



AWARFA-N Newsletter

Towards Equity in Investment and Governance in the Animal Resources Sector

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Contact & Connect With Us:**African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)**

Kenindia Business Park, Westlands Road.

P. O. Box 30786, 00100, Nairobi Kenya.

Tel: +254203674000

Email: ibar.office@au-ibar.org

Twitter: @au_ibar

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/au-ibar-3463b715b>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb3byV6rS9KzdNUEuvaRBwg>

Website: www.au-ibar.org



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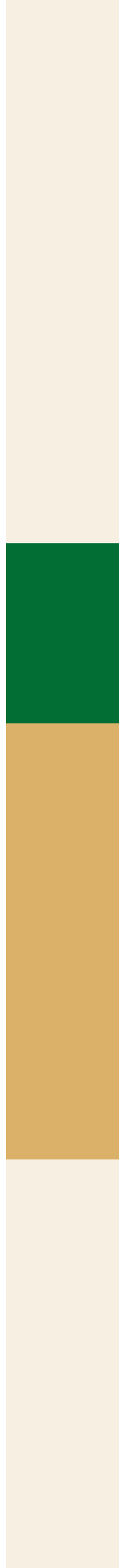
Editorial/ Welcome

Since its onset in 2018, the network has been involved in establishing and strengthening its governance mechanisms.

This process has involved several country and regional chapters strategizing on critical initiatives and engagements in the current and upcoming programs with other stakeholders – such as national governments and respective Regional Economic Communities. We are happy to note that national and regional chapters are being launched out of these efforts. The first country launch was the Ghana Chapter, followed by the East Africa Chapter. More countries and regions are expected to launch their chapters in 2021.

We are sincerely grateful to the authors of these stories and for portraying their successes and challenges, without whose insightful contributions would not have made this publication possible. We are also grateful to the European Union for their invaluable support in funding this newsletter's production.

**Prof. Ahmed Elsawalhy,
Director, AU-IBAR**





Towards Equity in Investment and Governance in the Animal Resources Sector

Women rally to restore fading glory for Ghana's poultry sector



Once a thriving sector in Ghana at the turn of the century, poultry production has continued to decline mainly due to competition from producers in developed countries who have flooded the local market with cheap imports.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that production increased by 80 percent between 2000 and 2007, making significant contribution to animal production and the economy. However, even with the exponential growth, local production could not meet the ever-rising demand for poultry products. The Western African nation turned to imports to plug in the shortfalls.

That was the beginning of the downward spiral of the

sector as price undercutting by poultry producers in developed countries led to unfavorable competition from imported poultry meat. At the same time, the profitability of local eggs also decreased.

However, women involved in various aspects of the poultry value chain are determined to restore the sector's glorious past. Through the Apex Body of Women in Poultry Value Chain (WIPVaC-Apex), they are advocating and lobbying for better policies in poultry development.

The national apex body, formed in 2017 brings together all fragmented associations of women poultry farmers, women live bird sellers, women feed producers, and women guinea fowl farmers. WIPVaC-Apex, Victoria

Norgbey says the idea for a national body to act as a platform for women stakeholders to voice their concerns was mooted during a consultative workshop on the implementation AU-IBAR sponsored Vet-Gov project for Economic Community for West Africa States (ECOWAS).

"The project was aimed at critically reflecting on national veterinary legislation on the control of animal diseases with a view to embark on a process of regional harmonization and it was here that it was realized the voice of women in poultry value chain was missing despite the critical contribution they make to the livestock subsector," says Norgbey.

Membership to the Apex national body is through

registration fees and annual subscription, giving it a base to mobilise members in poultry husbandry, biosecurity, advocacy and strengthening their business management skills. It currently has about 600 members drawn for all regions in Ghana.

One of their key achievements has been advocating for the speedy implementation of the ECOWAS veterinary and pharmaceutical protocol in Ghana. Lack of harmonization among the responsible state agencies leaves veterinary drugs to be sold all over the country in unauthorized places, thus bringing about the issues of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and antimicrobial Use (AMU) in livestock and poultry production. The protocol is, therefore, necessary to ensure monitoring and regulation of veterinary drugs use in the region.

The group is also engaged in the Ghana Poultry Project (GPP) funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It is aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the domestic production and processing of poultry meat and eggs.

Through the project, WIPVaC-Apex helps produce pullets (16 weeks layers) for members who cannot manage their chicken from day one. The pullets are then sold to members at affordable prices, and this helps to reduce the production risk of raising day-old chicks to the point of laying hence enhancing profitability.

To boost businesses and improve members' general

living standards and welfare, the national apex body implements an economic empowerment programme involving a savings and credit scheme.

“Under the scheme, members make regular contributions to a pool from which they can access credit facilities to fund



their businesses at minimal interest rates,” explains Norgbey. She says the initiative is supported by USDA, which provided seed capital to boost members' savings.

On value addition, the women are involved in cutting meat into pieces, seasoning or roasting for sale. The eggs, are cleaned and repackaged into different quantities like 3, 6 or 12 units, which people can buy for the table.

Since its establishment,

the organisation has been observing International Women's Day, when members come together and are educated on leadership and technical skills to improve poultry farming, and marketing processes.

They also participate in various international programmes where there are opportunities to explore new ideas and enhance members' technical capacity.

“We have made great strides and organisations like FAO and Veterinarians without Borders are partnering with us and using our farms for demonstration purposes. As a national apex body, we are enjoying high level of dynamism, unity of purpose and improving the technical capacity as well as social welfare for our members,” says Norgbey.

High cost of day-old chicks imported from Netherlands and Uruguay, scarcity of feeds whenever there is shortfall in maize production and lack of access to credit among the women are challenges that the organisation has to deal with.

However, with the launch of the AWARFA-N national chapter for Ghana, WIPVaC-Apex's vision of creating new opportunities for women in the poultry value chain to stimulate all stakeholders' developments is more than feasible.

“The network has given us a broader base to share ideas, solidify the work that the Apex body began and we are poised to move together and improve animal resource development in Ghana and west Africa,” notes Norgbey.

Women defy cultural odds to eke a living from animal farming



Makueni County, like many parts of eastern Kenya, is characterised by rugged terrain and poor rainfall distribution pattern. Horticulture, especially the mango fruit, is the main farming activity in this region.

Mangoes earn the economy millions of shillings from local trade and exports, but farmers continue to live in abject poverty due to low prices. Intermediaries who buy the fruits from them and sell at competitive prices in other towns and international markets are the ones who smile to the bank.

This situation prompted farmers in Nzau Sub-county to mobilise themselves into groups and form a forum that would ensure they get better

prices by selling the produce directly to the market.

Through the Nzau Small Scale Farmers Association formed in 2012, they can identify markets in various cities and bargain for fair prices rather than individual farmers selling to intermediaries prone to exploitation.

They also benefit from economies of scale as more than the 3000 farmers, majority women, from about 50 Community Based Organisations (CBOs) under the Association can supply adequate volumes, which they transport in bulk to the markets. This process has reduced transport costs resulting in higher incomes.

The Association's chairperson

Christine Kalui says they can advocate and lobby for favourable policies at the county government level. Their influence has so far led to prioritisation of value-adding technologies with the commissioning of a mango processing plant and several water harvesting projects.

But the progress took an interesting turn, which has seen farmers diversify into beekeeping, and poultry farming - production began to decline as the trees were not yielding much fruits. That is when the women realised they were faced with a challenge posed by two interconnected factors.

"Flowers were just falling off the trees due to lack of polli-

nation because farmers were using pesticides which was affecting population of bees despite having many trees that could support the animals,” explains Kalui.

To discourage use of pesticides, the association introduced beekeeping that opened a new stream of revenue for the farmers who are harvesting honey for sale. This method has also ensured that there is enough bees’ population to enhance pollination and the results have been increased mango production both in quantity and quality.

Poultry farming, on the other hand, was introduced to address cultural norms that inhibited women from keeping animals. Like many communities in the eastern Africa nation, women are not owners of land and must get permission from men who are the heads of families to engage in any agricultural activity.

“Most of our members are women and because of cultural issues they are not allowed to own or sell cows or goats, but with chicken a women can sell without permission from men. The chicken droppings are also a good source of manure and can be used to improve crop production,” says Kalui.

But the women’s contribution to animal resource development is a journey that still has several stumbling blocks along the way due to cultural norms and misconceptions. Many clans do not encourage women to participate in bees as they are considered dangerous and many are also not able to use traditional hives which require to be hanged from tree branches. Culture discourages women from climbing trees.

Kalui says although many defied the cultural odds and ventured into beekeeping, the issue of gender roles and project ownership came to the fore as the women began to

succeed.

“When the men realised their wives were bringing more income to the family as a result of beekeeping and poultry farming, they took over and instead of the women coming for group meetings, it is their husbands who are now attending and trying to influence decisions,” she says.

However, the future is brighter for the women following support from AU-IBAR through the African Women in Animal Resources Farming and Agribusiness Network (AWAR-FA-N). In 2016, they grouped themselves into 10 clusters, with a member in each volunteering a piece of land for a demonstration site for training in modern beekeeping techniques.

AU-IBAR brought in experts who trained trainers on various aspects of beekeeping and agribusiness management. The beneficiaries are now taking the knowledge down to every member and encouraging more to venture into animal farming. The trainers are also making modern hives from locally available materials and selling them to other farmers at affordable prices.

Kalui says the women have been able to influence their children who are helping in beekeeping and poultry farming, and more youth in the area are venturing into agribusiness culture.

The association is focused on the next move in their development which will involve cashing in on other hive products, beeswax, venom and propolis through value addition. With proper packaging and branding, they can access international markets and earn more revenues from the products.



Malawian woman on a mission to woo others into beekeeping



On a busy day, Mrs. Lestina Nhlema, wakes up early in the morning and puts on her protective gear – a full white jacket with a veil covering her from legs to the head and gloves – then arms herself with a hive tool, smoker, and bee brush before she ventures into the densely populated forest.

Here the mother of two will spend time moving from one hive to the other as she inspects the colonies, making sure the hives are clean, well-greased to prevent ants from going in and that there is enough space for the bees. She also makes sure there is enough food for the little waspy animals.

Lestina has been doing for the last ten years since joining her late father, who started beekeeping after retiring from his job. And she is not about to hand her gear as honey, the main product from the hives, gets sweeter as days pass by.

“My husband died in 2001, leaving me in an empty space with nothing worthy to engage in so I decided to join my father in beekeeping to fend for my children,” she explains. The joint venture only lasted for a year after which the mantle of running the enterprise was thrust on her following the death of her father.

With only 20 hives at the beginning, Lestina now boasts of 550 hives under the stable of Northern Honey Processors, which she controls as the managing director. The company has its base in the Northern Region of Malawi is also offering pollination services for macadamia plantations in the area.

From the proceeds of beekeeping, she has acquired six trucks for her transport business, built a family house and a warehouse for rental purposes. She has also been able to educate her children up to higher institutions of learning.

But Lestina is a woman of her kind in the Southern African nation – Malawi, one of the poorest countries in Africa, yet with so much abundant resources at its disposal. It has several national parks, conservancy and protected areas which provide massive opportunities for communities in rural areas.

However, many Malawians do not realize the potential in beekeeping as a source of livelihoods to levels of wealth creation – even those born in beekeeping families, according to a study commissioned by

Apimondia, the International Federation of Beekeepers’ Associations, in 2019. The study revealed that women’s participation in beekeeping is significantly low due to culture and lack of interest.

But Lestina is determined to lead by example and change mindsets about beekeeping among rural women in her region. Through the Malawi Bee Products Association, which she chairs, Lestina is conducting awareness campaigns and sharing knowledge and skills with other women to ensure they embrace beekeeping as an alternative source of livelihood.

“Culturally, women are supposed to be in the homes cooking and taking care of the children and men are the ones who would venture into the fields to do beekeeping. We also use traditional hives which are hung from tree branches and this makes it impossible for women to engage in beekeeping. Then there is the phobia due to the bees’ sting,” she says.

But she sees hope since men are now giving women the opportunity to go to the hives and they can contribute to family incomes.

Lestina dismisses the notion that beekeeping is a labour intensive and expensive agribusiness venture. “One can use locally available materials to construct hives before she gets money for the modern hives. The high cost of modern equipment is however an impediment as we have to import from other countries,

but beekeeping is a worthy investment that will ensure women no longer depend on their husbands.”

Counting the benefits she has received from AWARFA-N, Lestina says her fellow women will achieve much support from the network in terms of benchmarking visits, access to finance, and capacity building workshops.

“Value addition in beekeeping is one area that is yet to be explored and has a lot of opportunities for women. We need technical support to process other hive products like beeswax, royal jelly, bees pollen and bees propolis,” she notes.

The Government has already realised the potential of beekeeping and is undertaking various initiatives to promote it especially among the youth and women. The only threat that Lestina says may affect the progress being made is deforestation due to the charcoal trade, which involves cutting down trees and using harmful herbicides by farmers.

Some of the herbicides being used in crop production contain chemicals that are killing pastures for our bees. The substances are also harmful to the bees.

Botswana women bet on AWARFA to reap from animal production

As we settle down for a virtual interview, conducted simultaneously via zoom and Whatsapp, the first thing that hits my inbox from Ms. Sibonginkosi Bachobeli is a photo of the registration certificate for the Women in Animal Farming and Agribusiness Network.

“We have been encouraging women to venture into animal resource farming and agribusiness and it became apparent that mostly women are involved in poultry, diary, apiary, piggery and smallstock production, but were not yet formally organized into a network similar to the AWARFA-N. With the registration we can now incorporate these women legally and focus on pursuing our agenda,” says a notably excited Bachobeli, the country co-ordinator for AWARFA-N in Botswana. The country’s national chapter was registered on December 7th 2020, just two days before the interview.

The excitement expressed by Bachobeli during the interview mirrors the hopes of many women in Botswana who play a dominant role in crop production and food and nutrition security but plays a limited role in animal resources farming compared to their male counterparts. With the recent registration of the network, the Botswana chapter is looking forward to actively mobilize women to venture into animal resources farming and agribusiness, and also advocate and lobby for gender-sensitive policies and financial support.

Bachobeli, says the network offers women a platform to

succeed in animal resource farming and agribusiness through networking, acquisition of business skills and access to credit and finance.

She says the registration gives the network a legal basis and national recognition which will enable it to attract support and partnership from various organizations involved in



animal resource farming and agribusiness.

Bachobeli, a poultry farmer with some 200 broilers in a remote rural village of Butale in North East District, is leading efforts to and encourage more women across the southern Africa country to join the network. She says the main constraints for women to participate the animal resources farming and agribusiness are limited access to credit, poor marketing strategies and poor agribusiness skills. The women depend on selling to middlemen who exploit them by offering lower prices.

“We aim at promoting effective market linkages, enhance business skills, overcome hurdles in accessing finance, access to information as well as promote collective action to achieve economies of scale,” says Bachobeli.

According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2018 report on National Gender Profiles of Agriculture and Rural livelihoods, a huge gender gap still exist in Botswana as a result of socio-economic and cultural practices. This has disadvantaged women asset ownership, and limited their access to agricultural inputs and credit, extension and information services, technology and innovations, and markets.

In 1966 when the country attained its independence, agriculture accounted for 40 percent of GDP and 15 percent of formal employment. But with the discovery of diamonds, most people fled do urban centres leading to the restructuring of the population. Only 38 percent, majority of women are currently living in rural areas, according to the department of national bureau of statics. Bachobeli currently works for Ministry of Agriculture Development and Food Insecurity, explains the country has put in place several programmes to ensure gender mainstreaming and increased production in livestock sector.

The Government is implementing the Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) programme, which is supporting farmers to upscale production in the subsector.



Citizen Entrepreneurship Development Agency (CEDA) is also providing loans for agribusiness at low interest rates to encourage people to invest in agriculture.

Although the network is still in its infancy, Bachobeli eyes are already focused on the horizons. “We want women to understand the importance of livestock value chain, be able to network with other women across the region to exchange of ideas and exploit market opportunities and begin to embrace value addition for animal products.”

Fish farming, beekeeping, dairy farming and

leather production are some of the area with abundant opportunities that women can venture into to succeed in animal resource production. This, she says, will be realized when members get opportunity to learn from their counterparts in other countries through benchmarking visits.

.Bachobeli’s rallying call to Batswana women is that every animal resource they own counts and can be utilized to improve their living standards and it only takes passion and commitment to succeed.

Land: The big issue for Zambian women in livestock production

In Zambia, women constitute 76 percent of the agricultural workforce. Still, many of them living in the rural areas are engaged in subsistence farming, especially in the livestock subsector; hence their contribution to the GDP is unaccounted for.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2018 report on the National Gender Profile of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods, the reasons for the low participation of women in the livestock sub-sector are lack of access to and control of productive resources, services, and markets.

Low participation by women is also evident in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, where culture, gender stereotypes and security risks associated with fishing in lakes has discouraged women. Livestock contributes 15.2 percent of agricultural GDP.

Small Scale Industries Association of Zambia (SSIAZ) chairperson, Mrs. Anniei Kabayi, concurs that the main challenge affecting women's livestock resource development is access to land.

Kabayi says more than half



of rural households own livestock, but the number of female-headed households with livestock is lower than those of male-headed households. They also have less livestock than men across all categories of species.

The Government passed the Land Act in 1996, which guaranteed women the possibility of being landowners. The legislation allows for customary laws to dictate land ownership, which mainly confers land ownership on men.

"A policy that provides 30 percent of advertised land to be reserved for women only exists on paper as the men who have a say on land allocation processes dismiss it as a joke. Yet, the women need land for grazing and growing of fodder and other crops to have a meaningful contribution in livestock production," she says.

The cultural belief that women cannot own cattle is still there, and when a woman wants to buy cattle, there are always suggestions that it would be easier to go for small ruminants.

SSIAZ has been championing women's increased involvement in the livestock sub-sector by advocating for eliminating of cultural and structural barriers that have relegated them from mainstream economic activities. The association was established in 1982 to represent the entrepreneur's interests to the government and the business community on issues directly or indirectly affecting small enterprises.

The association is working with women in livestock resource value chains to enhance the development of entrepreneurial culture, promoting



value addition and confidence within the sector. About 60 percent of its members are women and the largest sector it is engaged in is agriculture where most of them are involved in livestock production and value addition.

Kabayi says SSIAZ helps link its members to markets, access finance, technology and capacity building, especially in finance management and basic animal husbandry. It also creates forums such as agricultural shows and exchange visits for the small scale entrepreneurs to networking and share knowledge in agribusiness development.

“Access to finance is also a struggle because most women have no collateral, and even where they have worked hard to get, the collateral is in the name of the spouse. Most men also think their wives are incapable of running a businesses,”

says Kabayi.

The association has also been promoting value addition for small-scale industries within the agriculture sector to enhance the country’s economic growth. The intention is to ensure that a commodity can only be imported if a local resource cannot produce it.

Several women in animal resources farming and agribusiness are already in value addition such as smoking fish, chicken, quails, morning worms and sausage-making which are sold at a high value. Some do pre-packs of sliced beef, fish and sardines.

Other setbacks to women’s contribution to the livestock sector are lack of modern equipment for processing of quality products, failure to embrace technology particularly in the rural areas due network challenges and

phobia. However, the association has been training them on how to do business using modern information and communication technologies.

Kabayi is optimistic that the women will overcome the challenges and make a significant contribution to the livestock subsector and the economy but only if the playing field is leveled.

She believes AWARFA-N will enhance women’s advancement in the subsector by creating opportunities for them to gain knowledge through capacity building, linkage to markets, and access to finance.

“AWARFA-N will uplift the standard in animal resource development as it brings in a very strong network of women in Africa and will be able to enable trade across borders,” notes Kabayi.



South Africa's women bear brunt as Covid-9 disrupts agribusinesses

Across Africa, Agriculture is one of the sectors that have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to several containment measures implemented by governments. The lockdowns, curfews and stay at home orders have seen disruptions of food supply chains, unemployment putting food security at risk.

South Africa, hit hard by the global pandemic with 23,451 deaths from 866,000 cases as of December 15th 2020, is not yet out of the woods as the Government and health experts warn of a second wave of the disease during the Christmas and New Year festivities.

Among those who are bearing the brunt of COVID-19 in the agricultural sector are women

smallholder livestock farmers, many whose stock have been affected and businesses interrupted.

The country has put the Solidarity Fund in place to augment government's response to the disease but there is little impact given the scale of devastation that COVID-19 has caused to health systems and livelihoods. The fund is focused on among many other things obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline health workers; and humanitarian response, including food relief for people who have lost their means of sustenance.

African Women in Animal Resources and Agribusiness - South Africa (AWAR-FA-SA) chairperson Nkhensani

Patience Valoyi says efforts to encourage women to venture into livestock farming and agribusiness were already paying off but this has been disrupted by the pandemic.

"Since 2018 we have been educating the women in animal resource value chain and mindsets were changing as many of them were going into piggery, beekeeping, rabbits and poultry farming, and registering companies in agribusiness," says Nkhensani.

With the implementation of the containment measures, many South Africans lost livelihoods, leading to a high crime rate and many women lost their livestock to thieves. Others involved in cross-border animal trade between Lesotho and South Africa are

also affected due to restrictions on cross-border movement of people and goods.

Nkhensani says unless there are emergency interventions to restore lost businesses and save existing ones from folding up, many women engaged in livestock resource development may not bounce back.

AWARFA-SA is already engaging the women through counselling and sharing opportunities for Covid-19 relief funds to enable them hold onto their businesses.

Nkhensani, who is also the Founder and CEO of Uproot Development Africa says that most of the network's activities, including formal registration which was already in progress, have also been grounded. Through Uproot Development Africa, she has been involved in helping the women with registration and business strategy

are involved mainly in beef, leather, apiculture, and aquaculture. However, there still exists a lot of opportunities for investments.

Nkhensani says the local network will create an ecosystem that will involve various stakeholders within the animal resources value chain. The network has about 100 members, but the chairperson is confident this will increase exponentially once they issue a public statement on enrolment.

"We want to make our network as broad-based as possible so that we bring in a lot of expertise that our members can benefit from in terms of access to relevant information, affordable farm inputs, land and marketing opportunities," she says.

AWARFA-SA has also co-opted the Agriculture Incubators Network in its strategy. As

livestock resource development face in the South Africa. "Women have the power to transform rural areas since they are the ones involved farming activities including animal resources. If we want to bridge the economic gap, reduce poverty and hunger then we need to empower women to engage effectively in livestock resources development," says Nkhensani.

To accelerate animal resources development and boost agribusinesses in the region, she calls for policy shifts to ensure harmonization of quality standardisation requirements, and removal of non-tariff barriers that hamper the movement of goods between borders.

Though AWARFA-SA is still in the process of registration, the chairperson is already aiming at the future. In the next five years, she says the network



development. Unfortunately, they cannot be incorporated into AWARFA – SA since it is not legally registered.

Once the formal registration is in place, , the immediate task would be to prioritise which value chains within the animal resources sector to prioritise. . Many South African women

soon as it is registered, it will outsource incubation facilities from other networks in Africa to empower members.

Access to credit for business expansion and management, quality standards certifications, markets and preservation of their produce are some of the challenges women in

will have a regional impact, boasting of membership from diverse backgrounds and a virtual incubation facility that would give the women access to information from any part of the world wherever they are.

Abu-Basutu championing women involvement in livestock production

Nompumelelo Abu-Basutu, 58, is a large scale cattle ranger and small scale goat and poultry farmer in Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe.

Abu-Basutu started livestock farming in 1985 at a small scale in her rural home, but in 2002 she moved to a 2500-acre ranch. Her motivation was to cash in on animal farming as an income-generating project, and since then she has never

looked back. Her herds have continued to grow in number, earning her clout and influence among other farmers in the landlocked country.

With only 10 heifers and one bull, six goats, four sheep and a ram at the beginning, the mother of four today sits pretty as the executive director of Morui Ranch which boasts 400 cattle, 300 goats and about 100 sheep. Morui

means animal farmer in the local dialect.

And her influence is not limited to her immediate family, where all her three children have pursued studies in agriculture related fields and joined the business. She is also on a mission to encourage her fellow women to venture into livestock production and agri-business.



“It is a family project involving my husband who is very supportive. Our children were born in a farming family and this influenced even their career choices at the higher level of education and they are part of the business,” says the mother of three. The firstborn, a girl, graduated with a first degree in wildlife and forestry management, researched on rural livelihoods, and a Master’s in business administration. The second-born has a degree in rural development while the last born studied agricultural economics.

As the chairperson of Reakopantsa Women Farmers Association, Mrs. Abu-Basutu is working with other women established in animal farming, to encourage their counterparts, especially in rural areas to start their farms.

She attributes minimal participation of women in the sector to the belief that animal husbandry, primarily, the rearing of large animals, is for men. In contrast, women are viewed to only be able to manage smaller sized livestock, such as poultry at small-scale level.

To heighten a shift in mindset, Mrs. Abu-Basutu and her colleagues at the association, which is affiliated to the AWARFA-N, have held workshops and other training forums across the landlocked country.

Through the local chapter of the AWARFA-N, they have acquired a piece of land from the government, where they are growing fodder project to feed their animals. Plans are also underway to start a goat’s project at the farm.

“We are using the land as a demonstration site where we share knowledge and skills with other women to influence them to venture into animal farming and agribusiness,” she says. They have also partnered with Zim Trade, the agency for export promotion, to educate members of value addition and to ensure target to international markets for their produce and increase incomes.

Although Mrs. Abu-Basutu agrees that women need support to play a more prominent role in animal resource development, she takes issue

with what she calls the “crying baby syndrome” to expect the Government to do everything for them.

“It is upon us as women leaders to be in the forefront and pull up those who are still lagging behind. We cannot talk about access to land as a challenge in Zimbabwe as the Government’s policy of land distribution doesn’t discriminate against any gender,” she says. With functional groups, challenges like access to technology, capital, and marketing can easily be overcome by women.

Abu-Basutu has been part of the AWARFA-N since its establishment, having attended the inaugural meeting in Dakar, Senegal. Currently, she is mobilizing women from the grassroots to be part of the national chapter of the network and increase their participation in animal resource development.

In Zimbabwe, the network is being decentralized into provinces for greater impact, especially among rural women. So far, the network has been established in one province, with 85 members while two others have about 50 each and they want to launch it in all the ten provinces in the country.

“The network is already registered and operational at the national level and it will offer women a platform for capacity building, networking and exchange of ideas, and access to credit for investment in agribusiness,” she says.

Her advice to fellow women is that they need to step up and take their rightful place in enhancing food security and the economic development of the nation. However, she says this can only be achieved if they venture and actively participate in animal resource development as only those who are already in the process can attract support.



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