



Ukama Ustawi:
Diversification for Resilient
Agrifood Systems in East
and Southern Africa



**CASE STUDIES OF GENDER
EQUALITY AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION SUCCESS STORIES
IN ZAMBIA'S AGRIBUSINESS
SECTOR**



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Summary

A situation analysis of gender issues in Zambia reveals that some challenges remain critical and fundamental to the country's achievement of its vision and goal of gender equality, social inclusion and delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is despite the fact that Zambia has signed and ratified various international and regional commitments to gender equality and development. Zambia has also enacted various pieces of legislation to ensure the effective mainstreaming of gender in all sector policies, laws, plans, programs, projects, and outputs. The operationalization of these instruments still lags behind and the expected gender equality outputs and impacts are still low at all levels, as evidenced in all sectors of national development in Zambia.

Nonetheless, this report presents case studies of success stories of value chain actors who operate in Zambia's agribusiness sector to promote gender equality and social inclusion. Potential success stories were identified during a stakeholder workshop on gender equality and social inclusion in the agribusiness ecosystem for multidimensional mapping of opportunities and challenges held in September 2022 in Lusaka. Some of these stories were then selected from different value chains for follow-up by the research team. Interviews with the value chain actors in these stories were arranged and conducted in early 2023. The case study method was used to identify value chain actors who are using good practices to address and promote gender inequality and social inclusion in the agribusiness sector in Zambia. We present the case studies as one means of sharing some of the strategies used by these value chain actors and their achievements so to contribute to scaling out of their successes to others in Zambia and in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region for greater gender equality and social inclusion in the agricultural sector.

Introduction

Zambian agriculture plays a key role of supporting industries in the production of raw materials, producing domestic and exportable agricultural goods and generating employment for the nation. Agriculture is the main livelihood of over 70% of the Zambian rural population. Agricultural production is still dominated by government-supported, rain-fed cultivation of maize but other crops like cassava, soybean, wheat, sunflower, cotton, and tobacco are also of great economic importance. The fisheries and livestock sectors have also been increasing production in recent decades. The changing weather patterns and low investments in research and development, policy inconsistencies, slow program implementations coupled with inadequate extension and advisory services are some of the major challenges of agribusiness development in Zambia.

The levels of achievement of goals or success in any agribusiness enterprise vary for different individuals and institutions, even those operating in the same business environment. Players may face the same challenges, but their abilities, capabilities, or connections to support systems ultimately affect their efficiency and productivity. The agribusiness case studies of Zambia's success stories present lessons on why some businesses prosper and can influence other players to adopt and adapt technologies that improve their respective agribusinesses and contribute to the attainment of gender equality and social inclusion.

The case studies follow the workshop on gender equality and social inclusion in the agribusiness ecosystem for multidimensional mapping of opportunities and challenges held on 29th September 2022 at the Asmara Hotel in Lusaka. The workshop was held to conceptualize gender equality and social inclusion in Zambia's agribusiness ecosystem; identify and collect data on successful agribusinesses in Zambia; address gender-based constraints to the active participation in and benefits from agribusiness by women, youth, and persons with disabilities; and establish a pan ESA gender equality and social inclusion agribusiness network. The workshop identified organizations that support and individuals engaged in agribusiness in Zambia. Some were purposively selected and interviewed for the compilation of success stories in this report and will form part of the agribusiness digital network database. For more details of the proceedings of the workshop refer to the report submitted to the Work Package 5 of the One CGIAR Initiative Ukama Ustawi.

The development of the case studies was funded by One CGIAR Initiative Ukama Ustawi. They collate experiences, challenges, opportunities, and successes from seven diverse agribusinesses (small, medium and large scale) in roots and tubers (cassava), legumes (soybean), cereals (rice) livestock (goats), aquaculture (fish), agro-dealer, and apiculture (honey). The cases were studied at different nodes in value chains to examine and narrate the constraints and opportunities to contribute to successful gender equal and socially inclusive agribusinesses.

This report presents information gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) of those identified to learn more about their activities and strategies for sharing with other network members. The stories were collected from 7 districts in 5 Provinces of Zambia.

Agribusiness case studies

Commercialization of cassava for women and youth economic empowerment in Northern Province - Itabwa Investments

Cassava is the second most important staple food in Zambia after maize. It is mainly grown in five Provinces of Zambia in Luapula, Northern, Muchinga, Northwestern and Western Provinces. In the recent past, the cassava sector has attracted increased investment because of the expanding use of cassava in the industrial sector. The government and private sector are actively commercializing the cassava value chain. The industrial use of cassava includes ethanol, starch, biofuels, animal feeds, beer, fertilizer, among others. It has been estimated that 850 MT/day is required to run all the cassava processing plants. Some industrial plants support out-grower schemes to increase their production of cassava in selected parts of Zambia.

Itabwa Investments is a company practicing corporate social responsibility (CSR) domiciled in the Kasama District of Northern Province. It is focused on harnessing northern Zambia's vast natural resources to reduce endemic poverty. Itabwa Investments was initially established in Kaputa District in 2018 before relocating to Kasama in 2021 after a cassava milling plant was commissioned. Itabwa Investments provides disease-free, high-yielding cassava cuttings to rural smallholder farmers, tillage and aggregation services, value addition and commercial market linkages for their produce. Cassava is processed into two main products: 1) dried cassava chips; and 2) high-quality cassava flour for industrial and household consumption.



Figure 1. Itabwa Investment workers at the Kasama milling plant
Photo by Itabwa Investments

Their current interventions to help commercialize the cassava value chain cover parts of Luapula and Northern Provinces. Cassava has, over the last 10 years, emerged as a key commercial crop given the plethora of its industrial uses. It has provided value chain actors with an opportunity to expand income streams to thousands of smallholder farmers in rural Zambia who have for a longtime produced cassava as a subsistence crop and thus regarded as a “poor person’s crop.” Given the low investment level, the increased demand for cassava as an industrial crop and its profitability has earned it the new name “white gold.”

Central to Itabwa Investments’ strategy is incorporating women and youth into the various cassava out-grower schemes and training programs. Women and young people are the most

susceptible to poverty due to limited opportunities available in rural Zambia. Through strategic partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders, among them Musika Development Initiatives and the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission, more than 4,800 farmers who supply dried cassava for further processing at the Kasama plant have been registered and trained. In addition, at least 400 farmers are registered under Itabwa Investments' cassava out-grower scheme. Itabwa Investments facilitates mechanization to increase production and helps link farmers to commercial markets.



Figure 2. Women members of the out-grower scheme in their cassava fields
Photo by Itabwa Investments

Itabwa Investments has demonstrated a willingness to operate “off the beaten track” or in areas referred to as “the last mile.” It is often the principal/sole cassava purchaser in some rural high-production areas. However, even in areas with multiple actors, they are often the only off-taker offering good market prices. This comes at a great cost given that the bulk of their activities is in areas with poorly developed transport infrastructure, significantly increasing operational costs. Most of these costs are associated with hauling cassava from mobile storage centers to final processors in Mkushi District, Lusaka City, and the Copperbelt Province.



Figure 3. Itabwa Investments field staff monitoring cassava processing
Photo by Itabwa Investments

The out-grower and aggregation scheme has 2,600 registered women farmers, representing 54% of the total registered farmers. This is in line with their preferential policy to skew opportunities created through their interventions towards women and youth to redress the persistent income inequalities and lack of access to opportunities in rural areas. Plans are underway to further increase the number of women farmers by registering an additional 2,400 by the end of 2023. Traditional authorities actively participating in the value chain commercialization process empower these women with the allocation of land for agricultural use in their own right. At the same time, those on the out-grower scheme are also supported with inputs whose costs are recovered upon delivery of cassava to the milling plant.



Figure 4. Ms. Kapasa, the highest supplier of cassava to Itabwa Investments, supervising cassava processing at her farm
Photo by Itabwa Investments

Over 60% of the cassava processed at the milling plant is sourced exclusively from women farmers under the cassava out-grower and aggregation scheme. The plant has an installed capacity of 30 MT/day. Due to low cassava productivity, the plant is currently operating below its full capacity. It is hoped that by promoting cassava out-grower schemes, more farmers will increase their production and productivity. Extension and advisory services are being provided to farmers by the Department of Agriculture and other institutions, such as IITA, that train youth from Itabwa Investments.



Figure 5. Itabwa Investments staff at a cassava production and disease identification training at IITA fields in Lusaka
Photo by Itabwa Investments

[Soybean farming at Kashumba Farm, Kaoma District, Western Province](#)

Soybean was introduced in Zambia in the 1930s and is now grown by small and large-scale farmers. Soybean is grown in Regions II and III of Zambia. Its production, trade and consumption have increased over the years in Zambia. Soybean is widely grown for its edible bean, which has numerous uses. In the early 1980s, it was being promoted by the government and the private sector as “the gold that grows.” Traditional unfermented food uses of soybeans include soy milk, from which tofu and tofu skin are made. Fermented soy foods include soy sauce, fermented bean paste, tempeh, among others. Fat-free soybean meal is a significant and cheap source of protein for animal feeds and many packaged meals. For example, soybean products, such as textured vegetable protein, are ingredients in meat and dairy substitutes. Soya chunks are a famous relish in Zambian homes, and soya flour is a vital ingredient in high-energy and protein supplements for infant foods.

Kashumba Farm is located in the Kalumwange area, about 65km on the Kaoma/Kasempa Road, in the Kaoma District of the Western Province of Zambia. A family farm managed by Ms. Molly Kashumba, a retired medical nurse, who greatly struggled to provide for the family upon retirement. However, she took it upon herself to venture into farming and trained in crop production. In 2021, she revived the dormant family farm and decided to diversify her crops. She grows soybean, tobacco, maize, cassava, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and Irish potatoes.

Kashumba Farm has 2,800 ha of land on statutory title. During the 2021/2022 season, using her own established workforce of men, women and youth, Ms. Kashumba managed to cultivate 45 ha of soybean and harvested 744 x 50 kg bags that she sold at an organized Grain Trader Centre in Lusaka.

Ms. Kashumba explained that it was initially challenging to grow different crops simultaneously, as each had unique requirements and challenges. However, she persevered and gradually began to see results. With careful planning and management, she achieved impressive yields and quality crops. She ensures that all operations are done under her close supervision and consults extension workers, other farmers and the internet to learn better management practices to successfully grow crops.

She learned how to rotate her crops to prevent soil exhaustion and use natural fertilizers and pest control methods to reduce costs and increase yields. In the 2022/2023 farming season, she cleared an additional 65 ha of land within two months and planted 45 ha soybean, 10 ha maize, 15 ha tobacco, 10 ha cassava, 5 ha groundnuts, 5 ha sweet potatoes and 4 ha Irish potatoes. According to Ms. Kashumba:

“We grow several types of crops to spread the risk. When one crop fails, we are likely to benefit from the other crops. But soybean is our major flagship crop for commercial production.”



Figure 6. Ms. Kashumba, Farm Manager, in the soybean field
Photo by Kashumba Farms

Her success story comes from growing and marketing soybean. She initially hesitated to plant soybean because she had no prior experience. However, the results were impressive after learning the good practices for planting, growing, and harvesting soybean. She harvested 37.2 MT of soybean in the 2021/2022 season, significantly higher than she had previously achieved. Furthermore, the market for soybean in Zambia is good. Farmers can sell their crops reasonably, providing them the much-needed income to sustain their livelihoods.



Figure 7. A heap of soybean for processing (left) and bags of soybean in a truck to be delivered to the market in Lusaka (right)

Photo by Kashumba Farms

The success of soybean production encouraged Ms. Kashumba to adopt crop diversification and research new techniques. She soon realized she could achieve even better results by working with other family members and sharing her knowledge and resources. Consequently, Kashumba Farm has thrived, and her family's livelihood has improved. Her vision is that, by working with other stakeholders, Kashumba Farm will be a Centre of Excellence for farmers in Western Province and beyond. Sufficient land has been allocated to host demonstration plots for trials on improved technology and innovations that promote climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices that are also gender-sensitive.

[Promoting commercialization of rice in selected districts in Western Province - Itana Farms](#)

Rice production in Zambia is becoming significantly important. Suitable farmland for growing rice exists in most provinces of Zambia, especially in Western, Eastern, Muchinga, Luapula, Northern and Central Provinces.

Itana Farms Limited is an indigenous Zambian-based enterprise located in the Mongu District, Western Province. Itana Farms primarily focuses on transforming Zambia into a food basket of Africa. The company aims to create a strong producer supply network of climate-resilient agricultural products and services for export promotion, job creation, poverty alleviation, and contributing to the national economic agenda.

Before the commencement of rice production by Itana Farms, the primary focus was on **environmental protection**. Itana Farms held environmental and forest sensitization meetings in their operational communities. Trees were planted in selected areas of Makapaela in Limulunga District, Kashembe in Mongu District, Nande in Senanga District and Looke in Sikongo District. The program is ongoing because the focus is on the reforestation of 80% of the targeted deforested areas of Western Province due to charcoal burning, timber trading and opening up of new fertile farmland.



Figure 8. Out-grower scheme members planting tree seeds in plastics for the reforestation projects at Itana Farms
Photo by Muhau Yusiku

In addition, Itana Farms set up a **community empowerment program**. The focus was to economically empower 3,500 community members by creating market linkages for their products and conducting capacity-building workshops on how to package their businesses. Itana Farms understands that a hungry community is spiritually, emotionally, socially and economically ungovernable and uncoordinated. Thus, empowering community members is empowering the nation. As an affirmative action strategy, at least 60% of the program participants should be women and youth. Itana Farms also deliberately targets people with disabilities to ensure no one is left behind in accessing knowledge and skills for improved livelihoods.



Figure 9: Participants of the community empowerment program in Sikongo District, Western Province
Photo by Muhau Yusiku

The company's affirmative action towards women, youth and people living with disabilities is followed when implementing all activities. For example, Itana Farms focuses on strengthening production and adopting viable practices to enhance the production of pure rice and other agricultural products. The goal is to contribute to sustainable agricultural development through effective agricultural value chain development in a gender-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive manner. Itana Farms operates a rice out-grower scheme. The farm buys rice from its out-grower scheme members, stores it and adds value to meet export requirements. In the process, jobs are created, and market linkages are enhanced. In addition to rice, other early maturing climate-resilient crops such as maize, millet, sorghum and wheat are grown before and after the rice is harvested. Plans are underway to introduce and integrate climate-resilient crops, such as soybean, sweet potatoes, and sunflower. Crop diversification has the advantage of spreading risks and improving food availability, thereby unlocking many business opportunities for farmers and vulnerable women and youth.

Working with various stakeholders such as Mutakamwa Production Ltd, AgriLife Business Ventures, Keepers Zambia, and the media, Itana Farms ventured into an out-grower scheme by engaging 100 registered women and youth cooperatives and other smallholder farmers from 5 districts, namely Limulunga, Mongu, Nalolo, Kalabo and Sikongo Districts of Western Province. This resulted in at least 500 registered out-grower groups on the rice out-grower scheme. The recruitment and engagement of these farmers in producing **Super Rice** at a commercial level has led to improved livelihoods of participating groups or cooperatives with an average of ten members, some of whom are vulnerable women and youth.



Figure 10. Super Rice produced by Itana Farms
Photo by Muhau Yusiku

Itana Farms will expand by planting 5,000 ha of rice if each registered member cultivates at least one ha of rice. If a ha produces a minimum of 40 x 50 kg bags of rice, the out-grower scheme will produce a minimum of 200,000 bags from 5,000 ha, which will be supplied to the market within and outside the country. Regarding job creation, each ha will have a minimum of 1 caretaker

bringing the total to 5,000 direct jobs. Itana Farms will create jobs and reduce poverty in the whole region as many will have more food on the table and surplus for sale. The quality of rice produced in the western part of Zambia has a high worldwide demand because of its pleasing aroma and taste.



Figure 11: Dr Emmanuel Alamu of IITA and Mr Muhau Yusiku displaying the Itana Farms Super Rice during a multi-stakeholder workshop in Lusaka. 29th September 2022
Photo by Mutakamwa Productions Ltd.

The success of Itana Farms is seen in producing 19,257 MT of rice in the 2021/2022 season from the five participating districts of Limulunga, Mongu, Kalabo, Nalolo and Sikongo Districts, with Sikongo registering the highest production at 40%. The out-grower scheme and farmers have operated successfully at a commercial level. However, the major challenge is the lack of adequate processing equipment and operating capital to buy and process rice from farmers to meet the market demand. Getting more joint venture partners to participate in the scheme will be highly beneficial, which has a considerable potential to alleviate poverty among smallholder rice farmers, especially women and youth.

[Disability is NOT inability – Goat rearing by a deaf person in Kitwe District, Copperbelt Province](#)

Gender equality and social inclusion in Zambia is an area with many challenges despite the legal and policy frameworks that are expected to promote activities that ensure no one is left behind in exercising and enjoying their full human rights. In Zambia, like in most ESA countries, some challenges are institutional, although the most critical ones are embedded in social structures. It is a common socially held belief that a lame baby is a curse or punishment from God, a girl's place is in the kitchen, or a menstruating woman or girl is unclean and must stay isolated during her period. These beliefs have contributed to, and continue to perpetuate, inequalities in some areas, including in the agribusiness ecosystem.

Another vital aspect that has significantly affected the implementation of well-meaning gender equality and social inclusion strategies and programs is Zambia's laws' disharmony and dual aspect. The statutory and the traditional practices that are not coded vary from society to society. Cultural practices and belief systems have been practiced over a long period and are internally held by most people. People with disabilities face multiple challenges of exclusion that result in high poverty levels among them. For example, the designs of improved technologies and communication systems do not usually consider their unique needs and specific challenges.

Nonetheless, Mr Frankson Musukwa is a 35-year-old youth with a disability who has made a difference in his community. He is a disability rights advocate and an activist and has been rearing goats for five years. He reflects a varied personality, including ambition and generosity and thoughtfulness. He is a well-determined and vigorous individual, yet pleasantly calm. He lives in the Kitwe City of Copperbelt Province with his family of 7 members and supports 7 children in boarding school. Mr Musukwa has overcome several barriers to be a mentor among citizens living with disabilities.



Figure 12. Mr. Musukwa's family admiring the goats on their farm

Photo by Frankson Musukwa

As a youth with disability activist, his everyday life involves advocacy and lobbying to protect and promote the rights of young people with disabilities in Zambia. He is a young, emerging, smallholder farmer who ventured into livestock business. He is the founder and executive director of Zambia Deaf Youth and Women. This disabled people youth-led organisation aims at lobbying and advocating for equal rights and opportunities for deaf youth and women in accordance with social, political, economic and cultural rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Musukwa is the Founder and Principal of Jennifer Memorial Special Community School, the most prominent special education school in Kitwe District, providing free access to primary education to 52 deaf and 8 intellectually disabled children in the Kitwe District.

Mr Musukwa holds a certificate in primary teacher's training from Kitwe College of Education, a Bachelor of Special Education from Kwame Nkrumah University, and a Master's degree in International and Comparative Disability Law and Policy from the National University of Ireland, Galway.

He has received awards and honors for his work as a young emerging farmer and his contributions to the disability movement in Zambia and beyond, including the 2012-2013 Open Society Foundations Disability Right Scholarship to complete his Master's degree. In early 2014, ICOF Colleges, Seminaries, and Universities awarded him a Certificate in Leadership and Development for his advocacy service to people with disabilities. In late 2014, he was nominated and awarded the title of PEPFAR 2014 Champion by the US Embassy in recognition of his efforts to combat HIV/AIDS among Zambian deaf people. In 2017, the Indian government honored him with the First International Excellence Award for his contributions to educating vulnerable and marginalized deaf children. In 2018, President Edgar Changwa Lungu bestowed upon him the President Insignia of Honor for his immense contribution to the disability sector.

Mr. Musukwa narrates:

"I started goat rearing [goats] in 2019 at my 14 ha farm located at the former Council Farm Block area initially with 5 goats that increased to 20 goats in 2021. Unfortunately, I suffered a setback as my relative whom I employed as a farm worker stole all adult goats and left me with 3 small ones that have bred and have currently increased to 13."

Mr. Musukwa receives technical support from the Department of Agriculture and the Muslim Community in the Mulangililo Compound of Kitwe City. He plans to increase the number of goats and sell some to the lucrative Kasumbalesa market at the Zambian border with The Democratic Republic of Congo. The farm size is sufficient to venture into other profitable agribusiness value chains for their livelihoods and assist other needy, marginalised citizens.

Mr. Musukwa explains:

"I am a young man with a disability who wants to contribute to the change of mindset among persons with disabilities and society by venturing into agriculture that should contribute to self-sustenance and the national food basket as well as transfer skills to youth with disabilities for self-reliance."

Based on his experience, Mr. Musukwa emphasizes that training and supporting small-scale farmers interested in agribusiness and providing them with capital and technical support will ensure success in gender equality and social inclusion in Zambia and ESA countries. Persons with disabilities must be encouraged, mentored and financed with capital so that they can engage themselves in farming that has the potential to reduce abject poverty and create wealth as well as challenge society's negative perception towards persons living with disabilities. There is an urgent need for stakeholders to source resources targeted at supporting persons living with disabilities in agriculture and those willing to venture into this sector.



Figure 13. Improved goat shelter at Mr. Musukwa's farm
Photo by Frankson Musukwa

Promoting fish farming in Zambia - Breathing Fish Farming Project

With the depletion of fish stocks in the natural water bodies coupled with increased demand for healthy foods, Zambia has seen a surge in demand for fish that has resulted in an increased number of farmers going into aquaculture. The potential to increase fish production and reduce fish imports is very high in Zambia if there could be increased practical support towards aquaculture value chain development.

A Zambian IT expert and lecturer at the University of Zambia was converted to an aquaculture trainer and producer of fish of international standards after training in fish production in Malaysia. Dr. Collins Kachaka is the Managing Director and major shareholder of Breathing Fish Farm.



Figure 14. Dr Kachaka preparing to cast a net at Breathing Fish Farm
Photo by Moses Katota

In 2012, the Breathing Fish Farm was established in the Westwood area of the Chilanga District in the Lusaka Province of Zambia. With a capital of K10,000 and a workforce of 8 people (three

women and five men), the farm began with just one fish pond. Today, it is a thriving enterprise with 12 ponds, and Dr. Kachaka has placed fish farming coordinators in all ten provinces of Zambia. Their primary duty is to promote fish farming through training, supply of inputs and provision of extension and advisory services.



Figure 15: Sampling fish with a cast net at Breathing Fish Farm in Chilanga District
Photo by Petronella Mphande

Dr. Kachaka attributes Breathing Fish Farm's success to the enterprise's commitment to sustainable aquaculture practices, effective partnerships, and innovative solutions in overcoming fish farming challenges. From the beginning, Breathing Fish Farm has had several partners who have helped it achieve its goals. The Citizen's Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) is one such partner that has been instrumental in training people in aquaculture. The project has also partnered with the Zambia Development Agency (ZDA), which has helped it access larger markets for its products.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has also been an important partner, providing guidance and support on aquaculture good practices. Additionally, the project has established partnerships with suppliers in China to procure high-quality fish farming equipment and tools such as pond liners, pH Testers, nets and other instruments.

Similarly, Breathing Fish Farm is committed to sustainable aquaculture practices, which has been a critical factor in its success. One such practice is the farm's use of homemade fish feed. The farm has developed a formula for fish feed that includes locally sourced ingredients such as maize bran, soybean meal and fishmeal. This has helped the farm reduce operating costs while ensuring

the fish are healthy and free from harmful additives. The leading suppliers of these ingredients are women and youth cooperatives around the project area in the Chilanga District.



Figure 16: One of the fish ponds at Breathing Fish Farm

Photo by Moses Katota

Another sustainable practice is the project's use of solar pumps. The cost of electricity was a major challenge for the farm, but by shifting to solar pumps, the farm has significantly reduced its operating costs. Solar pumps are environmentally friendly because they do not emit greenhouse gases and do not contribute to climate change.

However, despite the farm's success, Breathing Fish Farm has faced many challenges over the years. One of the biggest challenges was the water shortage in the ground, which made it difficult to pump water into the fish ponds. The farm's location in the Chilanga District has less underground water, which led the company to open a new farm in the Samfya District of Luapula Province, where there are adequate sources of water.

Breathing Fish Farm runs practical courses in fish farming, and the large number of trained farmers, who are over 60% female, has formed a cadre of producers who provide economies of scale for ordering inputs and securing big fish orders from clients. Breathing Fish Farm has created a substantial market for harvested fish through its commitment to sustainable aquaculture practices and effective partnerships. The project sells its fish at K50 per kg retail and K45 per kg wholesale, which is a competitive price on the market.

The success of fish agribusiness has also led to establishment of fish shops, supply of farming instruments, and material outlets in every province of Zambia. This has created a new revenue

stream for the Breathing Fish Farm and helped local communities access high-quality fish and fish farming inputs and extension services.

Breathing Fish Farm is a success story that showcases the power of sustainable aquaculture practices, effective partnerships, and innovative solutions. Through its commitment to these principles, the farm has overcome challenges and established itself as one of the leading aquaculture enterprises in Zambia. The farm's success has created new economic opportunities for local communities and contributed to the sustainability and growth of the country's fisheries sub-sector.

A successful agro-dealer, maize and sunflower farmer in Eastern Province - Ms. Nelia Banda

When assessing agribusiness in the Eastern Province of Zambia, it is not unusual to hear testimonies of a very successful community agro-dealer shop called Small Small Agro Shop based at Nyanje Village some 20 km south of the Great East Road in Sinda District. This agro shop is owned by Ms. Nelia Banda, a single parent with eight children (3 daughters and 5 sons). All her children have completed secondary education, with six of them in gainful employment after completing their respective tertiary education, while two are currently pursuing their university education.



Figure 17. Agro-dealer shop for Ms. Nelia Banda in Nyanje Village
Photo by Peter Phiri

Ms. Banda started her agro-dealer business in December 2010 after undergoing capacity-building training from Care International with eight other smallholder farmers identified in the Petauke District of Eastern Province. All nine participants were given grants to operate agro-dealer shops in their respective communities, but currently, only four (3 women and 1 man) are still operational. Ms. Banda is mainly engaged in selling agro inputs such as: certified maize seed, pesticides, agriculture tools such as ox ploughs and service parts, and sprayers and fertilizer.

Over ten years of operating her agro-business, Ms. Banda has received training and support from various organizations funded by USAID. She has also attended training organized by Musika Development Initiatives.

In addition, to the agro-dealer shop, Ms. Banda runs a successful sunflower out-grower scheme that benefits about 80 smallholder farmers in her community, comprising 60% female farmers. She currently has three agro-dealer outlets where farmers purchase inputs. The outlets also serve as aggregation centers for maize, soybeans, groundnuts and sunflower that she buys from smallholder farmers on behalf of grain traders located in nearby towns and cities. Ms. Banda is paid a commission for all the crops she buys from farmers in her community. According to Ms. Banda:

“I have been doing agribusiness for 11 years now. I have overcome the gender-based constraints of women, youth and the disabled by working together in this sunflower out-grower scheme. The farmers buy from Small Small Agro Shop. This reduces the farmers’ operational costs, and women can attend to other family chores. I have built customer trust and confidence and am easily accessible to all smallholder farmers in my community.”



Figure 18. Ms. Nelia Banda at the counter in her agro-dealer shop
Photo by Peter Phiri

Ms. Banda has been working with 3 partners: seed companies, chemical companies, and farmers. She is usually given certified maize seed on consignment from companies that include SeedCo, Corteva, Lake Agriculture and Zamseed, among others. In the 2022 /2023 agriculture season, she sold 15 MT of maize seed. She did not sell much compared to the previous seasons because many farmers planted soybean due to the high fertilizer costs associated with maize production. She orders chemicals from registered chemical companies, which she sells to farmers in her

catchment area through the agro-dealer shop outlets. The same farmers get sunflower seed for the out-grower scheme, and upon harvest, they pay back by returning an agreed number of grain bags, and she pays for the extra produce from the out-grower scheme members. This has helped smallholder farmers, especially women who often cannot afford to buy seed on a cash basis.

Ms. Banda owns 5 ha of farmland and planted 100 kg of maize in the 2022/2023 season. Her workforce comprises 4 employees (1 woman, 1 female youth, 1 male youth, and 1 male youth living with a disability). Her total average production revenue per year is around K120,000. The income comes from agribusiness, farming and the out-grower scheme. Her customers include farmers in the community and those from neighboring Mozambique. Her total operational capital costs for each season now stands at around K60,000.

Ms. Banda is convinced that gender equality and social inclusion can be promoted in agribusinesses in Zambia and other ESA countries by training community agro-dealers and empowering the trained smallholder farmers, especially women, with grants to implement agro-dealer shops. The funded agro-dealers would effectively serve their communities in agribusiness by providing reliable, easy-to-reach outlets for agricultural inputs, bulking products, and linking farmers to markets. Many gender-based constraints for women and persons with disabilities in agriculture can be addressed through a well-developed agro-dealer network that provides agricultural extension and advisory services for farmers to increase crop production and productivity.

[Supporting women's livelihoods through honey processing and marketing in Lusaka City](#)

Mahando Organic Honey is a company run by Ms. Eunice Muswele in Lusaka. She ventured into this business in 2019 after learning about the health benefits of honey. She started by selling a 20 L bucket of honey over two months with the help of two sales assistants. The honey sold very well, prompting her to return to Northwestern Province (where she originally purchased the honey) to buy five more 20 L buckets.

Over time, Ms. Muswele realized that travelling to and from Northwestern Province to procure honey was expensive. To cut costs, she employed her brother, who lives in Northwestern Province, to work with local beekeepers and supply her with honey by sending it on a public service bus. This method proved cheaper and less time-consuming and accorded employment to 10 local people (2 women and 8 men). Her male staff go to the bush to set up beehives and harvest the honey, while her female staff clean the buckets and package the honey before shipping it to Lusaka.



Figure 19. Ms Muswele processing honey
Photo by Moses Katota

To conserve the natural taste of honey, Ms. Muswele harvests it the traditional way. The honey is first placed in direct sunlight for two days to melt it. It is then sieved into buckets using clean white clothes to remove any particles before it is packaged and sold.



Figure 20. Mahando processed organic honey
Photo by Moses Katota

When Ms. Muswele started her business, the packaging was not of a high standard. There were no proper measurements done, and there was no branding. She packaged the honey into small jars. As the business grew, she registered her company and was certified by the Zambia Bureau of Standards in 2020. She then started ordering branded stickers that indicated the company's

name and address and the weight of the honey. Her family members are also a part of the company. She has also employed 5 women in Lusaka who package and brand the honey from her house.

The honey is packaged in 6 different sizes; 200gm, which sells for K20, 250gm for K30, 500gm for K50, 2.5L for K250, 10 L for K900 and 20 L for K1800. Wholesale prices vary depending on the quality and quantity of honey. The honey is sold in local retail and wholesale shops as well as directly to individuals.



Figure 21. Ms Muswele with 2.5 L of processed honey
Photo by Moses Katota

Ms. Muswele ventured into the honey business without business and marketing knowledge and skills, yet she rose above her challenges and grew her company from selling 20 L of honey in 2 months to selling the same quantity within a day or two. She plans to expand her business further and start supplying honey in other towns as well. She acknowledges that selling processed honey collected from honey-producing provinces like Northwestern Province supports women's livelihoods in Lusaka City.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these case studies reveal that, given the right enabling environment, self-determination drives value chain actors to overcome the many challenges that hinder gender equality and social inclusion in agribusiness. The success stories of the women and men farmers highlight the rewards of livelihood diversification and the importance of training, family unity, effective public and private partnerships, collaboration, hard work, and coming up with innovative solutions. Zambia's success stories have not only expanded economic opportunities in local communities, but they have also made a significant contribution to the growth and sustainability of the country's agricultural sector in a gender equal and socially inclusive manner without leaving citizens with disabilities far behind. Some strategies that resulted in positive changes should be scaled out to benefit more citizens in Zambia and other ESA countries. A

network of active players in agribusiness has been formed to implement some of the innovative solutions that will help contribute to gender equality and social inclusion in Zambia.

About IITA

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a non-profit institution that generates agricultural innovations to meet Africa's most pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation. Working with various partners across sub-Saharan Africa, we improve livelihoods, enhance food and nutrition security, increase employment, and preserve natural resource integrity.