

Transforming the Cashew Value Chain Through Mentorship and Shared Learning

Research-to-Practice: Mentorship and Mutual Learning

Dr. Olayinka Jayeola – Nigeria

For Dr. Olayinka Jayeola, a seasoned researcher in Nigeria's cashew sector, mentorship was rooted in transforming scientific knowledge into practical enterprise. Paired with her mentee, she explored innovative ways of translating cashew apple and kernel research into business opportunities.



Despite the challenges of remote engagement, she and her mentee used digital tools such as video calls, photos, and voice notes to simulate hands-on learning. This adaptive approach helped her mentee move from theoretical understanding to entrepreneurial thinking, particularly in cashew processing. For Dr. Jayeola, the most significant outcome was witnessing research “come alive” through enterprise creation, which deepened her commitment to bridging science and market application.

Community-Based Mentorship and Women's Economic Empowerment

Ajileye Felicia Taiwo – Nigeria



Ajileye Felicia Taiwo, an entrepreneur and trainer, brought her extensive experience in Good Agricultural Practices and financial literacy into the mentorship space.

Working closely with her mentee, she provided practical, hands-on guidance that supported real-world application, including improved farm practices and business thinking. The shared realities between mentor and mentee strengthened trust and engagement, making the learning process more responsive and impactful. While she faced occasional challenges related to distance and connectivity, she adapted by maintaining flexible communication channels. The experience strengthened her organizational skills and deepened her commitment to empowering women at the community level.

Mentorship as Mutual Learning and Leadership Growth-Ghana

Akua Konadu Antwi-Agyakwa

Akua Konadu Antwi-Agyakwa, a research scientist in Ghana's cashew sector, joined the CashewWomen Mentorship Initiative with the intention of guiding younger professionals while remaining open to learning from them. Paired with mentees Priscilla Obah-Lateo and Oladigbolu Yetunde Ololade, she quickly discovered that their curiosity and preparedness reinforced her belief that growth is driven by mindset. The mentorship, which unfolded through flexible and responsive exchanges, allowed real-time problem solving and reflection on practical sector challenges, even as some goals remained in progress.



For Akua, this experience reshaped her leadership approach, strengthening her active listening and empathy, and transforming her into a more intentional and supportive mentor to junior colleagues and national service personnel. She now views mentorship as an ongoing journey of mutual learning, where even experienced professionals are continuously shaped by those they guide.

Knowledge Exchange and Cross-Border Learning

Eunice Abosede Adeyemi – Nigeria



For Eunice Abosede Adeyemi, a researcher in Nigeria's cashew sector, mentorship was a platform for mutual learning rather than one directional teaching. Paired with her mentee, she engaged in dynamic exchanges that combined research insights with practical agricultural innovation. While she provided technical expertise, she also gained new knowledge, including environmentally friendly composting techniques and region-specific cashew by-product applications. This exchange expanded her perspective on sustainable practices and reinforced the value of cross-country collaboration in agricultural development.

Bridging Potential and Achievement through Structured Guidance

Adewoyin Oluyinka Benedicta – Nigeria

Adewoyin Oluyinka Benedicta, a trainer and facilitator, focused on transforming knowledge into tangible outcomes.

Her mentorship journey was marked by clear, measurable progress as her mentee advanced academically and established a cashew nursery business. She emphasized the transition from theory to practice, ensuring that technical knowledge translated into entrepreneurship and productivity. The experience also strengthened her facilitation and public speaking skills, enhancing her effectiveness as a trainer. She now sees mentorship as a bridge that connects potential with achievement in agribusiness.



Across all mentorship experiences, a common narrative emerges: mentorship within the Cashewomen Initiative is a dynamic, two-way process that fosters both professional and personal transformation. While mentees gained skills, confidence, and entrepreneurial pathways, mentors equally evolved in leadership, adaptability, and sectoral understanding.

Despite differences in geography, expertise, and engagement style, all mentors demonstrated that meaningful development in the cashew value chain is driven by collaboration, flexibility, and shared learning. Collectively, these stories affirm that mentorship is not only building individual capacity but also strengthening the broader ecosystem of women-led agribusiness in Africa.

Adaptive Leadership and Practical Agribusiness Mentorship

Noellen Barber – Sierra Leone

As an experienced processor, Noellen Barber focused on equipping her mentee with practical skills to succeed in cashew processing and agribusiness. Through monthly sessions, she discovered the importance of adaptive mentorship, tailoring her guidance to the mentee's individual learning style and aspirations. This flexibility strengthened both engagement and outcomes, enabling her mentee to better understand market positioning and business development in the cashew sector. The experience also refined Noellen's own leadership approach, making her more patient, intentional, and strategic in guiding others. She now views mentorship as an ongoing responsibility that strengthens both individual careers and the wider industry.

