

From planning to success

For Mavis Nyawo and her community the Mombe yaAmai (Mother's Cow) project is more than just a development initiative. This is a gateway to empowerment, income and a lasting transformation.

The project launched in October 2024 and the Sajeni Women Dairy Business began with planning and training. The group received four in-calf heifers and one bull to start their dairy business, but they also did all the preparations in building fences and sheds.

The group have purchased protein feed, planted fodder crops, established rotational grazing areas and begun keeping records on feeding and animal responses.

Mavis reports that the project training has been going well, with both women and men attending and contributing ideas. *"This inclusivity is helping the project grow strong roots. When people feel part of something, they protect it."*

This project was planned using an approach called GALS (Gender Action Learning System). The group planned the practicalities of keeping dairy cows, and also thought about how responsibilities would be shared within households to allow the business to thrive.



Mavis Nyawo, Chairperson of the Sajeni Women Dairy Business feeding the dairy cows with protein blocks.

Mavis said, *"GALS is helping each family member to be responsible in every stage of our own household project and the group project as well".* She explains. *"We now sit down and plan together, and even the children are helping with watering the fodder and feeding the animals."*

What stands out in this story is not just the business success but the collective ownership. Through co-financing the cows, the group have invested themselves in the business from the beginning.

The business planning has allowed inclusive decision making and shared responsibility which has made this project more resilient and sustainable. Mavis said, *"We're not just waiting for help we are building and maintaining our own future".*

Now that the business is underway and the cows are thriving Mavis and the Sajeni Women Dairy Business are making preparations for the next stage. The group has started talks with local markets and boarding schools for milk supply contracts and plans are underway to form a co-operative as the business grows.

"This is just the beginning," Mavis says. *"The cows will bring us milk, but more importantly, they brought us power, unity, and a vision we will never let go of."*

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