

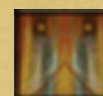
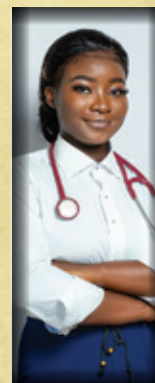


African Development Bank Civil Society Engagement

Newsletter

"Voice of Citizens in Africa" Issue 09 May 2022

Women Economic Empowerment Driving Economic Growth In Africa



Editorial

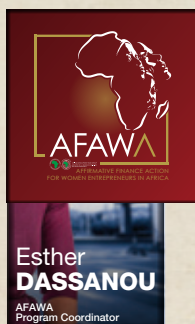
The publication of the Newsletter under the theme Women Economic Empowerment reminds us all, the significant role of women in African economies. In a few years, Africa has become the world's leading region in terms of women's entrepreneurship.

The outstanding initiatives and success stories of women entrepreneurs deserve to be highlighted, as well as the innovative actions of civil society organizations. This is the whole purpose of this newsletter: to make the voice of these organizations and women entrepreneurs heard. They stand out for both their stories and their remarkable careers, but also through the initiatives they create to enable tens or even hundreds of women to benefit from opportunities to create and grow.

While preparing this edition, we realized that the journey of these women entrepreneurs is not solely limited to their business and it often goes alongside a civic commitment to women's empowerment. The African Development Bank strongly believes in the role of Civil Society as a catalyst for change and socio-economic progress; we rub shoulders with her on a daily basis to testify to this.

I hope this publication will pay a tribute to all civil society organizations and women entrepreneurs who, at their level and owing to their status, are making a difference.

Dear readers, I wish you a pleasant and edifying reading!



Women Entrepreneurs: Key Drivers of Economic Growth

Entrepreneurship develops and transforms societies, driving growth and job creation. Africa has the highest entrepreneurship rate in the world, mainly driven by women. African women are twice as likely to start a business than women elsewhere in the world. It is estimated that the female entrepreneurship rate in Africa is nearly 30% of the female adult population, meaning that one in four women starts or manages a business. However, their contribution to economic growth has been limited.

African women entrepreneurs find it more difficult than men to convert their intentions into fast growing profitable and sustainable businesses. They tend to be overrepresented in small businesses and in sectors characterized by low productivity and profitability and face multiple challenges in accessing finance and growing their businesses. They are, therefore, disproportionately blocked from effectively participating in the market economy, which limits countries from realizing their full growth potential.

Limited access to finance has been a constraint for women entrepreneurs, with the total financing gap for formal women SMEs estimated at USD 42 billion. To address this, the African Development Bank Group established the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA), a flagship initiative specifically focusing on increasing inclusive finance for women entrepreneurs. AFAWA's primary objective is to bridge the finance gap for women entrepreneurs in Africa and to unlock their entrepreneurial capacity. The AFAWA program offers a multi-dimensional approach to remove the constraints that women entrepreneurs face in Africa through three pillars: 1) strengthening access to finance for women-owned/led businesses; 2) building capacity of women entrepreneurs and financial institutions; 3) strengthening the enabling environment to increase WSMEs ability to access financing. In order to achieve its objectives, AFAWA partners

with the private and public sectors but also with the civil society organizations (CSOs) particularly through its women entrepreneurship enablers program.

Women business enablers, such as business associations, cooperatives, incubators, accelerators etc. active civil society members, play an important role in developing women-owned enterprises. They foster a viable environment for women to grow businesses to generate jobs and wealth. By providing advisory and training services to women's enterprises on business management skills, enablers allow them to not only move from the informal to the formal sector but also to become commercially viable and bankable.

Despite their role growing women-owned enterprises, they have limited capacity to support women due to lack of value-added services, funding and access to networks. This is why AFAWA supports the enablers to scale their impact and create innovative, effective change in the WSME business culture. AFAWA launched the Women Entrepreneurship Enablers program in May 2021 through a call for proposals to enhance the viability and sustainability of women entrepreneurship enablers and link them to financing opportunities aligned with AFAWA's mission. This newsletter will give the opportunity to present and give voice to some of the enablers we collaborate with and showcase their extensive work in empowering women businesses.

Civil society changing the face of women entrepreneurs in Africa

Finally a sparks hope in women's financial inclusion

The Graça Machel Trust was established in 2010 as a Pan African advocacy organisation that tackles structural barriers to change the way public and private institutions address women and children's rights. The Trust's work is underpinned by the conviction that the development of the African continent hinges on I) the sustained and equitable participation of women in socio-economic spheres at all levels and II) Africa's human capital lies in its children who need to be holistically nurtured to build a strong foundation for them to thrive to become active and engaged citizens in the continent's development. We have a footprint across 17 countries through our women's networks and are headquartered in Johannesburg, with a satellite presence in Nairobi.

We have implemented our flagship entrepreneurs' development programme, Women Creating Wealth (WCW), since 2016. WCW is a capacity-building initiative that uses a growth mindset approach to transform and strengthen women entrepreneurs' skills and confidence to scale their businesses. The programme also enhances entrepreneurs' readiness and facilitates access to finance and

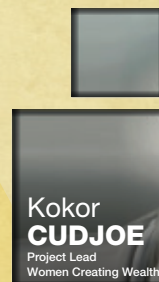
markets. We first developed WCW in recognition of the reality that women's entrepreneurship is increasing faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world, and yet, most women-owned businesses rarely grow into larger profitable companies. We believe that women's entrepreneurship as a pathway to Africa's development has not been effectively harnessed at scale.

While addressing the demand barriers of women entrepreneurs, the Trust also engages on the supply side through evidence-based research advocacy with the entrepreneurs to support the case for structural reforms. Our approach gives entrepreneurs voice and agency to be part of the change they want to see. WCW currently have 430 graduates from Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa.

The AfDB-AFAWA partnership seeks to facilitate processes and supportive interventions to enable WCW entrepreneurs to access funding to grow their businesses in the next two years in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa. Our target is for at least 20% of the WCW graduates to get appropriate financing for their needs and stage of business.

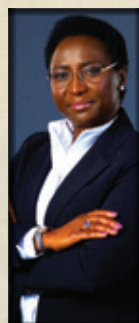
Due to the challenging nature of raising funding for women entrepreneurs, we will take both country and regional level approaches to crowd in knowledge,

Graça Machel Trust

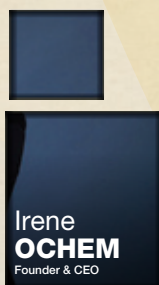


experience, and expertise from the four countries and beyond. We will work with our networks, entrepreneurs and technical specialists, including the Trust's gender lens investment and network building teams, to develop effective business advisory services, coaching and mentorship; and celebrate and give visibility to the successes that emerge. We will work with financial institutions to better understand and know the financing ecosystem and how we can close the gender financing gap by working together.

We value the support of the AfDB AFAWA team and look forward to the learning and financing opportunities our partnership will open up for women entrepreneurs.



AWIEF



AWIEF punches above its weight in Africa and beyond

The Africa Women Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF), proud recipient of the 2021 Associations Advance Africa Award for Outstanding Achievement in Inclusion and Diversity, and an Organisation with a Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), has been blazing an indelible trail throughout Africa and further afield as it unapologetically and determinedly confronts the numerous systemic and cultural obstacles to women's economic empowerment.

Such challenges are those common to many developing countries: gender inequality and bias reflected in policies and laws, in cultural and societal as well as financial and business norms

and institutions; lower self-motivation and greater risk-aversion; less confidence in competing with male counterparts; limited access to resources, skills and networks; fewer role models and family support, and less probability of membership in mainstream business associations. Sub-Saharan African economies alone lose nearly \$100 billion every year because of these gender gaps in the labour market.

AWIEF's specifically and uniquely crafted entrepreneurship development and support programmes are implemented with a holistic approach in training and development, providing access to markets and financial opportunities, and creating women networks to successfully devise solutions for all these systemic barriers to female entrepreneurship. The AWIEF online community plays a significant role in promoting communication, support and mentorship to many thousands of women entrepreneurs.

The principles underlying all the training, development, accelerator and mentorship programmes are enduring impact, inclusivity, scalability and sustainability. Programmes empower women across numerous different business, industrial and economic sectors.

The AWIEF annual conference, held with ever escalating renown and status since 2015, unites women entrepreneurs, stakeholders, investors, business and thought leaders, policymakers, academia and media globally in dialogue, establishing an effective think-tank with far-reaching consequences. The AWIEF is constantly nurturing and maturing an entrepreneurial ecosystem where women can mentor, learn, share, grow and gain in economic and social stature and impact, increasingly contributing not only to their local GDPs, but to their broader societies.



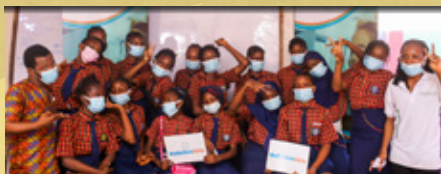
Designing for African Women : A Woman-led organisation's perspective

John Mahama, former Ghanaian president, once said, "52% of my country is made of women and the other 48% were born by women". He made this statement to emphasize the relevance of women to the economy, and the critical role their economic development plays in a nation's economic strategy. Sometime in 2019, I posted this on my personal social media pages - "I intentionally support women". Inspired by over five years of working with women entrepreneurs and youths in low-income countries, I had come to the realization that it takes intentionality to look beyond the generations of marginalization, discrimination and bias, but rather see their resilience and determination to thrive.

At Creative Space Startups, the quest for an inclusive environment and equal opportunities for women requires financial and sweat equity. We are intentional about how we support and invest in the growth of women and girls, especially those in underserved communities. Our focus is to co-create sector-specific, context-driven solutions and programs that make direct contributions to the attainment of SDGs 5, 8, 9 and 10, first in Nigeria, and across Africa. We strongly believe in fostering collaboration with

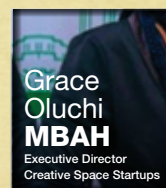
multiple partners, funders and other relevant stakeholders to ensure success and sustainability. Over the last four years, we have invested in entrepreneurship support, digital skills education, and more recently, climate change programs that focus on improving the quality of life of women and girls in our communities.

We have been able to contribute to successful programs like Founder Institute, Lagos, which now has over 200 founders - 40% of which are women. Through our in-house programs like Techamaka (Tech is good), MentorsKonnnect, and GoDo, we have been able to support over 500 women and girls through capacity building programs, mentorship and business development support.



As a Civil Society Organization (CSO), we always leverage the UN Women's 3Rs - Rights, Representation, and Resources in our women's programs. We strive to answer these questions: How do our programs ensure women are getting the Resources they need? Are women being adequately Represented through these programs? Does it provide them

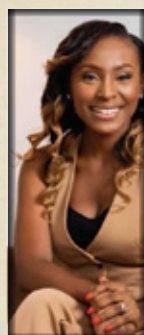
Growth4Her



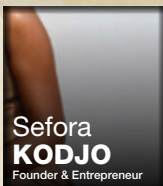
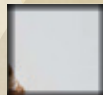
with the tools, and knowledge to access their Rights as human beings and citizens?

One of our 2021 highlights was being selected by the Bank to receive funding for our recently launched accelerator program - Growth4Her. Growth4Her is a program that builds an enabling ecosystem for WSMEs to reduce their risks, bridge the gender-financing gap and build more confident and self-aware women entrepreneurs. Over the next two years, the program will empower over 120 Women in Cameroon and Nigeria to access finance which will enable them to run more high-productive businesses.

Insufficient funding and hiring the right talents on shoestring budgets are some of our challenges. Notwithstanding, we are committed to contributing our quota to build a world where women are equal and have equitable access to resources and opportunities.



Sephis



Women's Access to Funding or the Blue Ocean Strategy

It is generally accepted that the African population is predominantly young. In Côte d'Ivoire, the youths account for more than 60% of the country's inhabitants. This situation certainly creates many challenges such as access to quality employment, especially for young women. Entrepreneurship, which leads to the creation of small and medium enterprises, remains one of the most effective solutions to absorb available skills and create jobs.

Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is also undermined by many constraints, including access to quality training and financing, which is even more problematic for women.

Despite the existence of numerous guarantees offered by financial institutions with the assistance of various development partners, women remain the least privileged category in terms of access to financing. This is due to the lack of confidence of financial institutions in the quality of the projects submitted to them.

It is therefore urgent to implement another type of guarantee that recognizes the reliability and credit-worthiness of loan applicants. To do so, it is important that an organization offers women entrepreneurs quality training and accompanies them in the follow-up of their loan applications. This is what we do through SEPHIS Foundation.

SEPHIS is firmly established as a strategic player in the growth of women-led SMEs in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. By actively providing crucial support, training and assistance programs to such entities, the Foundation has contributed to their growth; it has also succeeded in improving their structuring and visibility, while enabling them to access new markets and financing, in order to make all of them become leaders in their respective sectors.

With the support of the German cooperation (GIZ/Invest for Jobs), SEPHIS Foundation works today with more than 200 women-led SMEs in different industries (agri-food, energy, recycling, leather goods, fashion, cosmetics, etc.).

SEPHIS has been present for 13 years in West Africa (Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Togo), with representative offices in France and Canada. As part of its training programs, SEPHIS Foundation supports African women entrepreneurs through several channels:

- Provision of management and leadership tools for personal development;
- Capacity building to help them control the value chain and improve the quality of production and management of their companies;
- Assistance to enable them to leave the informal sector through the formalization of their businesses, which will allow them to be eligible for official support systems.

The SEPHIS Foundation, which has always fought to ensure that women-led SMEs have access to appropriate financing, succeeded in obtaining two special lines of credit in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal for a total of 2 billion CFA francs (3 million euros) from a major financial institution.

For example, Mrs. Egue Essim, promoter of Bassy doughnuts, received a loan of CFAP 25 million that enabled her to acquire new equipment and increase her production capacity. At the end of 2022, she will start exporting her products in containers to France, where she has joined a large network of major distributors.

Owing to its actions, SEPHIS has received numerous international awards and prizes, such as the 2018 African Union Award for the Best Women's Training Initiatives in Africa, coupled with a tweet from former President Barack Obama, all of which are eloquent proof that our work is an inspiring model for the continent.



Women Empowerment at the heart of the Bank's initiatives

Bridging the gender gap in financial inclusion across Africa

Launched in 2019, as a partnership between the African Development Bank and multiple donors, the Africa Digital Financial Inclusion facility seeks to leverage technology to ensure that 332 million financially excluded Africans, 60% of whom are women, are formally included into the financial services ecosystem. Current partners are the Agence française de développement (AFD); the Ministry for the Economy & Finance, France; the Ministry of Finance, Luxembourg; the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi).

A core foundation of our mandate is to support the reduction of the gender gap in access to finance in Africa through cross-sector collaboration with teams across the African Development Bank, such as the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa Initiative (AFAWA), as well as banks, financial service providers, governments, regional economic bodies and development partners.

ADFI seeks to invest in the gender-intentional development of digital infrastructure, policies and regulations and product innovation. Digital financial inclusion has proven transformational for Africa. The continent leads in the

adoption of mobile money services, accounting for 43% new accounts and 66% of transactions in 2020 (GSMA). Transcending literacy and geographical barriers, digital technology provides effective tools for women to break the cycle of poverty, strengthen their livelihoods and mitigate against risks of climatic or economic shocks.

A blended finance vehicle that leverages concessional funding (grants and loans) with traditional debt financing, ADFI works to ensure catalytic development of products and services, including those which are gender intentional and transformative. Our investment is informed by a series of methodologies, which include a human-centered research approach to better understand the challenges facing women in financial inclusion, generation of gender-disaggregated data, co-identification with partners and requests for proposals. Some of the current investments include working with the West Africa Monetary Agency to mainstream gender into the financial strategic framework across the 15 ECOWAS countries; developing digital micro-insurance for women smallholder farmers in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia to mitigate against economic and climate shocks; using the pay-as-you-go model to facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to smart phones that will enable delivery of responsive digital solutions; and working with YDFS, a subsidiary of MTN Nigeria, to address social and cultural norms which reduce women's access to finance via a

Africa Digital Finance Initiative

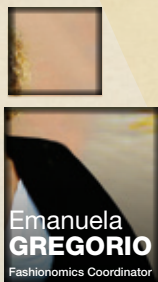


feasibility study and human-centered design of a women-centric agent network

And last month, ADFI received confirmation of grant support of US 15 million from We-Fi. The funding will support work which is complementary to AFAWA and seek to leverage finance and data to drive the required systemic changes, as well as harness the transformative power of digital technologies, to enhance access to finance for women entrepreneurs and help them build back better post COVID-19. The target is to provide digital financial solutions for 11,000 women entrepreneurs with credit offered to at least 8,000 in Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria.



Fashionomics



Reducing the financing gap for women entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

The fashion industry, as an export-oriented ready-made garment sector, provides a platform to support the sustained empowerment of women. Indeed, fashion is a female-dominated industry as women make up 68% of the workforce and account for 85% of the customer base for fashion companies globally. In communities across Africa and the world, rich cultural value and traditional designs have been protected and nurtured by women through creative industries.

The Bank's Fashionomics Africa is an initiative launched in 2015 to foster the growth of the fashion industry in Africa as a lever to create socio-economic opportunities, especially for women and

youth agents. It aims to promote African culture and promote investment in the fashion industry across the continent and increase access to market and finance for entrepreneurs and incubate and accelerate start-ups. Its objective is to stimulate further regional integration, intra-African trade, entrepreneurship development, and ethical sourcing and sustainability measures for MSMEs operating in the textile, apparel, and accessories (TA&A) industry.

In response to this, Fashionomics Africa and AFAWA have joined forces to unlock more paths towards financing for women and youth agents who are operating in the cultural & creative sector, especially in the fashion & textile industries. These efforts can be highlighted through a variety of initiatives such as the development of the Fashionomics Africa Investment platform (FAIP) which is set to roll out a 10 million USD program coupled with a 5 million USD Fashionomics Africa Technical Assistance Platform (FATAP), which has the objective to respond to the market failure gap, being the lack of financial support from traditional institutions in Africa to support the growth of the fashion & textile industry.



SUCCESS STORIES

from Abidjan to Nairobi

“Women are strong. The problem is they often don’t know it !”

Aïcha Diabi is a divorced mother of four children, an agribusiness entrepreneur and promoter of JUS AKADI.

For a long time, she dreamed of starting a business in this sector. It was, in her opinion, the best segment that could ensure the viability of a company and a more visible contribution to the economic development of our African countries where everything remains to be done, as she disclosed.

Without any fund, she had to first settle for a life as a civil servant until her savings could enable her to start her own business. At one point in her life, she found herself without a job, without a husband and without resources, with four young children to support. With her back to the wall, she decided one night to start a street business with only CFAF 500 as capital. This was half of the last banknote she had left.

She started by selling oranges at the stall, and then, little by little, she introduced other fruits (apples, grapes, mangoes, and so forth). One day, an unfortunate incident pushed her to move to another stage of her business. She received an entire shipment of ripe mangoes that she could not sell quickly. She shared her distress on social networks

and immediately her virtual friends advised her to turn the mangoes into natural juices, which they would buy, they promised her.

So, using a blender, she made juice, compote and jam that were totally bought by her network of friends. Galvanized by this experience – the selling of all her stock made her realize that she could start processing without great means – she has not stopped so far.

AKADI juices are now well known and appreciated in the market, far beyond its network of friends. After having appeared in several makeshift prototypes, AKADI is now recognized as a glass bottle containing a healthy drink without chemical additives, a natural product that has nothing to envy the big industrial brands.

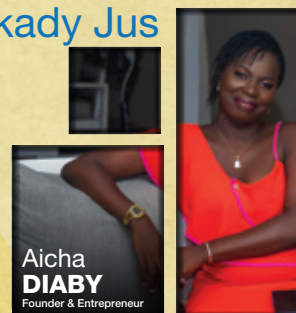
Today, the challenge of JUS AKADI is to increase its production capacity in order to meet the ever-increasing demand. It also aims to move from artisanal production to industrial production, to integrate large-scale distribution channels and to promote the Made in Africa brand.

Mrs. Diabi’s final words are for all women.

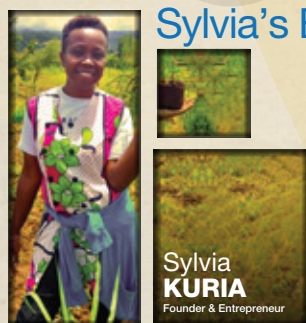
To the recurrent question of how she managed to go through all these ordeals with dependent children, she always gives the same answer:

"All women are strong. the problem is they often don't know it!"

Akady Jus



Sylvia’s Basket



Safe Food for All on the African Continent

When Sylvia and her young family moved to their village, she was looking forward to growing her own food. Sylvia was born and bred in the city, but she had a love for the countryside. When she visited her grandmother during school holidays, she was always eager to learn how to use a hoe and plow the land, but she was always dismissed as the city girl who could never farm. Twenty years later, her young family decided to move to the village. Her immediate family and friends never thought she would farm. And to an extent they were right, as this city girl would not differentiate beans from weeds! All the same, she set out on her “farming venture.” Her parents gave her “only” half acre to grow her kitchen garden.

Her husband challenged her to grow everything they ate at home and avoid going to the market.

The enthusiastic farmer grew all her favorite vegetables, and this resulted in greater amounts of food only after two seasons. And then she remembered her “hungry” friends in Nairobi who would love fresh greens from her garden. Sylvia’s Basket was then born. This was a small business supplying fresh organic produce.

Being a women entrepreneur on the African continent is very difficult. Many women do not have access to sufficient capital, networks and, most importantly, mentorship. Sylvia’s farming venture started 12 years ago has grown and now covers 15 acres. In parallel, the out-grower runs an organic grocery supplying produce to 80+ homes weekly in Nairobi. She has not had it easy running the farms and the shop. She is very fortunate to have a husband as a business partner supporting her dream of growing the business.

This might not be the case for many women entrepreneurs. Sylvia says her biggest challenge has been lack of mentorship in her field. The proportion of female farmers making business remains low, especially in the retail sector.

In spite of pitfalls on her pathway, Sylvia continues to be passionate and determined to grow her business in African. She wants to ensure that her organic food is affordable.

She is challenging the long-lasting beliefs that organic produce is made for the rich people. Does it mean that only rich folks should access safe food?

Access to safe food, free from poisonous inputs, should be a fundamental human right. Watch this space, as Sylvia’s Basket will soon be dotted all over the African continent. Mother of three beautiful children, Sylvia runs her farm and business while training farmers on how to grow food sustainably.





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