

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



01

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

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



RURAL NUTURE INITIATIVE

- 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)





02

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



03

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)

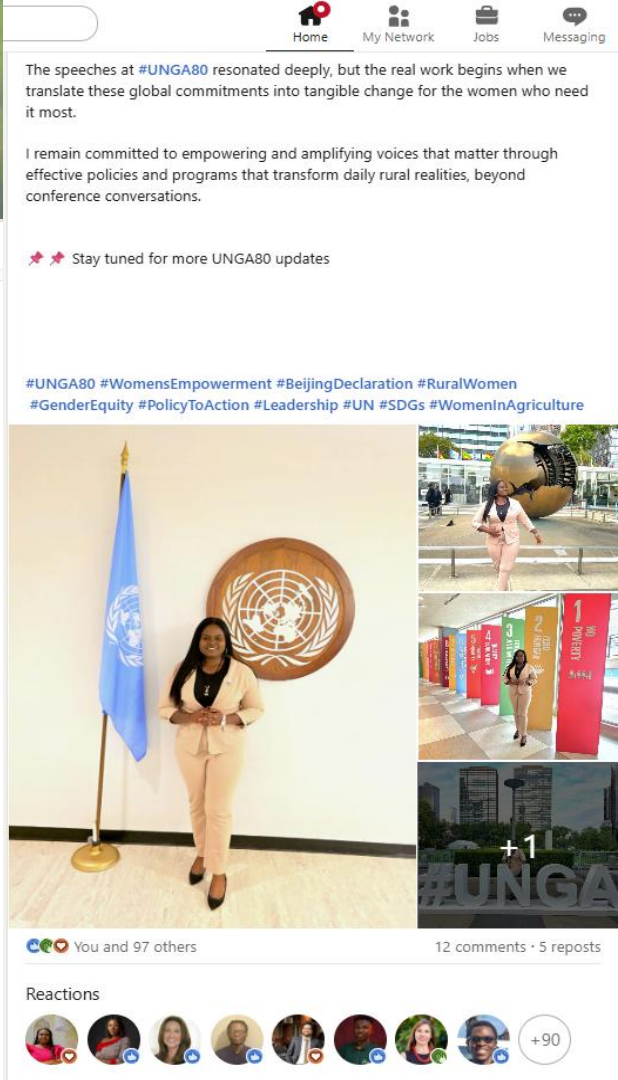
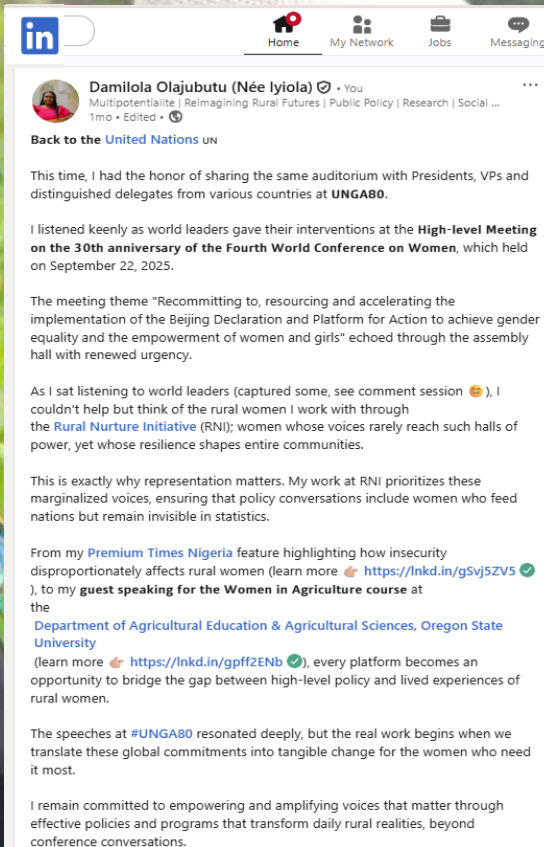


YOUR VOICE CAN CULTIVATE CHANGE

- Advocacy isn't only for policymakers; it begins with you.
- Use your voice, platform, and choices to amplify women's stories.
- Every post, project, and conversation can plant a seed for change.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/damilola-olajubutu_unga80-unga80-womens empowerment-activity-7378418274587430912-NCxB/

POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ADVOCACY





YOUR VOICE CAN CULTIVATE CHANGE

- Food security is a global issue.
- Speak up about equity in land rights, access to resources, and recognition for women farmers.
- When we speak for women farmers, we speak for food security, equality, and the planet.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/damilola-olajubutu_womeninagriculture-foodsecurity-ruraldevelopment-activity-7359212319630905344-nsvO/

POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ADVOCACY

The screenshot shows the Premium Times website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the website's name and a search icon. Below that, a large image of a woman in a colorful patterned dress stands in a rural setting. The article title is "Fields of Fear: Militia attacks in Benue force women off farmlands". The byline is "By Ogar Monday — August 5, 2025" and the reading time is "6 mins read". The article text begins with a quote: "It was a Tuesday morning. I had just bathed my children. They burned my farm and killed about eight people in my compound."

Fields of Fear: Militia attacks in Benue force women off farmlands

"It was a Tuesday morning. I had just bathed my children. They burned my farm and killed about eight people in my compound."

By Ogar Monday — August 5, 2025
Reading Time: 6 mins read

The screenshot continues the article from the previous one. It shows the text of the article, which discusses the impact of militia attacks on women farmers in Benue. The text is as follows:

affects supply chains and drives up food prices."

Benue is one of Nigeria's agricultural powerhouses, but the rising insecurity is disproportionately affecting women farmers.

"Women are more vulnerable because they don't have the means or skills to defend themselves," Ms Olajubutu adds. "When women abandon their livelihoods and flee from violence, it disrupts the entire farming cycle."

Timing, she explains, is everything in agriculture. "If attacks force women to flee during planting season, it affects what gets harvested. That eventually leads to food shortages."

This reporting was completed with the support of the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID)

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:



04

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**

**My dissertation focus



05

CAREER PATHWAYS

CAREER PATHWAYS IN AG. DEVT.

- International Development
- NGO & Civil Society
- Government & Public Sector
- Academia & Research (Agricultural innovation, gender studies, agricultural economics, development studies, and digital agriculture)
- Private Sector & Agribusiness
- Consulting
- Digital Extension & Innovation
- Policy & Advocacy
- Entrepreneurship
- Internships (volunteering) with organizations like Rural Nuture Initiative, UN Women, African Development Bank, etc.





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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/>
- African Rural Development Network:
<https://rnionline.org/>



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QUESTION & DISCUSSIONS



www.rnionline.org

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