

# A TRAILBLAZER FOR FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN THE CASHEW SECTOR

*Filomena Maiopue*

*Contributing to the cashew sector magnificently, Ms. Filomena Maiopue has made sure that everyone in this field gets a taste of success. In this write up, we celebrate and acknowledge her tremendous efforts!*

## ***As the director of INCAJU***

Until recently, Ms. Filomena Maiopue was the director of Instituto de Fomento do Caju (INCAJU), a government based cashew promotion institution responsible for the development and revitalization of the cashew sector in Mozambique. During her tenure as the director, she worked tirelessly and enthusiastically towards building a sustainable cashew industry, welcoming the various opportunities and challenges the cashew sector presented.

## ***Adapting well to the environment***

She began her career in the agricultural sector as a technician at the Cotton Institute of Mozambique (IAM). She was later transferred to INCAJU in 2001 and appointed as the head of the INCAJU Delegation in the northern region of the country. The region consists of the provinces with the highest production in the country and these are Nampula, Zambézia and Cabo Delgado. In 2005, she was nominated by the Minister of Agriculture as the National Director of INCAJU.



With the vast experience she had acquired from working with a team of technicians and producers, as well as in her position as a project coordinator for seven years, she adapted easily to the position. She was tasked with overseeing cashew-related work nationwide while working with the Ministry of Agriculture to develop policies and strategies for the cashew sector. She also collaborated with the Ministry to develop activities for and addressed pertinent issues concerning the cashew sector.

## ***A committed leader***

Throughout her work, Ms. Filomena has demonstrated exceptional leadership in various capacities. Her commitment to the industry has also been evident on several occasions. She led the promotion of the cashew nut production and processing industry in Mozambique for 11 years. Despite being confronted with difficulties as director, she managed to hold the organisation together with her unique leadership style.



### ***Keeping her head high amidst challenges***

Although reputed as a primary source of income for more than 1.4 million households in Mozambique, the cashew sector was faced with challenges such as lack of interest and the limited value attached to the cashew crop. She was committed to a paradigm shift in the sector. “A lot of mobilizing and advocacy should be done at all levels so that more families and producers would grow cashew,” she said.

### ***A strategized plan***

Her wish over the years is to contribute to the development of informal processing of cashew nuts which currently takes place in most parts of the country. This, she believes, could be achieved firstly through survey of domestic and informal processors in order to get relevant information on them. Based on data collected, training sessions should be organized on topics such as processing techniques and procedures, improving packaging and identifying markets for cashew products.

### ***Working for women and the youth***

Her biggest target groups have always been women and the youth. Through her efforts, a large number of the youth in Mozambique were encouraged to join the cashew sector as entrepreneurs. During the cashew festival which was held in September 2015, some of these young men and women set up stalls to sell products like cashew kernels, juices and alcohol.

### ***Need for motivating women and providing valuable trainings***

Ms. Filomena believes that talking about the benefits families have derived from cashew is an assured way of encouraging more women to become entrepreneurs or leaders in the cashew sector. She also proposes that training programmes be organized







in agro-business for women. In addition to this, small-scale funding for women, promotion of market access and linkage would encourage more women to become entrepreneurs in the sector. “Most of the workers in these factories are women, especially in the grading of the kernels. In most African countries, women are in the frontline developing the informal processing of cashew nuts and marketing them,” she said.

### ***Cashew sector has helped to better the lives of people***

Her contributions to the growing cashew sector in Mozambique are evidence of her good visionary leadership. “I feel happy working in this sector, because I can see that cashew nut production is increasing in the country and many families are improving their lives from the sale of raw cashew nuts and kernels, processed secondarily by the informal sector,” she commented.

### ***Recognized and appreciated***

Her excellent efforts and contributions to the cashew sector in Mozambique are recognized and appreciated by all. In acknowledgement and appreciation of her commendable contributions and exemplary service to the cashew industry, we’d like to congratulate Ms. Filomena Maiopue for her giant strides in Mozambique and wish her well in her new endeavors!

