



Where I work Doreen Anene

Photographed for *Nature* by
Adam Wiseman.

Most livestock farmers in developing countries live in poverty. Women are often heavily disadvantaged because they don't have the same access to land, credit and training as men. Seeing these things while growing up in Zaria, Nigeria, led me to study agriculture and animal sciences.

Poultry can be raised quickly on little land. If we empower women and increase livestock-farming productivity, they can better feed their children, educate them, save money and escape poverty.

In the photo, I am using an egg candler to assess egg quality. As part of my PhD, I found that heavier hens are poor feed-to-egg converters and produce more abnormal eggs. As such, if farmers over-feed young birds to get them to reach sexual maturity earlier, it could undermine their profits.

Girls in low-income countries often hear stereotypes about women in science struggling to find a husband and maintain a home, and that mathematics is for boys. They lack female role models, mentors and funding to study science. To help close

the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), I founded a non-profit initiative, the STEM Belle, in 2017.

We bring female scientists into schools in Nigeria, Ghana and Pakistan to talk to girls about STEM careers and provide opportunities to learn coding, electronics and robotics. We give out academic awards and kits containing things needed to study science in secondary school. We run STEM boot camps, an ambassador programme and a teacher-development fellowship. More than 5,000 girls have benefited, and we're seeking collaborators, funding and donations to increase our impact.

I was privileged to grow up in a middle-income home with supportive parents. Success for me would be to see that more people, especially girls, are thriving because I've shared what God has placed in my hands.

Doreen Anene is an animal scientist at the University of Nottingham, UK, founder of the STEM Belle and winner of the 2019 Nature Research Innovating Women in Science award.
Interview by Nic Fleming.