

Gender inclusion in the establishment of youth agribusinesses

Karen M. Nguru, Salome E. Asena, Damary Sikalieh, Jane Muriithi and Philip Khamati



FRANCIS NGUMBA

Context

Although 71% of the youth who applied for the Cultivate Africa's Future (CultiAF) project – *Expanding business opportunities for youth in the fish and poultry sectors in Kenya* – had an ambition to become agricultural entrepreneurs, they had limited knowledge and skills to carry out agriculture as a business. Young women are also less likely to have the resources required to start businesses compared to young men. This 'gender gap' in resource access hinders women's productivity and reduces their contribution to the agricultural sector, and to the achievement of broader economic and social development goals (FAO, 2011).

In order to address the gender gap, the project took several measures to specifically target the selection of participants to the program, and ensure that young women were provided with the facilities to enable them to participate. For example, during business counseling, women received support at their homes in order to increase their retention rate in the program, and to address the key issue of mobility that has often reduced women's ability to attend training programs.

The main aim of the CultiAF project was to build the capacity of young men and women entrepreneurs to develop and manage businesses in the fish and poultry sectors. The program tested the living lab model – a model that combines training, business development services and action research to support young entrepreneurs to launch business ventures in the poultry and fisheries sub sectors.

The recruitment process attracted 301 youths (35% women, 65% men) with entrepreneurial interests, of

Key messages

- By combining multiple strategies including training and business counseling, the project achieved a 90% business launch success rate of youth ventures in the fish and poultry sectors.
- Compared to their male counterparts, female applicants demonstrated a greater capacity to complete the entire training program through to business launch.
- Although there were more men than women in the initial 301 applicants (65% to 35%), there were more women than men in the final group (60% to 40%).
- Of the final 20 business plans, those led by women demonstrated and implemented a social enterprise angle for community empowerment more so than those led by men.

whom, 220 had innovative businesses ideas. Through a vetting process, the top 30 men and 30 women were selected using criteria including education level, agricultural training, work experience, knowledge of the poultry/fish sector, and the availability of funds. Of these 60, 39 attended intensive entrepreneurship training. Figure 1 shows the percentage of men and women who initially attended training, compared with the proportion of men and women who progressed to the final group for business development.

Emerging outcomes

A higher proportion of women entrepreneurs were selected for business development

The 39 selected youths attended an intensive business training course with the United States International University Africa (USIU) that covered topics such as entrepreneurial mind set, business plan development, product marketing, financial management, resource mobilization, information and communication technologies, record keeping, and production and operation management. Following this preparation, the youths pitched their business plans to a team of industry experts. From this, 20 were selected to receive business counseling and mentoring support towards the launch of their businesses.

In the group who initially attended training, 68.4% were men compared to 31.6% women, however in the final group, 66.7% of participants were women (Figure 1). This indicates that the women demonstrated a greater capacity to complete the entire training program through to business launch, and that they performed better in the articulation of their business ideas.

During the course of the program, it became evident that the female participants had more of the entrepreneurial characteristics associated with launching a successful business plan. Such factors included knowledge and experience of the poultry/fish farming industry and thus, a greater ability to bring skills relevant to the program; and the ability to take on board the CultiAF training to overcome weaknesses identified in venture concepts. The higher proportion of female participants in the final group supports the point that more women had these characteristics than men. The program helped improve youths' entrepreneurial characteristics by combining training with mentorship, as one female entrepreneur indicated.

"Many programs give us training but they never follow up or come back to give extra support. When I was told the CultiAF team would come back, I didn't take it seriously but now I am so grateful since it shows they care and I am motivated to carry on with my business."

— Stacey Saida, 22, entrepreneur, poultry value chain

Improved rates of business launch by young agripreneurs

Combining training and counseling services increased the probability that entrepreneurs would launch their businesses. This probability was even higher for female entrepreneurs because in the final group, more than half of participants were women.

Of the 140 participants not selected to attend the training course (control group), 22% did not launch their businesses. For those who did attend training, the percentage of entrepreneurs who did not launch their

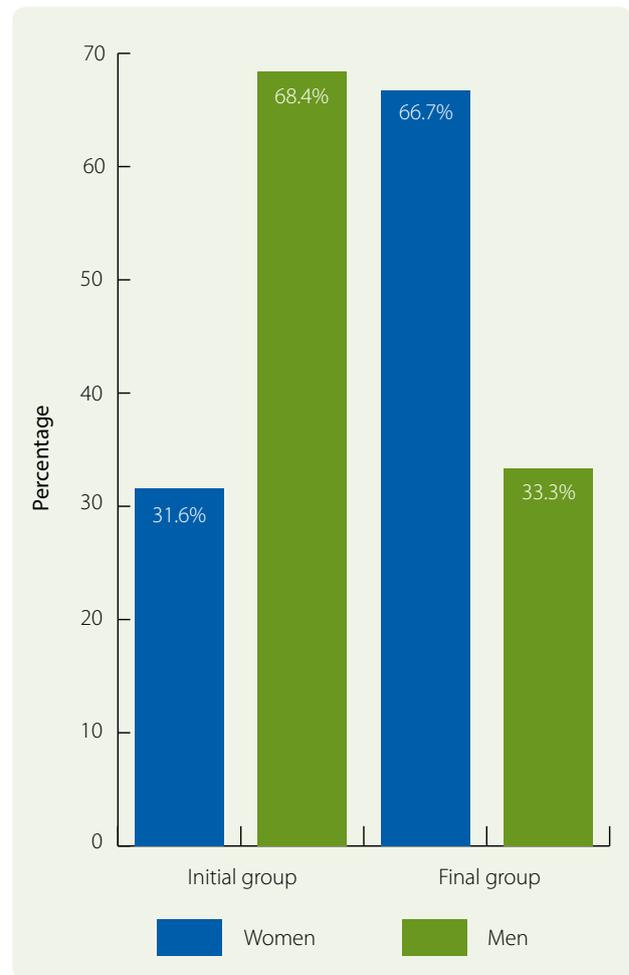


Figure 1: Percentage of men and women in the initial and final groups



A Kenyan entrepreneur ensuring dung has enough moisture to rear maggots as chicken feed

FRANCIS NGUMBA

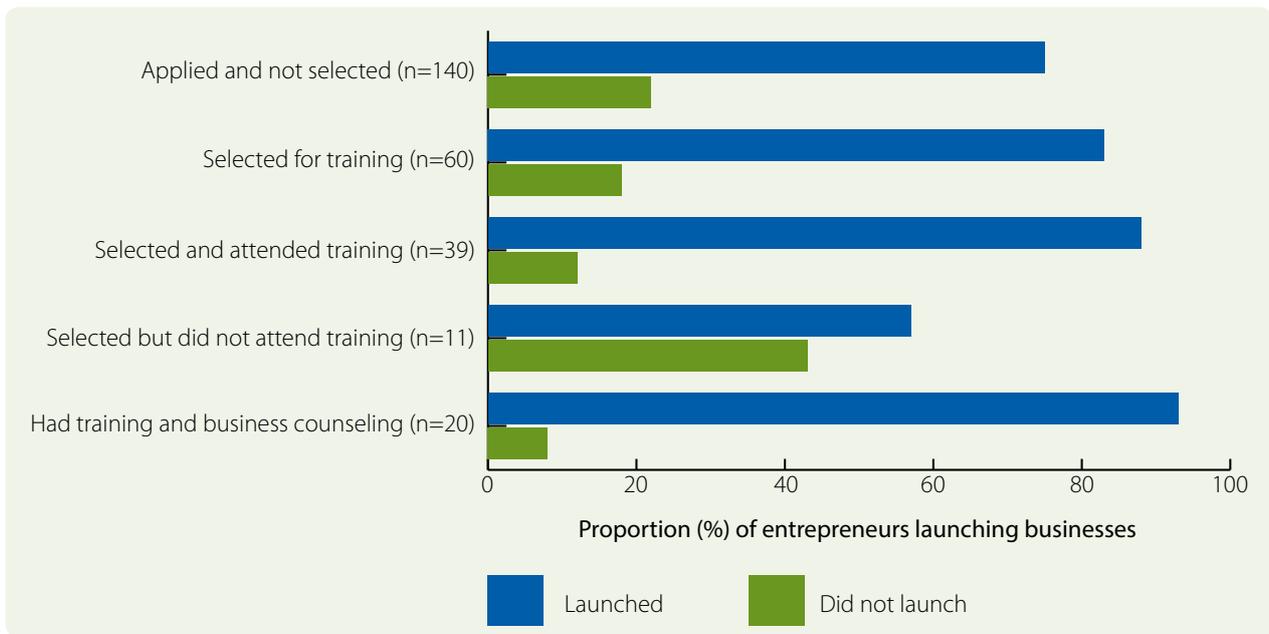


Figure 2: Proportion of entrepreneurs launching businesses

businesses declined to 18%. This figure further declined to 7% for those who received both the training and businesses counseling services (Figure 2).

One such entrepreneur who launched her business as a result of the training and business counseling was Rosalia Muchori, a fish sector entrepreneur from Nairobi. Her training with the project helped her to realize that she could grow her market base by further processing her fish into ready-to-cook products, such as fish sausages and fish samosas. She is now in the process of mechanizing

her venture to scale up production and standardize her fish products. Her aim is to expand her facilities and production to reach a wider urban market.

The top three performers of the final group were women, and these entrepreneurs were selected to receive further support from project partners including Agriprofocus, who intended to showcase their products during a business-to-business networking forum, and Umati Capital who provided further training on market linkages.



Most youth businesses in Kenya are family owned and so challenging to formalize

FRANCIS NGUMBA



JOHN MACHARIA/USIU AFRICA

USIU staff carrying out business counseling in Kilifi county, Kenya

Women's agribusinesses benefit their communities

Five female entrepreneurs from the final group had a 'social change' component to their businesses and wanted to positively impact other members of their communities – even during the growth of their businesses. As such, following the training and business counseling, two have expanded their businesses to outsource products or raw materials from other young agripreneurs in their localities.

Following the training and counseling, poultry entrepreneur Eunice Mukai organized a one-day workshop to train others in poultry production and business management. She has now trained and contracted 75 poultry farmers who are currently rearing chickens for the markets she identified from contacts made during the CultiAF project. Eunice, 34, has also employed a young accountant, secretary, farm manager and an assistant from Wote, Makueni county to help with her poultry business.

Conclusion

Women participants were more resilient than the men in developing and launching their ventures in the fish and poultry sectors. The project's results also demonstrate that the women's business plans detailed a desire to empower communities through the establishment of

social enterprises more so than the men's. However, studies have shown that due to cultural norms, women face more constraints than men to participating in agribusinesses because of limited mobility and demands on their time. Programs supporting youth entrepreneurs must address these gender based barriers if they are to benefit young women.

While many programs supporting youth entrepreneurs focus on single strategies such as the provision of capital or training, the results from this program show that multiple strategies including capacity building, mentoring and linking entrepreneurs to other networks, are required to enable young agripreneurs to successfully launch their businesses. This is especially important for young women, who are often less likely to apply for these programs.

References

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2011. *The State of Food and Agriculture in Africa: Women in Agriculture, Closing the Gender Gap*. FAO, Rome. <http://bit.ly/LL9mfr>.

Contact

Munoko Karen Musikoyo: karenmunoko@gmail.com

Cultivate Africa's Future (CultiAF) supports research to achieve long-term food security in Eastern and Southern Africa.



International Development Research Centre
 PO Box 8500, Ottawa, ON Canada K1G 3H9
 Phone: +1 613 236 6163 | Fax: +1 613 238 7230 | www.idrc.ca