

Mentorship for Women in Action

Mentorship for the Empowerment of Women Agripreneurs

Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W)



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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ATC	Agricultural Training Centre
ATVET	Agricultural Technical and Vocational Training
ATVET4W	Agricultural Technical and Vocational Training for Women
AUDA	African Union Development Agency
E4D	Employment for Sustainable Development
GmBS	Gender makes Business Sense
CTPA/WK	Coopérative de Transformation des Produits Agricoles/Wend Kuuni (Burkina Faso)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
P3	Power 3 refers to a course for agribusiness development
UDERD	Union Départementale des Etuveuses de Riz de DOUNA
USP	Unique Selling Point
WG	Working Group



Guiding Principles

The mentorship programme as developed and implemented under the ATVET4W project across the continent is based on a number of guiding principles. Drawing on the experiences gained from the implementation of the mentorship programme conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and Kenya, eight guiding principles have been used and are developed in this document.

The eight guiding principles are as follows:



1 Context of intervention

A good understanding of the context makes programme interventions more useful and accessible, once they are aligned with the capacities, needs and realities of (all) stakeholders.



2 Voluntary membership

Mentoring relationships are based on voluntary programmes in which mentors enter mutual and complementary professional relationships with mentees over a given period. The time frame is set by the programme implementer.



3 Cooperation and networking

Programme stakeholders communicate with each other and explore the possibilities of working with other parties in order to expand their networks and business relationships.



4 Complementarities and synergies

Programme implementers should be able to identify what they have in common with other mentoring programmes at national and international levels, and explore ways in which programmes can complement each other.



5 Methodological and operational stages

The programme's operational objectives (number of beneficiaries, geographical scope, etc.) and methodological support (implementation tools, forms of incentives, etc.) should be developed progressively according to the means available and the capacities of the main actors. The scope of the programme and its incentives should be communicated to the final beneficiaries.



6 Free or voluntary work

Mentorship is a voluntary relationship between mentor and mentee, without remuneration, based on the principle of service. Mentors as senior and experienced individuals work with less experienced mentees as partners in the exchange of practical knowledge, such as market insights. Incentives for both mentors and mentees include recognition, enriched work experiences, and new knowledge and skills.





Usefulness and benefits

The mentoring relationship must be beneficial for the mentee and the mentor, and even beyond that, for the sponsoring organisation and society in general. The voluntary nature of the relationship does not take away from its value, and should not undermine its effectiveness or the benefits to those involved. Stakeholders will need to undergo regular performance evaluations to ensure the usefulness and relevance of the programme.



Flexibility, learning and innovation

Mentoring as individualised coaching is by nature an adaptable and learning process, and the programme will respect this flexibility. Stakeholders may want to adapt methods and activities, and bring in innovations.



Matching Models to Contexts



Mentorship is a reciprocal learning relationship in which the mentor and mentee agree to a partnership to achieve mutually defined goals that develop skills, abilities and knowledge.

The mentorship programme is a solutions-based approach developed to address the challenge of economic empowerment of mentees. As an individualised or personalised support process, mentoring complements and consolidates the achievements of collective mechanisms for sharing knowledge and experience.

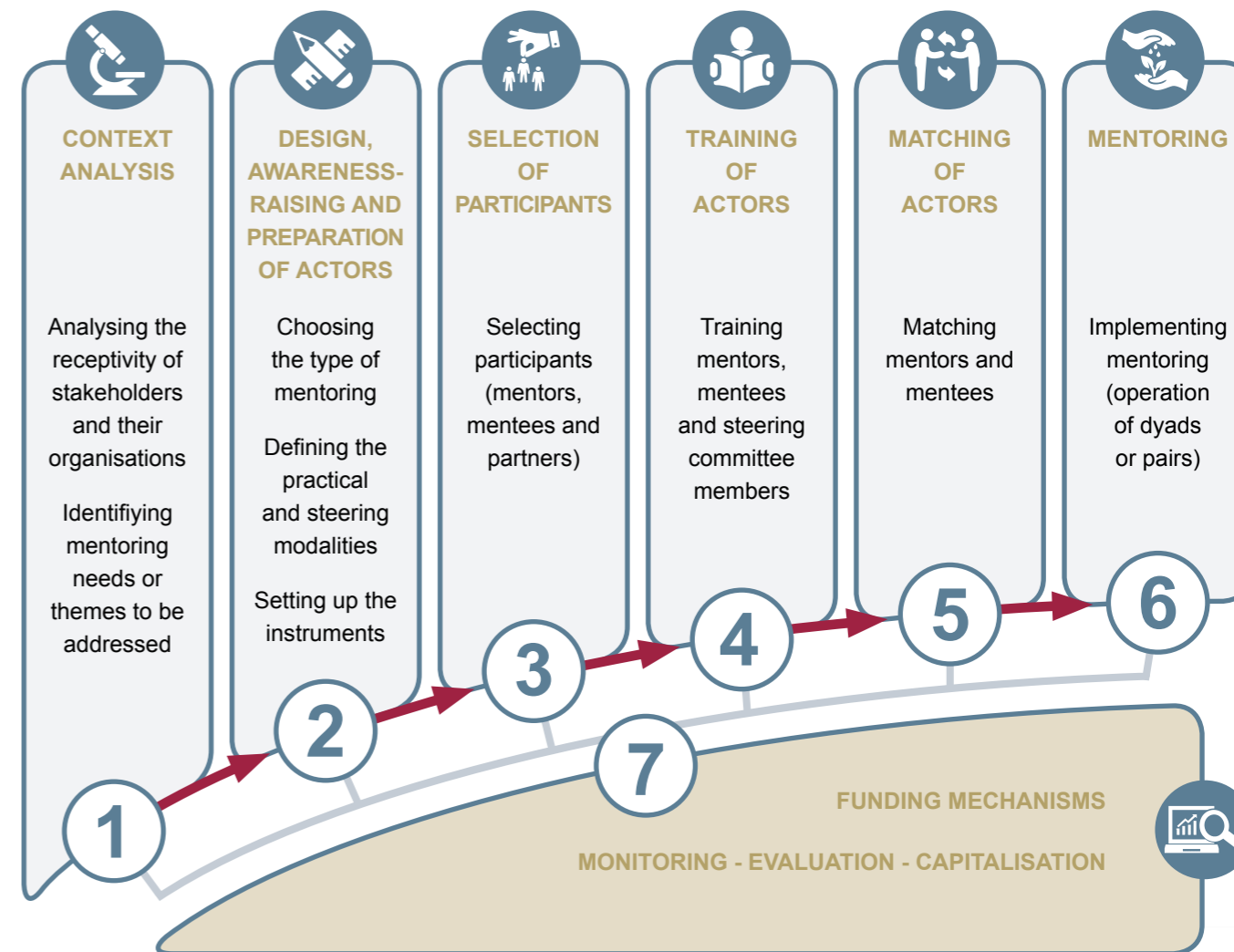
Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. Informal mentoring occurs when an experienced person decides to help a less experienced person improve their abilities and advance in their career. For example, a parboiled rice processor might identify a novice with a particular interest in local processing, and may choose to spend time with that person to teach her a relevant skill. Formal mentoring, on the other hand, takes place in a structured programme with defined activities and outcomes.

ATVET4W Mentorship: The Collaborative Model

The methodological approach adopted for the implementation of the mentoring programme is based on an iterative, cooperative, participatory and inclusive approach, against a backdrop of continual building upon lived experiences.



The Collaborative Model can be summarised in seven steps:





The seven steps of the Collaborative Model are unpacked below:



Context Analysis

A mentorship programme is client-oriented: this means that it focuses on the needs of the mentee. It aims to fill a gap or offer a solution to a challenge encountered. The context analysis, therefore, needs to assess the relevance and appropriateness of the mentorship programme, including the responsiveness of the targeted organisations and other stakeholders in the programme.

At this stage we must, therefore, ask and answer questions such as the following: Which gap or challenge are we trying to address here? Have others already taken similar approaches or actions to those we are considering? How is our case similar? In which way is our case different - what stands out as unique in this context or for this intervention?

Other factors to take into account in a contextual analysis include:

- ▶ Framing or launching the mission
- ▶ Doing a literature review and consulting with resource people with mentoring experience
- ▶ Identifying, approaching and consulting with organisations who may partner in the mentoring programme



Design, Awareness-raising, and Preparation of Actors

The conceptualisation and proposal development stage lays the foundations for ownership of the programme by the relevant stakeholders. The proposal will raise awareness of the mentoring programme and define its objectives. It will also cover elements such as the following: the guiding principles for the programme; the form of mentoring to be used; the practical arrangements and institutional agreements that need to be put in place. In addition, conceptualisation involves planning and developing the documents and tools required for implementation. A steering committee to guide development and implementation of the programme must also be set up.

Other factors to think about in the conceptualisation and initial phases include:

- ▶ Decide on your target group: starters (new to the business), on-going or both. Develop a mentorship programme suitable for the needs of the beneficiaries/target group.
- ▶ Identify and select the beneficiaries (mentees) and their agribusiness. This depends on the available resources and programme period. A careful selection of the right beneficiaries (mentees) is critical for the success of the mentorship programme.
- ▶ Create a sensitisation and awareness campaign for potential beneficiaries (mentees).
- ▶ Invite potential mentees to apply for the programme.
- ▶ Conduct the process in which potential mentees present their business pitch for consideration.
- ▶ Compile and finalise the list of the selected number of beneficiaries.



Selection of Participants

The participant selection phase identifies eligible and compatible mentors and beneficiaries, as well as other partners who will be part of the process. Indeed, appropriate matching of all actors in the programme is essential, and can determine whether the programme succeeds or fails. It is, therefore, important to make a careful selection. Selection of partners will depend on their passion and interest in any of the following areas: entrepreneurship, agriculture, women, mentoring and incubation, government and national policies, industry and the national and international entrepreneurship/business space. They may or may not have expertise in the selected value chain(s). They provide technical advice to the programme from time to time, and are like administrators or friends of the programme, ensuring that it meets its goal and objectives.

Ideally, the selection of mentors, mentees and partners should be made by the steering committee.

It includes the following activities:

- ▶ Develop suitable selection criteria per category of actors.
- ▶ Receive applications.
- ▶ Compile and finalise the list of stakeholders/partners.
- ▶ Confirm applications (by telephone interview).
- ▶ Screen applications and pre-match mentors and mentees.
- ▶ Notify candidates of the results of the selection process.

The range of actors includes the following:

- ▶ Mentors – selected business owners willing to handhold mentees
- ▶ Programme support team/partners – 2-5 technical experts as backstops
- ▶ Trainers/coaches – for capacity building, knowledgeable in their fields/value chains, sectors
- ▶ Other actors – industrialists, ATCs, finance and technology institutions, technical experts, trainers, and facilitators



Training of Actors

The training phase concerns all the actors involved in the mentorship programme. All participants need to understand their roles, responsibilities and limits in the programme, in order to avoid abuses in the implementation phase. Initial training is carried out under the supervision of the steering committee by a resource person competent in this field. It includes the following activities:

- ▶ Identifying and prioritising technical capacity needs and gaps, both for individual beneficiaries and for enterprise development. Some capacity training needs are more urgent than others, while others come sooner rather than later.
- ▶ Addressing inter-personal skills: among all the key factors influencing women's success in agribusiness, confidence - or lack of it - affects women's ability to access market opportunities, lead teams and negotiate enterprise value, which has an overall impact on the enterprise and its profitability. The development of non-technical skills is, therefore, vital.
- ▶ Developing training modules for mentors and mentees on good mentoring practices.
- ▶ Delivering effective training of mentors and mentees.

During this phase, mentees decide what is a priority for them, what is important and what they need to have. A provisional training plan is defined by the mentor and the mentee before the start of the programme. This plan must be shared between the actors so that they can plan their lives around the subsequent training period.





Matching of Actors

- ▶ The twinning process can be done during training for greater efficiency. The objective is to confirm the pre-matching that can take place towards the end of the training session as an application of the training and an effective start to the mentoring relationship. This phase includes the following sub-activities:
 - ▷ Define the programme protocol: this is essential because it sets the rules of the game, agreements, responsibilities and commitments. It allows everyone to focus on what is agreed upon and to manage any expectations, including the mode of engagement and communication strategy.
 - ▷ Launch the programme: introduce the programme in the presence of all stakeholders. At the same time, share the programme objectives and roadmap. Ensure that all stakeholders have a good understanding of the programme.



- ▷ Introduce the stakeholders to each other to facilitate communication and understanding of who is who, who does what, and how the roles fit together.
- ▶ Link the twinning to the programme implementation: as the programme is designed to progressively improve business performance as well as the capabilities of business owners, it is important that the needs of both are well targeted. If business continues as usual, without addressing the bottlenecks or practices that prevented growth, then there will be no improvement. New or improved knowledge, skills and attitudes will be required. Consider the following:
 - ▷ Put needs into categories: examples include needs related to financial management, technical knowledge, educational travel, peer learning, exhibitions and fairs, business, technological opportunities and challenges, social interaction, partnerships, networking and collaboration.
 - ▷ Carry out all planned activities at appropriate times.
 - ▷ Combine mentoring and mentorship sessions with coaching, experience sharing, industry exposure and incubation periods.



Funding mechanisms

Mentorship programmes are complex, lengthy, multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder, and require a great deal of facilitation and coordination. They also need a lot of time to build relationships, partnerships and networks among the different stakeholders, and a solid foundation for success and sustainability. A significant financing mechanism is, therefore, vital to support sustainability. A variety of funding sources should be exploited, bearing in mind that funds can come from, among others:

- ▶ governments
- ▶ businesses
- ▶ private organisations
- ▶ financial institutions
- ▶ technology companies and educational institutions

Different parties provide different resources, including, but not limited to, human capital, knowledge, equipment, technology and finance.



Mentoring, Evaluation, Capitalisation

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process is designed to follow up with the agri-enterprises six months to one year after the programme to assess the results and impact of the programme, using the baseline profiling for comparison. Ideally, it is carried out by the steering committee, with possible support from external resource persons. How did the agripreneurs benefit from the programme? What evidence is there of impact? What could have been done better? M&E includes the following activities:

- ▶ Developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools.
- ▶ Gathering information from participants (e.g. through remote telephone exchanges) on the evolution of the mentoring relationships (effectiveness of the mentoring meetings, level of satisfaction of participants, possible readjustments for the success of the mentoring relationships, etc.).
- ▶ Evaluating the types of support put in place to ensure programme success (mentorship guidelines, promotion of the programme, mobilisation of necessary resources, advocacy, lobbying and communication, etc.).
- ▶ Conducting field visits for the evaluation of mentoring relationships.
- ▶ Holding workshops to share programme experiences.



Case Studies

Each of the case studies below is set out as follows:



Description

This section outlines the scope, nature and beneficiaries of the mentorship programme.



Model and Key Steps

This section describes the activities that need to be done in order to implement the programme successfully. These steps illustrate some of the Key Principles for effective mentorship.



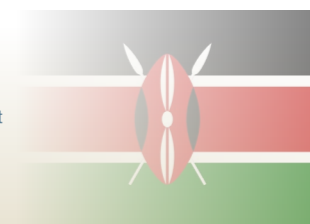
Programme Results and Sustainability

This section describes programme outputs (such as numbers of mentees who completed the programme) and some of the qualitative impacts noted (such as behavioural changes). It also gives one or two examples of how sustainable change has been achieved by the programme.



KENYA

What we did here and how we did it



Description

In Kenya, the mentorship programme reached 16 individual women agripreneurs with three mentors. The 16 women agripreneurs come from 11 different counties: Murang'a (2), Embu (1), Nyeri (1), Nakuru (2), Nandi (1), Eldoret (2), Coast (3), Western (1), Machakos (1), Kiambu (1) and Kajiado (1). They work in enterprises or value chains such as fresh milk, yoghurt, poultry, honey, dairy products, strawberries, fish, vegetables, herbs, flowers, mushrooms, beans and consulting services. Beneficiaries were selected on the basis of well-defined selection criteria after presenting their enterprises to a committee of three experts.

The training programme was designed in response to training and capacity-building needs shared by the mentees, supplemented by the analyses of the ATVET4W project expert during her visits to the various beneficiary enterprises. Training covered technical aspects, administrative and financial management, food safety, hygiene, communication and presentation techniques. On the basis of training needs, three mentors were selected to work with the beneficiaries and help them solve some of their problems. The 16 mentees were grouped into three groups of five to seven women per region (Centre, West and Coast). Each of the three regions had a mentor. A training session coupled with the mentor-mentee pairing activity was organised, during which the roles and responsibilities of each of the players were discussed. Commitments were signed to launch the effective start of the programme.

The mentors have monthly working sessions with the beneficiaries. The visits are either physical or virtual.





A follow-up and evaluation session was organised at the end of the programme. Using a simple questionnaire, mentees were asked to evaluate the usefulness of the programme, the progress made both at the personal and business levels, and areas for improvement in the programme as a whole. In addition, an experience-sharing and reflection session was organised with the beneficiaries and the mentors, during which all the programme's activities were reviewed in order to capitalise on the lessons learned. Perspectives were proposed for the continuation of the pilot phase of the mentoring programme.



A mentor is truly vital for any business, but particularly for women as most of the time we are the mother/dad/worker and a business woman all in one. Hence, having that one person that can nudge you ahead is important. My mentor encouraged me even when I thought of giving up due to various challenges. My mentor was there to hear and share my lows and highs.



Beatrice Kalya

Poultry farmer, Naivasha, Nakuru county



Model and Key Steps

The following approaches informed the model.

Select the target group

- ✓ Have a pre-determined target number, but include a slightly bigger number during the early stages so that you have backup participants should any of them fall off the programme.
- ✓ Advertise for potential mentees to encourage motivated mentees through competitive selection, and to avoid friends being proposed.
- ✓ Develop good selection criteria to reach the right mentees; this is critical as it determines the success or failure of the programme.



Get buy-in

- ✓ Present and describe the programme so that the actors buy into its objectives and benefits, and you can then move on together with a common understanding.

Work with beneficiaries to define what is relevant

- ✓ Ask the mentees to identify their bottlenecks/challenges and possible solutions so that you are part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Profile the actors

- ✓ Profiling can ascertain the currently documented status of the agribusinesses.
- ✓ Provide a baseline to be used in monitoring and evaluation to measure change.
- ✓ Through first-hand observation and interaction with the potential mentees, profiling helps you understand who you are dealing with.

Select the mentors and define the mentorship style

- ✓ A set of selection criteria for mentors is key. Ineffective mentors can cause the programme to fail.
- ✓ Plan the training programme with the mentor and mentees.

Plan the training with the mentor and the mentees

Organise the logistics

- ✓ Define contact hours per mentee, location, distances between them, frequency (number of sessions per month) and report writing time.



Pairing agri-business women with suitable partners is key in unlocking the potential of their businesses. With competent mentors, there is flow of new insights and ideas which are valuable in addressing some of the challenges that women experience in their businesses. The mentorship programme was an eye and mind opener for me. It has opened opportunities in terms of networks, linkages, knowledge and skills and I feel empowered to pass the skills learnt to other women and the agriculture community at large. The most remarkable thing that I have gained from the ATVET women project is business planning skills and life/soft skills that are applicable not only in my business but also in life in general. I learnt about team work and conflict management as well as networking with others. I also learnt from the ideas and businesses of other mentees. My business now has a business plan that is a roadmap highlighting the milestones that I would want to go through. My communication skills have improved which have enabled me to market my product better. I have also started keeping updated records of the business. There was a WhatsApp group for the mentees and mentor where we regularly communicated and shared information. We have also communicated through texts, calls and emails.



Mary Karigu

Nutritive pulses farmer, Muranga county



Programme Results and Sustainability

- ▶ Mentees were connected to each other and to the mentors, and each of these individuals also brought in their networks. This has created a huge knowledge resource which can be tapped into and expanded to help their businesses going forward.
- ▶ Beneficiaries started a WhatsApp group that is active beyond the programme. Useful information is shared, including posting opportunities whenever they come up – to seminars, workshops, business fairs, funding opportunities, learning excursions, trips, etc.



- ▶ Mentees and mentors gained new knowledge and skills and grew in their attitudes and mindsets; this will enable them to make wise and informed decisions for the betterment of themselves as individuals, and to grow their businesses.
- ▶ From our successful USP mentorship programme, we can easily provide guidance to upcoming mentorship programmes, sharing our experiences and lessons learned. The mentees and mentors can add value to related programmes, and would sign up to such programmes in future.
- ▶ Mentors and mentees learned how to conceptualise and implement mentorship programmes. They will be able to repeat and scale up the approach.
- ▶ The women agripreneurs had a plan to form a strong business network or hub that would be a membership organisation.
- ▶ Some business-to-business links and deals were initiated to go forward beyond the programme.

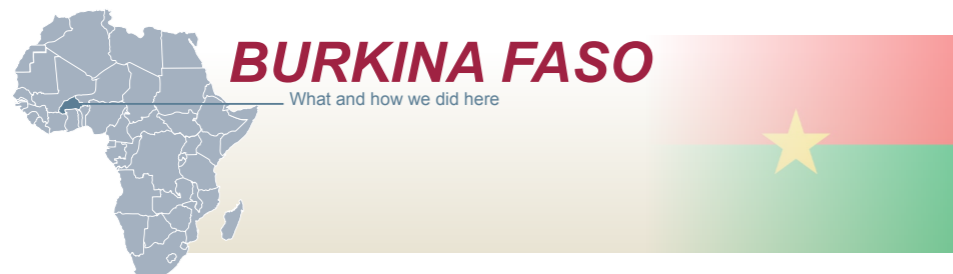


Mentorship is an interesting approach to business and especially for women. Women naturally like to share stories and experiences. To me, mentorship allows for guided continuous learning and improvement of a business. I have been exposed to business ideas and acumen. As an individual, I have gained confidence in interacting with other people, presentation skills, improved in my public relations. I am able to relate better with competitors as well as business leaders in my field without feeling intimidated. I have been empowered to appreciate what I have and what I can do for myself as a young woman. I have also gained skills from the trainings and used it to improve my business.



Jackline Sawe

Horticulture producer, Kajiado county



Description

In Burkina Faso, the mentoring programme reached 61 women (20 mentors and 41 mentees). The mentorship programme was designed for women members of seven women's organisations that are partners in the ATVET4W project. These seven women's organisations are essentially cooperative societies that facilitate socio-professional insertion and economic empowerment through the processing of several agricultural products (rice, sesame, cassava, cashew nuts, etc.).

The programme was implemented by two women's organisations: Union Départementale des Etuveuses de Riz de Douna (UDERD) and the Coopérative pour la Transformation des Produits Agricoles/Wend Kuuni (CTPA/WK). These two organisations are partners of the ATVET4W project.

Burkina Faso's mentorship programme was designed to meet the training and supervision needs of the targeted women in order to improve their income. Within the targeted organisations, the programme aims to prepare the next generation of women agripreneurs, strengthen the cohesion of the group, improve the productivity of the members and build up the entrepreneurial capacities and leadership of the members.

The programme has been implemented by two partner organizations (Union Départementale des Etuveuses de Riz de Douna and the Coopérative pour la Transformation des Produits Agricoles/Wend Kuuni).



Here in Nabadogo, mentoring has broken down some barriers. Before, there were two groups: Protestant women on one side and Muslim women on the other. Now they [women] are together. Muslim husbands who were reluctant to let their wives out to participate in activities are no longer [concerned]. We are grateful to GIZ for this program that strengthens the Cooperative.



Florence Bassono
Mentor, CTPA coordinator



I've learned a lot and things have changed a lot at my level. With training and my mentor's insights, I have learned to listen to others. I now take the time to listen to my children. I communicate better with my husband.



Awa Soura
Mentee, Douna





A mentor is expected to:

Be a leader or a dynamic member of the organisation
(member of the board or a commission or a branch of activity)

Have key skills for the organisation or have followed
specific training courses that deserve to be shared with others
(e.g. food processing techniques, women's rights, access to land, access to financing, etc.)

Be a model of success, humble, patient, sociable and approachable, available, passionate
about investing in the development of others (especially young people)

Be motivated by the preparation or development of the next generation
of employees at the organisational level

Be open to learning and innovation
(willing to take training courses, to experiment with new techniques, approaches, etc.)

Have good communication skills, a great capacity for active listening, and a sense of humour

Be available and have time to volunteer for others

Have a mobile phone and be reachable



A mentee is expected to:

Be young (under 35 years of age)

Be a new member of the organisation
(e.g. membership of 3 years or less)

Be in a transition phase
(e.g. starting a new activity, entering a new stage of life)

Be open, willing to learn, proactive, confident and optimistic
(e.g. believe in one's potential)

Be available and punctual

Have a mobile phone and be reachable





Mentoring is really something that benefits women. Women used to be soft [passive, not very dynamic]. With the meetings and other events, there is a strong sense of cohesion. There is no more secrecy, no more mistrust ... We feel like parents. ... The system has allowed the mentees to get closer and to develop strong friendships. They are more open to learning. They want to learn more. Before, at the end of the meetings, everyone would disperse. Now, after the meetings, there are small groups to exchange experiences and advice. I really liked that effect of mentoring too.



Laeticia Meda

Mentor, Manager UDERD



Programme Results and Sustainability

- ▶ Two women's organisations which process rice, cassava and sesame (UDERD and CTPA/WK) have been strengthened to set up internal mentoring programmes.
- ▶ About 1000 women processors of cassava, rice, sesame and cashew nuts have been sensitised on mentoring through the programme development process.
- ▶ 61 women (30 members of UDERD and 31 members of CTPA/WK) were trained for the implementation of the first cycle of the mentoring programme.
- ▶ 41 dyads (mentor/mentee pairs) were trained for the first cycle of the programme, with 41 mentees (20 at UDERD level and 21 at CTPA/WK level) and 20 mentors (10 per organisation).
- ▶ Through awareness-raising, training, support and guidance for organisations, their members will be able to take ownership of the mentoring programme, and involve other organisations in sharing mentoring experiences.
- ▶ Through the use of a participatory approach and training in local languages (90% of participants are rural and illiterate women), mentors and mentees will be able to assimilate and use new knowledge better. Translation of the tools and messages into local languages (Mooré and Dioula) will also support sustainability.



- ▶ Knowledge has increased through mentoring around 'know-how' and 'knowing how-to-be' objectives (such as processing and marketing of rice, cassava and sesame, knowledge of the union, leadership strengthening, public speaking, facilitating meetings, etc.).
- ▶ Funding structures and public technical support services have been involved in the awareness workshops.
- ▶ Free coaching was offered by mentors to mentees.
- ▶ Consideration of geographic proximity in the matching of mentors and mentees minimised distances and, therefore, costs.
- ▶ A simplified and streamlined monitoring system (telephone interviews for follow-up, field visits only when necessary, etc.) was developed.
- ▶ Seventeen of the forty-one mentors have developed the skills and self-confidence to mentor other women.
- ▶ The programme steering committee, made up of the heads of each organisation, carried out the main task of leading and monitoring the implementation of the programme and are, therefore, able to mobilise the resources needed to continue and scale up the programme.
- ▶ The organisation of a review and experience-sharing workshop will also serve as an opportunity for advocacy in favour of the programme.



Thanks to the mentoring, I bought a motorcycle. With the advice of my mentor in terms of managing my income, I was able to save 120,000 FCFA which I supplemented with credit from the organisation...to buy a motorcycle to distribute the attiéké within a larger radius.



Jocelline Kando

Mentee CTPA, Ouagadougou



Lessons Learned



- ✓ The successful implementation of a mentoring programme for organisations of women processors of 'small-scale' agricultural products in the West African context is possible in both rural and urban areas. However, this requires substantial resources for awareness-raising, preparation and support for the actors concerned.
- ✓ The organisations best suited to develop or deliver a mentoring programme are well-structured organisations with strong, legitimate and respected leadership, a shared vision (or an authentic joint project), a technical staff, however few, and operational and financial capacity to provide relevant and satisfactory services to their members.
- ✓ It is essential to avoid imposing mentors on mentees, and vice versa. In this respect, the coupling of the matching process to the training of participants is a good practice for the launch of mentoring relationships.
- ✓ It is important to train mentors and mentees together: this allows participants to better understand their roles as mentors and mentees in the mentoring relationship, thus preparing today's mentees to become accomplished mentors in the future.



There's a lot to be said, but I'll say the gist. I am now in control of my work. I know how to get good quality rice, how to look for the market and how to get along with the buyer. So I was able to sell 400 kilograms of rice. I can talk now without getting angry or embarrassed.



Fatimata Hie
Mentee, Douna



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