



Speech of the Acting Director, AU-IBAR

**Writeshop to Prepare AWARFA-N Proposals in Response to the African
Development Bank Affirmative Finance Action for Women Africa (AFAWA)
Call for Proposals**

21st February 2022, Naivasha Kenya

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Livestock Policy, Agribusiness and Trade Credit and Finance Experts

AU-IBAR Colleagues

Distinguished Guests in your different capacities

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocol observed,

It gives me much pleasure to welcome you to this very important Writeshop to Prepare AWARFA-N Proposals in Response to the African Development Bank Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa Call for Proposals.

This is the first physical activity we are holding at the continental level for AWARFA-N since the start of the restrictive measures to contain covid-19 in early 2020.

It is wonderful to see each of you again. Where you have suffered personal loss of dear ones, we pray God Almighty continues to comfort you.

At this Writeshop let us continue to observe COVID-19 SOPs so that we stay healthy and safe.

Distinguished Guests,

The African Union theme for 2022 is ***“Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on The African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development”***

In launching this Theme, the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, remarked that the focus will be on the extremely important subject of nutrition. She highlighted that this is a subject matter since the days of the OAU! Progress has been made, but it is an enduring perennial challenge for the African continent.

She called on the need to use this opportunity to secure greater political commitment and investment in nutrition, to keep it high on the policy agenda.

Distinguished Guests,

This Theme brings the animal resources sector into great focus as critical to the achievement of the Malabo Declaration target of ending hunger in Africa by 2025 by improving nutritional status, and in particular, to the elimination of child undernutrition in Africa by bringing down stunting to 10% and underweight to 5% by 2025.

Typically African households in the rural and semi-urban areas allocate more than 40% of their budget to food, with the food economy in Africa valued at slightly over US\$443 billion by 2012 estimates.

Animal source foods are significant in Africa's food economy with four out of the top ten agricultural commodities by value being livestock products, and the demand for the relatively high priced animal products will continue to increase.

Yet Africa's consumption of animal-sourced foods is very low compared to other regions of the world even while evidence shows that even small amounts of animal-source foods provided to children regularly, such as an egg a day, can have very significant positive effects on physical and cognitive development, critical to allowing children, communities and countries reach their full potential.

Distinguished Guests,

Data from the Biennial Review Report, which every two years tracks the implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, showed that the intensity of spending in the livestock sector is strongly correlated to better nutrition outcomes.

Of the only four African countries that were on track in addressing stunting targets in 2020, two were ranked highest in the intensity of spending in the livestock sector. Therefore, countries should consider increasing their spending intensity on livestock to achieve the nutrition target of reduced stunting.

In rural areas, where most poor households live, consumption of animal source foods is largely dependent on their keeping livestock. Therefore keeping livestock, or providing new livestock assets to rural households, can and does have a positive impact on household nutritional outcomes.

Distinguished Guests,

This call also resonates very strongly with the core role that women have traditionally held in ensuring the nutrition of their households and communities.

Women reinvest up to 90% of their income in the education, health and nutrition of their families and community, compared to 40% for men – it means that investing in women businesses can transform societies

The African Development Bank provides some very interesting facts about women in business in Africa and the financing gap:

- Africa has the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs in the world: one out of four women in sub-Saharan Africa starts or manages a business
- An FAO Report shows that if women were to have access to the same level of resources as men, livestock productivity would go up by 10 to 30 percent and agricultural output would increase by up to 4 percent.

- However the financing gap for African women across business value chains is \$42 billion, with a gap of \$15.6 billion in the agriculture sector alone.

This means that women's role in the sector is not supported by policy and regulation, and they are seen as riskier – with no traditional collateral, making them unattractive for investment by financial institutions.

Distinguished Guests,

The focus theme for the African Union this year is a very important opportunity for Women to drive an agenda that will demand for greater support for women's role, beneficial and profitable participation in the animal resources sector which is critical to better nutrition outcomes.

In November 2019, the Global Gender Summit met in Kigali Rwanda under the theme 'Unpacking Constraints to Gender Equality'

Key world leaders stressed that Women empowerment is a right and indispensable if African countries are to achieve the desired socio-economic transformation. Africa cannot reach its full potential without meaningful participation and benefit to women, directly impact their families and communities.

Leaders also emphasized that women must own that space to be heard and visible, and to claim rights and attention of duty bearers if change is to happen.

Distinguished Guests,

We are here this week to respond to the call for proposals put out by the African Development Bank's Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa initiative to Transition Women Entrepreneurs. This is a flagship initiative that specifically focuses on increasing inclusive finance for women entrepreneurs on the continent.

It is designed to take a multi-dimensional approach to remove the constraints women entrepreneurs face in Africa by:

- (i) leveraging the Bank's financial traditional instruments (lines of credit, trade finance, and equity funds) and innovative de-risking mechanisms to lending to women SMEs
- (ii) strengthening the policy and regulatory environment to strengthen women SMEs ability to access financing,
- (iii) Strengthening enablers, like AWARFA-N, with sustainable programs, to assist women entrepreneurs in their growth.

This African Development Bank initiative recognizes that women are mostly locked in the informal economy, making them more vulnerable to crisis and shocks with low access to finance to expand their businesses and productivity. And with low data related to the informal sector, there is inadequate tailoring of financial products for women entrepreneurs in the informal sector.

Distinguished Guests

These are areas where AWARFA-N can work to bring change and therefore discussions with the African Development Bank indicated that this is a strong fit for AWARFA-N to apply for funding at continental, regional and country chapter level.

The deadline for submission is at the end of this week: and it calls for focused deliberations and development of the proposals.

You are keenly aware of the limited funding for AWARFA-N due to the impact covid-19 has had on Member State contributions. This has limited the number of countries that can participate in this Writeshop.

We trust that the continental and regional proposals, if successful can open doors to creating partnerships with African Development Bank and other donors and finance institutions for increased and sustainable funding for AWARFA-N.

Distinguished Guests,

I wish you a productive and successful week.

Please be reassured that AU-IBAR remains seized upon its mandate to support and elevate the meaningful participation of women in the animal resources sector, and will continue to support AWARFA-N across Africa.

Thank you for your kind attention.