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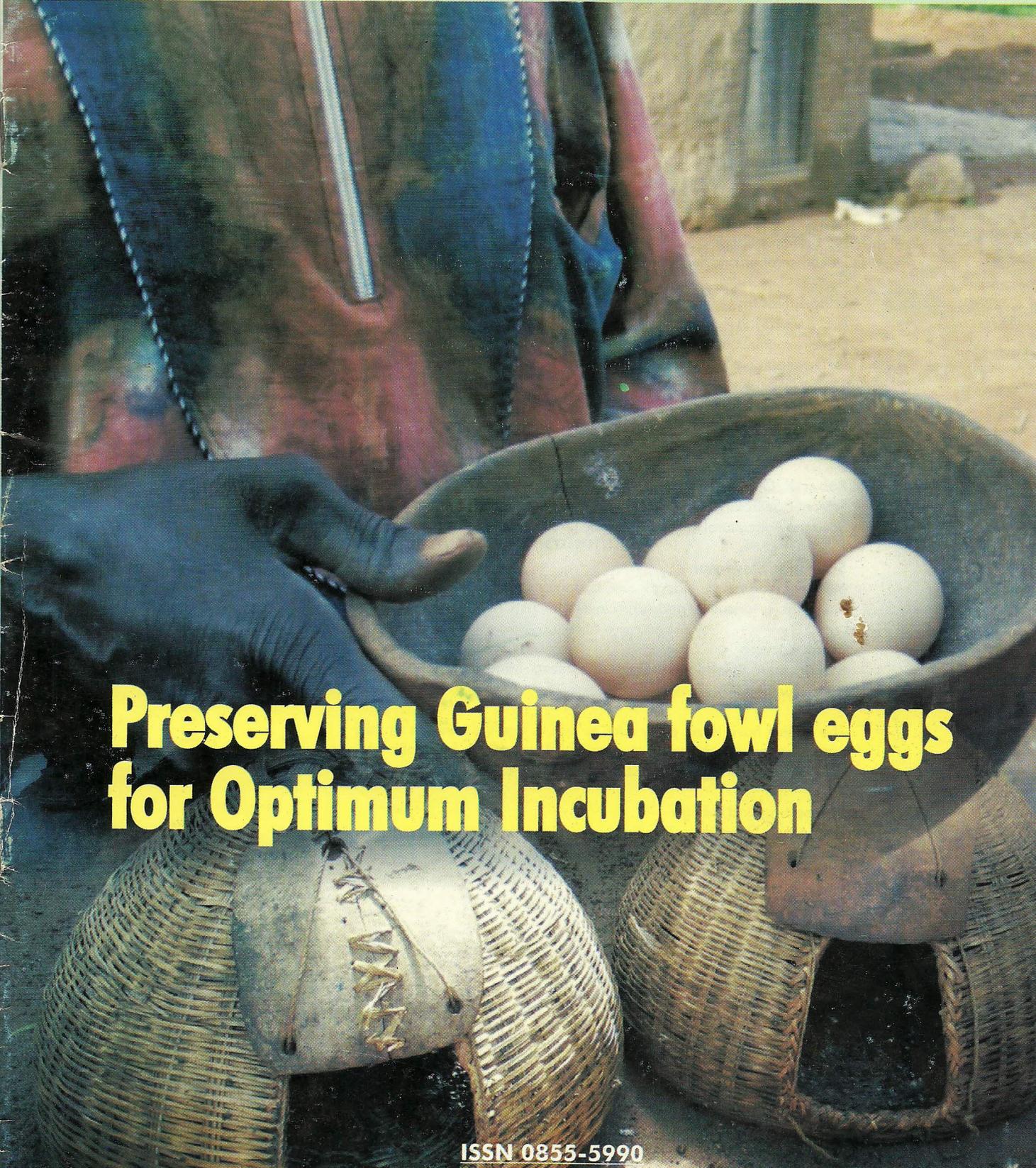


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for Optimum Incubation**

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Women in Livestock Production in the West Gonja District of the Northern Region

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Abstract

A study was carried out in the west Gonja District of the Northern Region from February, 2005-July 2005 to determine the role of women livestock production. A total of 70 women were randomly selected from 10 communities. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the women to gather the relevant data. A total of 20 men were also randomly sampled from the 10 communities to determine their perception about women in livestock production. Focus group discussion was used in obtaining information from the men. The results from the study revealed that women have numerous roles they play in livestock production. These include provision of feed, water, cleaning of animal structure and treating sick animals. Most women owned the animals they kept, particularly the small ruminants and poultry. The ownership of cattle was ascribed to the household head who is a man, implying that women are not permitted to keep cattle. Problems such as theft, finance, illiteracy, inadequate veterinary personnel were some of the problems hindering women in livestock production. It was realized from the study that most men had bad perception about women in livestock production. They claim that women who own livestock, particularly cattle, do not respect men.

Introduction

Many rural households keep livestock to sustain livelihood. Keeping livestock plays a major role as a safety net that enables households to get quick income to settle urgent financial needs such as buying food and farm inputs, settling hospital bills, paying school fees, expenses for funerals and marriages. Keeping of livestock by poor households serves cash buffer as well as a deterrent against inflation and therefore provide income stability for the farm households (Kyomo, 1998).

Most agricultural households operate livestock enterprises alongside crop enterprises. In such mixed farming systems, livestock provide manure to improve soil fertility and structure. The manure also serves as a source of fuel in rural homes. Keeping of livestock employs a relatively higher proportion of the rural population than the urban population. In many rural communities with poor access roads to market centres and other important places, particularly in the Northern Savanna Zone, animal-drawn carts sometimes provide transportation.

The production of livestock, particularly sheep, goats, and cattle is predominant in the three Northern Regions of Ghana (Upper East, Upper West, and Northern). The Northern sector accounts for about 67%, and the coastal plains about 30% of the livestock produced in Ghana with the rest distributed over the other parts of the country (Biotech Ghana, 2001).

In spite of the great potential of livestock production in Northern Ghana, the industry is typically a smallholder farmer activity. It attracts minimum investment in housing, feeding and health. This situation may be due to lack of education, lack of financial support and also livestock production not considered as a serious business. Herding, tethering and confinement are the three distinct management systems.

After independence, many agricultural projects have been laid down with explicit roles for livestock for economic development by various governments. Many of the financial support for livestock projects have been provided through annual national budgets. This is exemplified by activities designed as part of the Medium Term Agriculture Development Programme (MTADP, 1991) or (MTADP, 2000) and the Accelerated Agriculture Development Growth Strategy (AADGS, 2001-2007). A few Non-government organizations (NGOs) have also initiated projects since the late 1990s to support rural livelihoods through livestock keeping. The projects initiated by the NGOs covered vaccinations of rural chicken, supply of livestock to start an enterprise, in-service training for the staff of veterinary service and livestock keepers in feeding and housing of the livestock.

Women, as in other sectors of agricultural production, seem to play important roles in livestock production. They may be owners themselves or contribute labour to the family's livestock farm. They provide feed for the animals and are responsible for collecting water for the animals regardless of who the animals belong to. However the important roles which the women might have been playing in livestock production, factors such as social and cultural practices, traditions and customs seem to have prevented their equal participation as their male counterparts (Nuhu, 2004).

The study therefore seeks to determine the activities that make up the role of women in livestock production.

Specific objective:

- To determine the specific activities performed by women in livestock production
- To determine the problems faced by women in livestock production
- To determine the perception of men about women in livestock production.

Materials and methods

Study area

The West Gonja District of the Northern Region was chosen as the study area. It shares boundaries in the south with Kintampo District in the Brong Ahafo Region, Bole District in the west, West Manprusi District in the north and Tolon-Kumbungu and East Gonja Districts in the east.

Vegetation of the area

The natural vegetation of the West Gonja District is Guinea Savanna. The major trees found in the area include sheanut (*Vitellaria paradoxa*), Neem (*Azadiracta indica*), Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), Dawadawa (*Parkia biglibosa*), Acacia and a few ebony trees.

Data collection and analysis

A total of seventy (70) women from ten (10) communities were randomly selected. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to gather information relevant to the objective. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Twenty (20) men from the ten (10) communities were interviewed to determine their perception about women's role in livestock production.

The ten communities that were randomly selected were Canteen, Baribaga, Agric Extension, Dakpala Kuraa, Damongo Atteributo, Damongo Zongo, Damongo Langbunto No.1, Damongo Langbunto No.2, Mpaha, and Damongo Yakgumwura Kuraa.

Results and discussion

Background information

Table1: Age distribution of respondents

Age	No. Of Respondents	Percentage
11-20	1	1.4
21-30	9	12.9
31-40	11	15.7
41-50	36	51.4
51-60	10	14.3
60+	3	4.3
TOTAL	70	100

From table1, 70% of the women involved in livestock production are above 40 years. This finding agrees with the report by Abdulai (2001) who reported that women farmers in rural areas are predominantly old women. This

trend could be attributed to the rural-urban-migration of most of the youth to seek other jobs.

Table2: Marital status of respondents

Marital status	No of women	Percentage
Married	56	80
Widowhood	8	11
Single	4	6
Divorcee	2	3
total	70	100

Table 2 indicates that most of the women (80%) were married. The high percentage has a definite implication on the type and number of activities that can be performed by women in livestock production. A similar trend was reported by Abdulai (2001) in the Savelugu-Nantong District of the Northern Region.

Jiggins (1985) also observed that the multiplicity of women's role wives for that matter, affect the form of participation and type of activities they easily are able to take up.

Table3: Educational background of respondents

level	No. of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	41	58.6
Non-former	11	15.7
Secondary	9	12.9
Basic education	7	10
Post secondary	2	2.8
Tertiary	0	0
Total	70	100

Most women (58.6%) from table 3 fall within the illiterate group and generally it can be observed that the educational level was very low. This can affect the rate at which women farmers adopt and use new and improved farming technologies (Benning and Nabila, 1981).

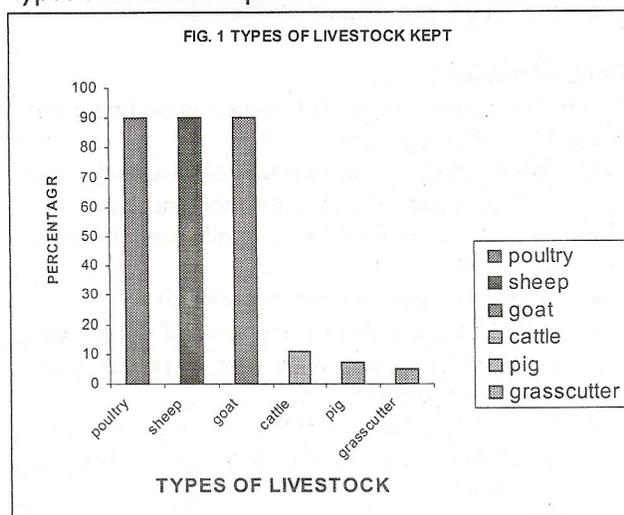
Operational information

Table 4: Major occupation of the respondents

Major occupation	No of respondents	Percentage
Crop farming	25	35.7
Trading	24	24.3
Food selling	6	8.6
Gari processing	6	8.6
Civil servants	4	5.7
Shea butter processing	3	4.2
Hair dressing	2	2.9
Livestock production alone	0	0
Total	70	100

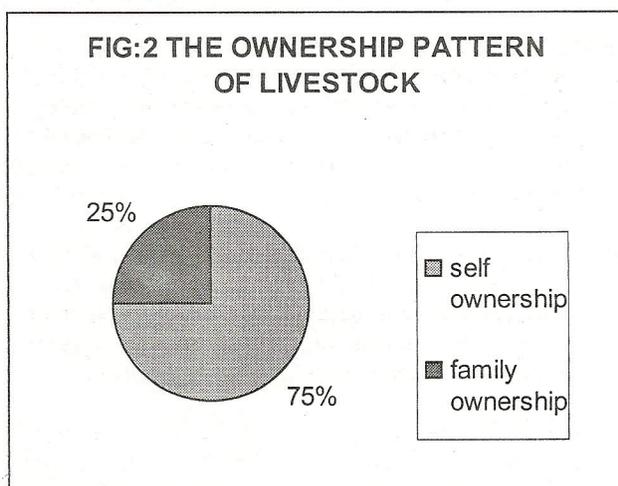
Livestock was not a major occupation for any of the respondents in the study area from table 4. Most of the women had livestock as a secondary occupation.

Types of livestock kept



Majority of the women (90%) kept poultry, sheep, and goat. All the livestock reared by the women were of the local breed. These according to the farmers are easy to manage. A few women kept cattle and it was realized that they were either not married or widows. Pigs were also reared on a small scale likewise grass cutter. The high percentage of women keeping small ruminants and poultry from the study agrees with Karbo, *et al* (1994) who reported that the ownership of small ruminants and poultry had gender or age limitation in the Northern Region. The low percentage of women keeping pigs also agrees with Tetebo (1992), who observed that pig production in most Muslims communities is very low as is the case of West Gonja.

Ownership pattern of livestock



Data in figure 2 shows that most of the women (75%) owned the livestock they kept. This is because of the high number of women keeping poultry and small ruminants. The 25% could be those keeping livestock that are gender restricted like cattle and therefore will ascribe ownership to the family head who is always a male.

Table5: Reasons for keeping livestock

Reasons	No of respondents	Percentage
Income	68	97
Employment	53	76
Source of food	48	69
Sources of manure	28	40
Social/cultural	2	3
Admiration	2	3

Income from table 5 was the major reason given by the women for keeping livestock. This implies that women see livestock as an income generating activity. This finding is consistent with that of Nuhu, (2004) in the Saboba-Chereponi District in the Northern Region.

Table6: Production activities of respondents

Activity	No of respondents	percentage
Direct production	66	94
Marketing	3	4
Processing	1	2
Total	70	100

From table 6, 94% of the women concentrated their activities in the direct production of livestock. A few women 4% and 2% were into the marketing and processing of livestock respectively.

Table7: Specific activities

Activities	No. of respondents	Percentage
Provision of water and feed	69	99
Cleaning of animal structure	67	96
Acquisition of animals	58	83
Treating of animals	3	4

The specific activities carried out by women in the livestock industry are indicated in table 7 above. Women supply water and feed, clean animal structure, treat animals when they are sick and also acquire animals. The findings on the supply of water agrees with the findings of Abu (1994) and Nuhu (2004) who reported that water for animals is supplied from household pots which women fill at least twice a day. The women also provide feed supplements from agro by-products and crop residue since they do most of the crop processing after harvest.

Table8: Problems faced by women

Problem	Percentage
Theft case	79
Disease and pest	63
Accident	40
Housing and feed	20
Financial	18
Inadequate Veterinary services	12
Education	11

Majority (79%) of the women from table 8 complained of theft as a major hindrance to their work. This could be attributed to the lack of appropriate housing facility for the animals. The women also mentioned problems such as disease and pest, accident, poor housing and feed, financial support, inadequate veterinary personnel and illiteracy. The theft was attributed by the women to the operation of illegal small scale miners (Galamsey operators) in some parts of the District.

Table 9: Suggestion by women as a way of solving the problem

Suggestion	No of respondents	percentage
Loan	69	99
Education	68	97
Provision of improved breeds	26	37
Availability of vet drugs and Technicians	17	24
Construct dams	4	5.7
Form cooperation	3	4.3
Provision of supplementary feed	3	4.3

Women were asked to suggest ways of solving the problems mentioned in table 8, this they mentioned and was recorded in the table above. Education and loan were observed to be the highest. This is an indication that women in the study area see education as very important. Women also requested for loans to improve their livestock production. This finding agrees with a report by Nuhu, (2004) who reported that women access to bank loan would help promote the roles they play in livestock production.

Perception of men about women in livestock production

A total of 20 men were interviewed to determine their perception about women in livestock production. All the men were married. The men said that women who own livestock especially cattle do not respect their husbands and also accuse them of witchcraft.

In addition the men perceived that when women keep livestock in their marital homes their stock grow up and capture that of the men in such a way that all the animals belonging to the men die leaving that of the women. This perception may be wrong since men by their nature are always busy and do not make time to take care of their animals resulting in high mortalities.

Conclusion

It was gathered from the study that women have various roles they play in the livestock sector. These include the provision of feed and water, cleaning of animal structure etc. Some women also own the animals they kept. Most of the women kept livestock as secondary job. The types of livestock reared included poultry (chicken, guinea fowl etc), sheep and goat, cattle, pig and grass cutter with the majority keeping poultry.

Very few women claimed ownership of the livestock kept with the majority owned by family.

Most men in the community had a bad perception about women who keep livestock particularly cattle.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that women should be given training in the following areas:

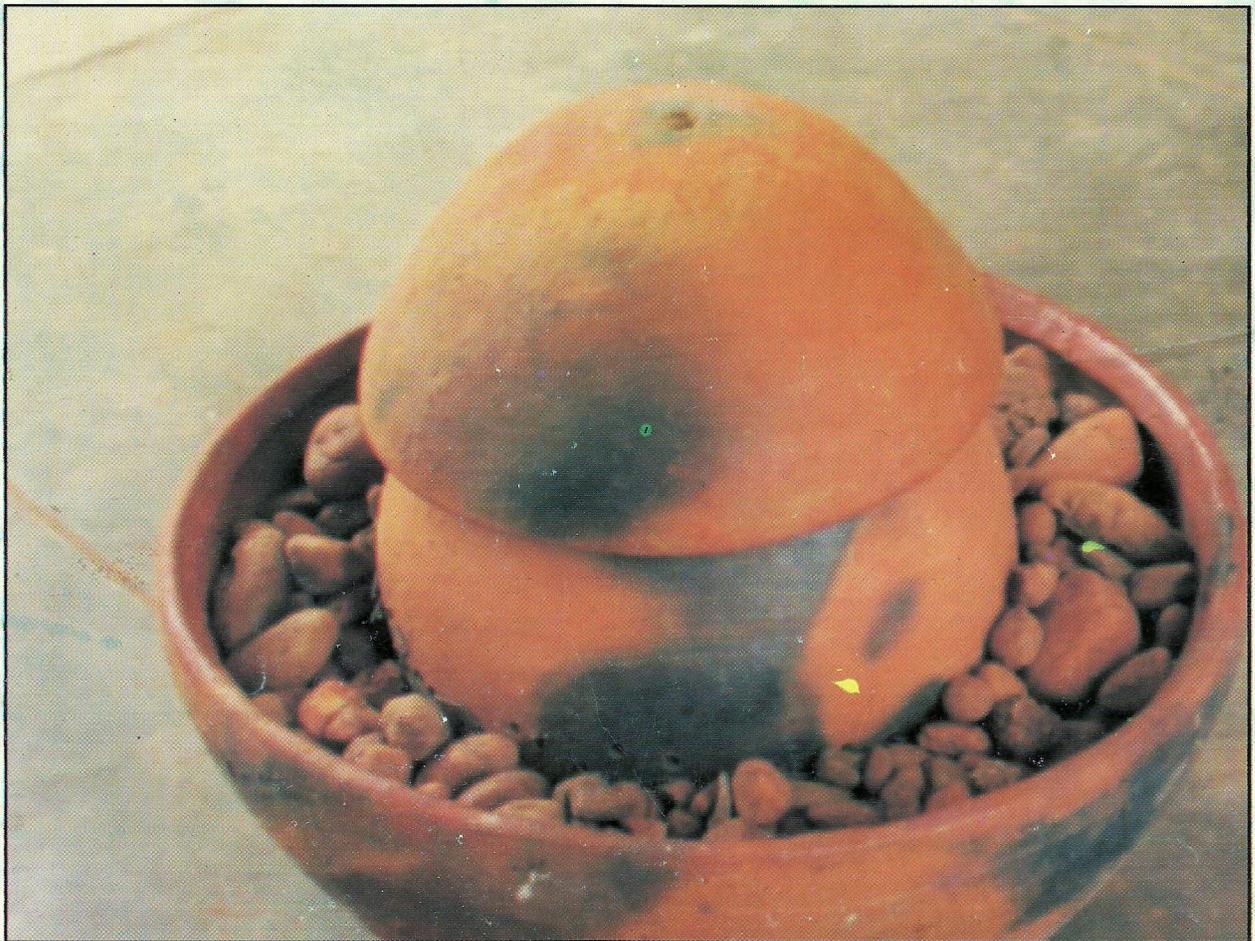
- Processing and marketing of livestock and livestock product to generate more income.
- Formulation of feed using locally available feed materials.
- Ethno-veterinary treatment of animals.
- Women should also be encouraged to form co-operatives in order to be able to secure loans from financial institutions
- Men should be educated to erase the bad perception they hold about women keeping livestock.

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These guinea fowl eggs and keets are inside the incubator which was used to hatch them



A specimen of an "awudu" heater