

# Levelling the field

SUPPORTING AFRICA'S WOMEN FARMERS

In sub-Saharan Africa, the hand that rocks the cradle also tills the field.

Women are the engine of agriculture, working on small-scale farms that support more than three-quarters of the continent's people.

Women **till** the soil, **plant** the crops, **weed** the fields, **harvest** the produce, **transport** the goods and **prepare** the food.

But although Africa's women carry out up to 70% of the manual labour on small-farms, they receive only a fraction of the available support.

They are **denied access** to land, training, seed, knowledge and markets. As a result, yields for women farmers are 20–30% lower than men.

In many African communities, malnourishment amongst women is substantially higher than amongst men. In many societies “food discrimination” means that women and girls eat last, and least, as tradition dictates that they receive the food remaining after the male family members have eaten.

“**I am ...**” is an exhibition that illustrates the importance, and positive benefits of supporting Africa's women farmers.

It seeks to highlight the issues, and illustrate what is being done to level the field for Africa's women farmers.

For more information visit:  
[www.selfhelpafrica.org](http://www.selfhelpafrica.org)

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Self Help Africa



I am...

a daughter

**15-year-old Munira Hairdein lives on a small farm in southern Ethiopia.**

“I am very fortunate, because the income that my parents earn allows them to send me to school.”

Munira’s father has doubled his income since he received better quality seed and training from Gorta-Self Help Africa, and started growing wheat, beans and other crops alongside his traditional ‘teff’ cereal crop.

**In Ethiopia, just 10% of girls attend second-level school.**



A woman with a yellow patterned headwrap and a matching yellow patterned dress is holding a large bowl filled with rice. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a dirt path.

I am...

# a business woman

**Sanwogou Lalle is a member of a processing group in Tonte village, Northern Togo.**

“We are stronger because we work together,” she says.

Support to this group has allowed 100 local women to increase their income from the production, processing and sale of rice.

**Most African women farmers don't get paid for their work, including weeding, planting and harvesting crops. Creating producer groups and sourcing markets enables them to earn an income.**



I am...

a hard  
worker

**19-year-old Betty is a member of a beekeeping group in Bohopa village, Central Uganda.**

“I’ve been funding my own education since I began producing and selling honey,” she says.

Betty is amongst 40 villagers who have been supported with this enterprise. She will be the first generation of girls in her family to finish school.

**In many African countries the average age of farmers is 60. Creating opportunities for rural youth is vital to the sustainability of farming.**





I am...

a farmer



**Foster lives in Malela, a remote village in Zambia. She supports her five children and 19 grandchildren.**

“Villagers are now working in groups, and we have access to new crops like maize, groundnuts and beans.”

Foster received training and high quality seeds, and by bulking her crops as a member of a village farmers’ group she hopes to source new markets for her produce.

**Women produce up to 70% of the food grown on small farms in Sub-Saharan Africa.**



A photograph of two women standing in a field of green plants, likely cassava. The woman on the left is wearing a green and white beanie and a dark jacket, smiling broadly. The woman on the right is wearing a colorful patterned headscarf with a yellow tie and a white long-sleeved shirt, also smiling. The background is a dense field of green foliage.

I am...

a mother

**Like mothers everywhere, Suzanna Omwango wants the best for her children.**

“I want them to have opportunities that I didn’t have when I was young,” she says.

52-year-old Suzanna is being supported with the production of improved variety cassava and other crops on her small farm in Kamkuyu village in western Kenya. Her daughter Naomi is attending High School.

**When women have control over family income, they invest up to 90% in the household, including family diet, medical costs and school fees.**



A woman with short dark hair, wearing a bright red t-shirt, stands in a field of tall green plants. She is holding two chickens: a brown rooster with a large red comb on the left and a smaller brown hen on the right. The background is filled with the green stalks of the plants, creating a textured, natural setting.

I am...

a producer

**38-year-old Nancy Wanjiku rears poultry to earn an income and improve her family's diet.**

"This opportunity has truly jump-started my life," she says.

Trained in poultry keeping, she is now breeding and selling full grown chickens. The food that her family has to eat has improved, and she has renovated her house.

**Women represent more than 50% of the agricultural labour force in many sub-Saharan countries.**



I am...

# embracing change

**Malidadi Chilonga grows rice on her land in a remote part of northern Malawi.**

“I used to grow mainly maize, but now I also grow rice,” she says.

Rural farmers are being supported with the production of improved variety rice and alternate crops in a region that has been badly affected by climate change.

**The introduction of alternate crop varieties enable rural households to diversify their production, increase income and reduce the impact of climate change on their lives.**



I am...

the future

**Ayisha Ahmedin comes from Berissa Village, Ethiopia. Her father joined a seed producer cooperative a few years ago.**

“I eat more different vegetables than before. I also recently started going to school.”

Her father has received training and now has access to markets where he can sell his produce at a fair price.

**In Ethiopia, most girls leave school before grade five, mainly because of the cost of school books, uniforms and clothing.**



I am...



an innovator

**For 50-year-old Rose Mutai, cooking over an open fire is a thing of the past.**

“Since I introduced biogas to my home I haven’t needed to burn firewood. It is much cleaner,” she says.

A small-scale dairy farmer in Kenya, Rose participated in a project encouraging households to capture cooking gas from bio-slurry collected from their animals.

**Alternate sources of energy are vital to efforts to reduce fuel-wood consumption, and diminish the devastating effect this has on the environment.**





I am...

# a provider

**Ugandan farmer Fatuma Nambiro, 33, provides for her four young children. She is the secretary of her community farmers' group.**

“In the first season alone, I yielded 180kg of beans from the 20kg bag I had received,” she says.

Provided with training and seedlings, she used part of her production to feed her family and was able to sell the surplus.

**If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase their yields by up to 30%.**