

SUCCESS STORY 3 Alleviating Poverty and Improving Livelihoods through Indigenous Poultry Farming

Godfrey is most thankful to RIU for opening his eyes to the great potential that lies in the indigenous poultry farming. He also attributes his successful entry into the business to on-site practical training by RIU in modern poultry management, close extension support by the project, provision of credit in form of input, and availability of a reliable market for local chickens through the contract arrangement with KukuDeal. The project also linked poultry producers with input suppliers to promote access to essential inputs.

Bi Maimuna's and Godfrey's stories represent several untold stories of over 3,500 farmers in the RIU project

area, whose lives have been transformed through commercial production of indigenous chickens. In less than a year of implementing the project, local chickens' production had increased from an average of 5-10 chickens per farmer to 100-300 chickens each. The number of production cycles also increased from only 1 in 12-18 months to 3 in 12 months, enabling farmers to earn more frequently from the business. As clearly demonstrated by Bi Maimuna's and Godfrey's stories, increased indigenous poultry production can lead to increased household income, reduced poverty and improved livelihood for the poultry-keeping households.



Farmers in Rufiji district setting up their chicken shed prior to receiving their first batch of indigenous day old chicks



The livelihood of over 3,500 rural poultry producers in RIU project area has been significantly improved through indigenous poultry farming by empowering farmers to increase production scales from an average of 5-10 chickens each to 100-300 per farmer, as well as frequency of production from only 1 in 12-18 months to 3 in 12 months.

"I tell other women I meet either individually or in groups to look at how indigenous poultry farming has changed my life. They are truly inspired considering that in our culture men are known to be the sole breadwinners for their families", Bi Mainuna.

Bi Maimuna Sefu Mkongea, a 59-year old poultry farmer in Rufiji District cannot be a happier woman, having opened a bank account for the first time in her lifetime using money earned from production of indigenous chickens. She is one of the beneficiaries of the Indigenous Poultry Commercialisation Project implemented by Research Into Use (RIU) programme in Pwani, Dodoma, Singida and Morogoro regions, with an objective of transforming the rural poultry subsector into a viable commercial enterprise.



Provision of interest-free credit in terms of inputs motivated farmers to invest in commercial production of local chickens.

Bi Maimuna first learned about the project through a meeting organised by RIU in Rufiji District to map stakeholders in the indigenous poultry industry. She learnt about the project in detail during the first stakeholder meeting where RIU shared with farmers and other stakeholders its plans to commercialise production of local chickens. She listened attentively as the RIU project team shared the commercialisation dream. Her gut feelings told her she could be part of the team to turn the dream into a reality. She made a decision to sign up for the project. The project team asked her to ready herself up for the commercial take-off by building an appropriate shelter for the chickens she was about to start keeping. She was given guidelines on how to build the structure using locally available materials.

As soon as the shelter was ready, Bi Maimuna received from RIU a whole box of 100 day old chicks together

with two feeders and drinkers, poultry-keeping guide book, laminated vaccine calendar, an exercise book for record-keeping, charts showing types of records to be kept, and a coupon to enable her access start-up feeds, vaccines and essential medicines, as subsidies enough for one month. It was a moment of great joy to the old lady but one laced with anxiety and some degree of fear. Bi Maimuna had never raised such a large number of chickens before, and here she was with 100 day old chicks whose survival depended on her. However, her hopes were renewed and fears diminished upon realising that the programme had assigned a household poultry advisor to stay with her in her home for not less than thirty days, guiding her step by step on how to take care of the birds.

As the poultry household advisor left her village for another location, Bi Maimuna, like other poultry farmers in her village, was linked to the existing

government extension services for continued technical support. Nonetheless, this transition was not without challenges, as the government extension services were not readily available and so was the case with input supplies. Agribusiness suppliers were yet to feel the impact of the growing poultry production scales and match it up with corresponding stock levels of input supplies. This made it difficult for some of the farmers to access feeds, vaccines and medicines in time, adversely affecting the survival of their chickens. Bi Maimuna was not spared the loss. However, the unfavourable outcome of the first round production did not dampen her hopes. Instead she remained alive to the commercialisation dream and signed up for another round of production, this time to produce 200 birds under a poultry contract farming model. Thanks to the empowering feedback meeting which was organised by RIU and where farmers aired their fears and RIU staff encouraged them to keep on learning and improving. During that feedback meeting Bi Maimuna learnt that being innovative involves experimenting, sometimes failing and keeping on learning. The RIU team also moved in with speed to address some of the systems challenges especially difficult access to quality feeds, vaccines, medicines as well as day old chicks, by mapping and strengthening the capacity of agribusiness suppliers to ensure reliable supply of quality poultry inputs. This intervention, combined with the experiences gained by the poultry producers in the first round of production and continued technical support by RIU, was the powerful force that threw Bi Maimuna's and several other farmers' indigenous poultry production efforts into a commercial realm.

In the second attempt to raise local chickens on a commercial scale, all her 200 birds survived to maturity. She sold 180 of the chickens to traders linked through KuKuDeal, a business initiative started by RIU to deal with overall systems challenges along the indigenous poultry value chain. She reserved the remaining 20 chickens for domestic consumption. Her gross income from the bulk sale was 900,000 Tanzanian Shillings. She took home 500,000 Tanzanian Shillings after deducting the loan for chicks, inputs and transportation. She used part of the money to renovate her house, expand the chicken shed and pay school fees for her children.

She banked the rest of the money in a personal savings account which she opened for the first time in her lifetime using the "poultry money". Bi Maimuna is determined to continue expanding her poultry flock size so that she can earn more from the business.

Her story has inspired several women in Rufiji District to join commercial production of local chickens, especially after she was elected by stakeholders as a champion to help mobilise other farmers in the district to start commercial production. *"I now tell other women I meet either individually or in groups to look at how indigenous poultry keeping has changed my life. They are truly inspired considering that in our culture men are known to be the sole breadwinners for their families"*, says the elated Bi Maimuna. It is a story of a strong-willed woman who has successfully cracked a layer which had for decades remained cemented in a myriad of systems challenges, poor poultry keeping practices, fear for failure and general lack of a commercial drive; to free her family from the yoke of poverty into improved livelihood.

In Kibaha District, Mr. Godfrey Anigulile Mwaipopo is all smiles. He joined the RIU project in 2009 and happily recounts his achievements. He started with 100 chickens in the first round of production support by the project then moved to 300 birds he raises in rotation under a contract arrangement with KukuDeal. Every four months he sells between 170 and 180 mature chickens to KukuDeal and other independent buyers, and earns 5,000 Tanzanian Shillings per chicken from all sales to KukuDeal. The retired police officer cannot imagine a more rewarding occupation after several years of service in uniform, and is determined to expand his poultry business further, for increased income.

The income earned from the poultry enterprise has enabled Godfrey to take two of his children to college after staying home for a long upon completing their ordinary level education. "One of my children has already completed a certificate course in community development and is now pursuing a diploma in the same field. My other son is studying in a private boarding school", narrates Godfrey. He is also able to provide for other domestic needs of his family and save some money for expanding the business.