

Bridging the Gap: Empowering Women Farmers in African Agriculture through Policy, Practice, and Innovation

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www.rnionline.org

OBJECTIVE:

To discuss how targeted policy initiatives, appropriate technologies, and innovative practices can narrow the gender productivity gap in African agriculture while promoting food security and women's economic empowerment.



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Brief background and introduction to Rural Nurture Initiative's work
- Context, background and challenges faced by women farmers
- Case studies of interventions
- Policy frameworks and advocacy strategies
- Practical solutions and technology innovations
- Career pathways in agricultural development



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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Bachelor's and Master's in Agricultural Extension & Rural Development
- Public Policy doctoral program



RURAL NUTURE INITIATIVE

- Research-driven NGO spearheading evidence-based, community-centered approaches to rural transformation across Africa.
- Agricultural innovation, economic empowerment, health systems strengthening, rural capacity development, and evidence-based policy advancement
- Nigeria, Ghana, and the Republic of Benin

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: **Traditional role of women in African agriculture**

- In many pre-colonial African communities, women held significant roles in agriculture and other economic activities" with substantial influence over markets and agricultural production (Wikipedia, 2025).
- Colonial systems later disrupted these economic roles, contributing to current gender disparities.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND



LABOR CONTRIBUTION

- Women comprise 40% of agricultural labor across Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda – significantly lower than commonly cited 60-80% figures (World Bank, 2017)
- **Regional variations:** Women's labor share exceeds 50% in Uganda, Tanzania, and Malawi; only 29% in Ethiopia and 24% in Niger (World Bank, 2017)



PRODUCTIVITY GAP

- Women farmers produce 13-25% less per hectare than male counterparts (World Bank & ONE Campaign, 2014)
- In Ethiopia, female-headed households are 11.1% less productive than male-headed households (ScienceDirect, 2023)

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND



KEY CONSTRAINTS



LAND ACCESS

Less than 20% of agricultural land owned by women despite their substantial labor contribution (UN Women, 2019)



FINANCIAL EXCLUSION

Only 37% of women have bank accounts vs. 48% of men in sub-Saharan Africa (AUDA-NEPAD, n.d.)



INPUT INEQUALITY

Limited access to fertilizer, high-yield seeds, and pesticides (UN Women, 2019)



CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

Women disproportionately affected by climate change impacts on agriculture (Connecting Africa, 2024)

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Closing gender gaps could boost GDP by \$65-105 million in countries like Tanzania, Malawi, and Uganda (AUDA-NEPAD, n.d.)
- Equal access to resources could increase women's farm yields by 20-30%, potentially lifting 100-150 million people out of hunger (World Bank & ONE Campaign, 2014)





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CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS



✓ RURAL NUTURE INITIATIVE'S AGRICULTURAL EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN (NIGERIA, BENIN, GHANA)

- **Challenge:** Climate unpredictability and low productivity using traditional methods
- **Intervention:** Climate-resilient agricultural practices training and improved seedling support
- **Outcomes:** Increased yields, greater food security, and climate resilience
- Multiplication effect as women share knowledge with community members

(Rural Nuture Initiative, n.d.)

CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS



✓ RURAL NURTURE INITIATIVE'S WOMEN LIVELIHOOD EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (NIGERIA)

- **Challenge:** Seasonal income fluctuations and limited economic opportunities
- **Intervention:** Off-season livelihood diversification training and micro-grants
- **Outcomes:** Stabilized year-round income and reduced vulnerability to shocks
- Development of sustainable micro-enterprises led by women

(Rural Nurture Initiative, n.d.)

CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS



✓ VODACOM FOUNDATION'S WOMEN FARMERS PROGRAMME (SOUTH AFRICA)

- "The Women Farmers Programme provides digital literacy training and has helped more than 1,300 women farmers develop their digital skills since its pilot in 2018" (Vodafone, n.d.).
- Connected women farmers with "Connected Farmer" app for real-time market information
- Technology adoption among women smallholders

CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS



✓ TAWONGA COOKING OIL PROCESSING (MALAWI)

- Trained 33,450 women and linked 1,460 small-scale women and youth farmers, addressing gaps in sustainable agriculture and business skills" (Ban Ki-moon Centre, 2025).
- Technology adoption among women smallholders
- Created sustainable value chain from farm production to processed products

CASE STUDIES OF INTERVENTIONS



✓ ETHIOPIA'S JOINT LAND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- **Program Design:** Ethiopia implemented joint land certification with both spouses' names and photos on certificates, combined with legal literacy education for women about their newly formalized land rights (Gates Foundation, 2019).
- **Key Impact:** Women with secure land rights demonstrated increased willingness to make long-term agricultural investments, particularly when they also understood their legal entitlements (UN Women, 2018).

COMMON THEMES AND PATTERNS

1

MULTIDIMENSIONALITY

- Programs addressing multiple constraints simultaneously achieve better outcomes

2

RESOURCES

- Combining training with tangible resources (seedlings, grants, technology)

3

COMMUNITY

- Creating peer support mechanisms enhances sustainability



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POLICY FRAMEWORKS
AND ADVOCACY

POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ADVOCACY



INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

- UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) provide policy guidelines specifically addressing women farmers
- FAO's Digital Villages Initiative targets 1,000 villages globally for digitally-enabled agricultural services (FAO, n.d.)



EVIDENCE-BASED NATIONAL EXAMPLES

- Tanzania, Malawi, and Uganda: Addressing gender gaps boosted GDP by \$105M, \$100M, and \$65M respectively (AUDA-NEPAD, n.d.)
- Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan 2015-2020 prioritized women farmers in development strategies (UN Women, 2018)

POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ADVOCACY



EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY APPROACHES

- **Community-led models:** models that are place-based and people-focused achieve better outcomes for women and youth in agriculture (CABI Agriculture and Bioscience, 2024)
- **Data-driven reform:** Economic cost analysis demonstrating GDP impacts proves most persuasive with policymakers (UN Women, 2015)



EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY APPROACHES

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** African Development Bank's \$1.4M grant for female-led cooperatives in Chad (Princeton JPIA, n.d.)
- **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Analyzing government spending to address disparities, as implemented in Ghana, Ethiopia and Tanzania, ensuring agricultural resources reach women farmers (Oxfam, 2021)

MEASURING POLICY IMPACT

1

ECONOMIC METRICS

- GDP Growth
- Poverty Reduction
- Agricultural Yield
- Food Security

2

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Resource Access
- Financial Inclusion
- Market Integration
- Household Outcomes

3

MONITORING FRAMEWORK

- Baseline-Endline Comparison
- Disaggregated Data Collection
- Mixed Methods Approach:



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PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS
AND INNOVATIONS

MOVING FORWARD



PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS & INNOVATIONS



FINANCIAL INCLUSION

- Mobile Banking Solutions
- Women-Targeted Credit
- Savings Groups



SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

- Women's Agricultural Cooperatives
- Climate-Smart Initiatives
- RNI's Approach



DIGITAL AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES

- Mobile Information Services
- Satellite/Drone Data
- Digital Extension*



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CAREER PATHWAYS

CAREER PATHWAYS IN AG. DEVT.

- Research opportunities in agricultural innovation and gender studies
- Internships (volunteering) with organizations like Rural Nurture Initiative, UN Women, African Development Bank, etc.
- Academic pathways in agricultural economics, development studies, and digital agriculture





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CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

- Closing gender gaps could increase farm yields by 20-30% and lift 100-150 million people out of hunger
- Technology adoption, cooperative models, and policy reform show most promise
- Multi-sector partnerships enhance sustainability
- Digital agriculture transforming opportunities for women farmers
- Cooperative models combining technology with market access
- Increased policy focus on women farmers as economic drivers

Call to Action!!!

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT + RESEARCH + ADVOCACY + INNOVATION



RESOURCES

Key Organizations & Networks

- Rural Nurture Initiative:
<https://rnionline.org/>
- UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/>
- African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD):
<https://awardfellowships.org/>
- CGIAR Gender Platform:
<https://gender.cgiar.org/>



Key Organizations & Networks

- African Development Bank:
<https://www.afdb.org/>
- World Bank Agriculture Practice:
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture>
- FAO Gender Team: <https://www.fao.org/gender/>
- International Food Policy Research Institute:
<https://www.ifpri.org/>



QUESTION & DISCUSSIONS



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