



# A LEADER IN THE MAKING

*Fatou Ndong*

*If a woman can dream of achieving great heights, then there's nothing that can stop her. But the problem lies in the fact that she fails to see her worth, and neglects her dream and the magnanimous possibilities they promise.*

She has a solid base of education coupled with experience Regional President of cashew players in the Fatick region, the 52 year old Senegalese, Mrs Fatou NDONG is a wonderful lady, with a practical approach to life. Rich with over a decade's worth of experience, and a Bachelor's Degree as well as a vocational training in Marketing and Business Management, she has greatly benefitted the cashew industry.

### ***A frontrunner from the beginning***

Even before she could start work at this enterprise, she has been the leader and President as a partner in the International Relief and Development (IRD), Integrated Development Program of Fatick (PDIF), ENDAPF. As for the cashew business in specific, she was in touch with a number of women who helped and encouraged her to participate in it.

Thus with the aim to earn a livelihood and to contribute to the vast sector, she took her first step in this promising venture. While she reminisces the times when her grandmother was involved in this trade, as she states, it was done on a small scale and was quite different to what it is now.

### ***Managing crucial aspects***

Although she did not have any prior trainings, gathering the courage and finding much needed information, she decided to step in the field. Now, the enterprise she works in has about ten women workers and Mrs Fatou's primary job is concerned with the purchase of RCN and kernel, marketing as well as negotiation with kernel buyers. She also engages in financial transaction with banks.

### ***A motivator***

Apart from all this, she takes up the job to encourage



women in the workforce, helps reinforce their capacity and ensures that they stay motivated all the time. She hopes to instill in them their worth, and let them know that no matter what the world says, they are capable of so much more.

She strongly believes that if they truly wish, women can achieve great heights. It is important for them to believe in themselves. Alongside this, she confesses it is equally essential for them to willingly take up responsibilities. She does not deny that social environment and the related challenges pose hindrance, but she knows for sure that with a clear focus and determination, one can rise above all this.

### ***She's a known face in the sector***

When asked to comment on working alongside males, she says since her team is composed solely of women, she isn't in the place to pass an opinion. But considering the larger picture, she does feel that compared to men, women are denied rewards. That aside, when it comes to receiving recognition in the generally male dominated sector, she is glad to be acknowledged by all the active actors in the cashew processing business.

When asked, she states that proper funding and skills will help women deliver better results. Similarly, adequate technical and financial partners will help to bring about an all-round improvement.

### ***Women power***

Speaking of the availability of labor, she comments that labor is available, the workers are extremely committed and enjoy doing their work. She takes pride in the fact that their team is 100% feminine.

As for her enterprise, she says their attainable prices and the quality of products makes them unique. The members, together, form a united team of strong women who even help their husbands. Besides, their receipts are well managed by the enterprise's members.

### ***She's not one to compromise***

While she lends a helping hand at home, she is glad to have a supportive family that helps her all along. Her family is involved in the cashew business, particularly the children, and this is an added advantage.

She tries to balance her professional and personal life and her typical routine involves completing her household chores at in the morning followed by working at the office in the afternoon, to supervise the work being carried out.

She always tries to strike a balance by maintaining a difference between family and enterprise management, and never compromising on either one.

### ***Crossing all barriers***

As we know, challenges are bound to surface on the path to success. Similarly, she too has her set of hurdles ranging from the hunt to find financial and technical partners, equipment to raw material procurement. Despite them, she tries to find a middle path by renewing contracts and conducting business meetings. It's not always an easy task but at the end of the day, she manages to find profitable strategies to help deal with problems.

### ***Dreams within a reaching distance***

After all, since she sees herself as one of the women leaders in the field of cashew, she is all set to face any crossroads by keeping her cool. Speaking of her big goals she wishes to achieve in the years to come, she hopes to develop the cashew sector in her region, occupy the market in the sub-region.

Above all, she dreams to be identified as the cashew leader in her country and given her efforts, we're certain she isn't too far from accomplishing it!

