food security at the local level.

During her research work, she observed an interesting research method used to prioritize and assess species for conservation purposes. Building on this method, she came up with the idea to develop a similar method to apply in the field of food security. However, she was not yet

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Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare

able to apply this method to identify the nutritional potential of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).

At the same time, she conducted a survey and learnt that in the larger cities of Benin, there were only a few native forest food products for sale, but they had tremendous market potential. Together with a small team of her graduate students, Dr.Chadare applied for the GDN Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) research grant to be able to innovate and implement the adapted method, prioritizing top non timber forest species for food security.

### **The impacts of winning the GDN award**

As a finalist for the ORD grant, Dr.Chadare was invited to participate in a large conference on food security in Morocco. The finalists worked together and participated in workshops on how to present their research in the week leading up to the

conference. During this event she made valuable connections with other GDN finalists, as well as, with food security researchers who presented during the conference. Dr.Chadare won the ORD grant to apply new methods and broaden her work from Baobab to five potential key food products. *“Winning the GDN grant presented me with an opportunity to apply many new methods that I learnt even at this early point in my career.”*

Her research team used the grant funding to perform the proposed mapping of the food species,as well as, their ranking. Originally, they applied for a larger grant, so after winning a smaller one they reduced their objectives slightly. Through their research, they gained an insight into several species that have high nutritional value and great potential to improve food security in Benin.

Right after winning the grant, Dr.Chadare experienced an increase in exposure of her work. She was approached by a journalist who published

## **“What I know is that this grant helps to build the capacity and career of a researcher.”**

a story on her research in *The Guardian*. During one of her meetings with some Dutch partners, she was pleasantly surprised to see that her colleagues recognized her and knew of her work already. *“When I gave them my name, they immediately recognized me and asked ‘Are you the one who was mentioned in The Guardian?’ It was good to see that other people had seen it and knew about my work.”* In 2018, GDN gave her the opportunity to participate in a GDN conference in India, where she presented her research again.

The ORD grant formed the basis for the future of her research work and sparked new research questions. Since the ORD award, the research ideas and projects got bigger and bigger every time. Today for instance, Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare is not only focusing on the five identified species, but on a large multitude of local food resources.

She now recommends her students to apply for this type of research grants because she can show from her experience that it really is possible to win. In her opinion, applying for the grant and managing the grant is already a big learning process for a young researcher. For herself, she also sees how winning the ORD grant has contributed to her career development. Over the last five years, she has gotten increasingly more responsibilities at the university in her positions of Dean of the Faculty of Food Science and Lab Director.

### **Impact on food security of local communities in Benin**

During ORD grant project implementation, the team established the nutritional potential of five food forest species. Due to the grant size, the project mainly focused on the research and knowledge generation component. However, the team’s capacity and knowledge were already developed,

so that Dr.Chadare was able to apply these in other projects that included follow up dissemination in the villages. There she saw how the research directly impacted the local community’s food security and the uptake of the promoted foods.

*“What made me happy is when we went to a village for dissemination on fortification trial, people were asking us why we were promoting the use of this product in only one food? They wanted to use it in all of their food. We have already started work on this.”*

### **Ambitions for future research projects**

Dr. Ir. Flora Chadare believes that having safe, locally available food resources is key to improving food security, sustainably. Thorough research on these food resources should inform local communities on which sources are available, how to use them, and make their food status more resilient.

*“I would like to thank GDN for approving the grant, this gave me the opportunity to see the nutritional potential of some of our local resources.”*

When Dr.Chadare started working on Baobab trees, she did not see any Baobab-derived products in stores in the cities. However, she has recently conducted an inventory study that showed how Baobab sales are booming in stores in Beninese towns. She has noted this happening for many of the indigenous species. In the future, she intends to continue working on valorisation of local indigenous foods for nutrition and wellbeing in research. In addition, she will continue promoting start-ups in local food production and their marketability, so that in the future these foods can be found easily in every store.

## AWARD

### The Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) 2015

This award category identifies and funds outstanding research proposals in low- and middle-income countries with high potential for excellence in research and clear policy implications for addressing development issues.

## INTERVIEWEE

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## KEY WORDS

Research, non-timber forest food products (NTFP), native species, local food, food security, Benin

## About the Global Development Awards Competition

The Global Development Awards Competition (GDAC) is an award scheme that identifies talent, supports the career advancement of researchers in developing countries, and funds innovative social development projects, implemented by NGOs, to benefit marginalized groups in the developing world. The award categories include the Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (ORD), the Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Projects (MIDP), and the Japan Social Development Fund Award (JSDF).

## About GDN

This initiative is administered by GDN, funded through the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (PHRD) trust fund at the World Bank, and generously supported by the Ministry of Finance, Government of Japan. The competition has awarded US\$4 million in grants since 2000 to more than 200 projects.

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