



AWEAA Impact Report & Member Highlights

FROM EMPOWERMENT TO ECOSYSTEM: WOMEN BUILDING
THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN ENTERPRISE



2023 - 2025 Edition

Contents

01	Leadership Insights & Perspectives	PAGE 3 - 10
02	AWEAA in Action: 2023-2025 Highlights	PAGE 11 - 22
03	State Impact Reports	PAGE 23 - 27
04	Members Milestone	PAGE 28 - 30
05	Thought Leadership Corner	PAGE 31 - 37
06	Partner Collaborations	PAGE 38 - 47
07	The Road Ahead	PAGE 48 - 49

Letter from the President

BY ADEBISI ODELEYE

Two years ago, we had a simple vision: create a space where alumnae of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) program could continue growing their businesses long after training ended. Today, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) has become a movement transforming how women do business across Africa.

With the support of U. S Consulate General Lagos and Missions in Nigeria, what started as network among AWE alumnae has evolved into Nigeria's most dynamic women-led business association. We've moved beyond individual success stories to creating systemic change that opens doors for the next generation of African women entrepreneurs. Our members' resilience has been extraordinary, and through our partnership with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and the International Trade Center (ITC), members operating in the agro-processing and cosmetics sectors successfully secured certifications from the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). Fashion entrepreneurs have pivoted successfully during challenging times and secured major contracts through insights from our Business Clinics.

The strength of AWEAA lies in our strategic relationships. Our partnership with United States Missions in Nigeria, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Women (UNWomen), and the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) created unprecedented access to funding, markets and expertise. Financial partnerships with Fidelity Bank, Providus Bank, and Optimus Bank provide capital, financial literacy, and investment readiness training. Our collaboration with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) helps members navigate international trade.

These partnerships deliver real outcomes. Members access grants, participate in international trade exhibitions, and receive specialized training that would be impossible to obtain individually. Perhaps our

proudest achievement is earning a voice in Nigeria's policy discussions gender inclusion; and when government agencies need insights on women-led businesses, they turn to AWEAA. Our recommendations are being incorporated into national strategies.

What we have built in Nigeria now inspires similar associations across Africa. Countries throughout the continent are adapting our structure and approach, creating a network that shares resources and opportunities across borders. This expansion recognizes that challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria aren't that different from those in Nairobi, Cape Town or Accra.

As we enter our next phase, we focus on deepening our policy influence, expanding cross-border trade opportunities, and strengthening the pipeline from individual success to systemic transformation. The foundation we've built positions us to tackle even bigger challenges. We're no longer just supporting women in business; we're reshaping what's possible for women in African business.

Leading AWEAA has been the privilege of my career; witnessing women who refuse to accept limitations, build businesses that create jobs, solve problems, and lift others as they climb.

Here's to our members, partners, and the team who have made this possible: this is your success story!

In conclusion, I'd like to state that the future truly belongs to African women entrepreneurs; and AWEAA is here for such a time as this, making sure women have everything they need to claim this future!



Adebisi Odeleye
President, AWEAA

About AWEAA

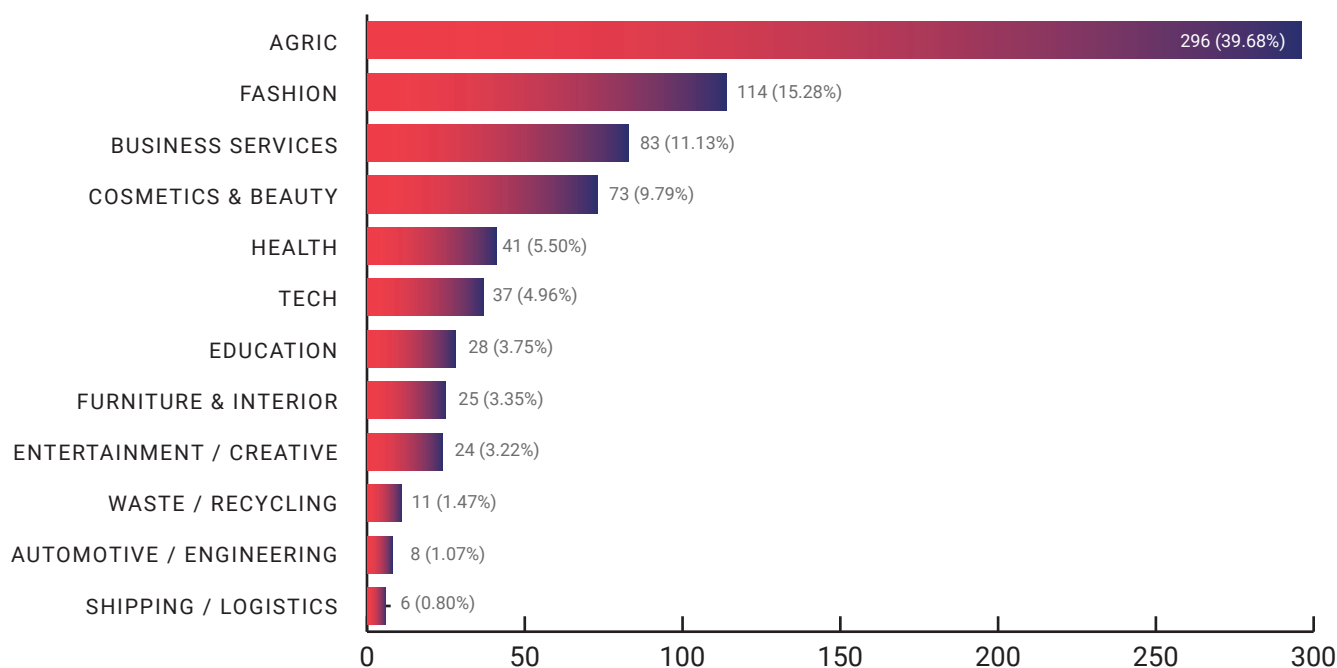
The Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) is a dynamic pan-African network dedicated to women entrepreneurs who have completed the AWE program, a U.S. Government initiative aimed at providing women with essential tools to build sustainable businesses. AWEAA effectively bridges the gap between training and practical implementation, empowering women to lead in business, governance, and their communities confidently.

Officially registered in Nigeria, AWEAA is organised into cohorts, state chapters, and regional clusters. Our activities encompass advocacy, digital skills training, mentorship, and fostering cross-border collaborations, all designed to support and elevate the impact of women entrepreneurs across the continent.

Our Impact in Numbers



Where Our Members Work: Industry Breakdown



The Team

2023 - 2025 AWEAA LEADERSHIP

*Adebisi
Odeleye*

President



*Victoria
Ajayi*

Vice President



*Oluwayemisi
Oguh*

Secretary



*Juliet
Obi*

Treasurer



*Funmilola
Agbayewa*

Financial Secretary



*Oluwadunsin
Bolaji*

PRO



*Dr Yemisi
Adeyeye*

*Ex-Officio/
Immediate
Past
President*



VICE PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Rooted in Connection: AWEAA Strengthens Alumnae Communities Across Nigeria

At the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA), community isn't just a word; it's a core value. With a growing network of empowered women across Nigeria, AWEAA is committed to building strong, supportive communities where its alumnae thrive, collaborate and grow together.

During the Impact year, a wave of state-level meetups was sparked. AWEAA brought together members in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Enugu, and Abuja for a series of enriching gatherings focused on knowledge sharing, capacity building, and meaningful connections.

From insightful discussions on business growth and personal development to collaborative brainstorming sessions and peer mentorship, each meetup offered a space for alumnae to grow, learn, and support one

another. These events weren't just about training; they were about bonding, building confidence, and creating lasting networks.

"Our alumni are doing incredible things in their communities, and it's important that we continue to nurture that connection. Whether launching a startup, scaling a business, or exploring new opportunities, AWEAA's community-first approach ensures that members have the support and encouragement they need to thrive. And with each state meetup, the network grows even stronger, one conversation, one collaboration, and one connection at a time..."

- **Victoria Ajayi**

PRO DESK

Strengthening AWEAA's Voice – The PRO Team's Two-Year Impact

Over the past two years, the Public Relations office of the Association of Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) has worked tirelessly to elevate the association's visibility and professional image.

At the start of the tenure, AWEAA's digital presence was limited — We launched a professional LinkedIn page and grew the Instagram page to bring more visibility for the community.

In addition to digital growth, the PR team played a crucial role in promoting AWEAA's programs through strategic communications, event support, and creative designs; significantly enhancing the association's public image and outreach across Nigeria and beyond.

- **Oluwadunsin Bolaji**

Money Moves Women Forward – AWEAA Finance Desk

At the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA), we believe that money is not just currency, it's capacity. For women entrepreneurs to grow, scale, and thrive, access to finance must be seen as a core pillar, not an afterthought.

Over the past years, our community has demonstrated the power of collective support and intentional resource mobilisation. Through exhibitions facilitated by the association, such as FITCC in Houston, our members generated over \$10,000 within 42 hours; HerAfCFTA organised by UNDP generated about Two Million Naira in 5 hours at the Lagos Continental Hotel and SMEDAN exhibition in Abuja. Even more inspiring, individual members within the network have secured over ₦200 million naira in grants. This progress isn't coincidental. It is the result of strategic efforts, deliberate positioning, and partnership with various Stakeholders.

As an association, AWEAA received grants from the U.S Consulate General Lagos to execute impactful projects aligned with our mandate, including education/empowering tertiary students, supporting the girl child, entrepreneurship, upskilling and providing equipment grants to our members.

Our buy-in through the sponsorship of UNDP under the

HerAfCFTA project launched members a seat at the table of Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (WCCIMA). This is no small feat, as being part of this national economic body continues to open doors to wider opportunities including funding pipelines, international business partnerships, and capacity-building programs tailored for Women Led Business (WLD).

We've also seen the power of community-led finance. When one of our members experienced a tragic fire outbreak at her business premises, the women rallied to support her recovery through crowdfunding within days. This is a clear reminder: money within the community is a vital tool. It helps us respond, uplift, and build resilience.

Finance is not just about numbers; it's about possibilities. It buys us access, leverage, influence, and the freedom to dream and deliver. As we continue to grow, let's remember that our financial participation, both personal and collective, is what fuels the vision. Because when women have access to money, we move markets!.

- **Funmilola Agbayewa**

Editor's Note

Oluwatosin Adisa,
2022 Cohort & Founder,
Indwelt Studios

The 2023/2025 executive tenure of the AWEAA stands as a testament to the courage, determination, and extraordinary brilliance of African women who boldly pursue their dreams and challenge the status quo. This edition of our magazine seeks to encapsulate the remarkable achievements and milestones we've reached together.

As an alumna of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs and a proud member of this dynamic alumnae association, curating this edition has been both a labour of love and a compelling reminder of what women can achieve when allowed not merely to participate, but to lead.

This edition reflects our collective momentum transcending borders, sectors, and generations. Whether you are an alumna, policymaker, or partner, I invite you to engage with a narrative that continues to evolve—one that is driven by women and fueled by vision.

OUR COMMITTEES & REPRESENTATIVES

People Behind the Work

AWEAA State Representatives for 2023/2025



Amarachi
Okpala-Onwuamaegbu
ANAMBRA REP



Aishatu Hassan
Ibrahim
ABUJA REP



Celestina Eneji
LAGOS REP



Adanne Uche
LAGOS REP



Olufunke Akinola
OGUN REP



Bosede Nwachi
OSUN REP



Omobolanie A.
Adedeji
OYO REP



Oduyemi Omowumi
Helen
OYO REP



Nneka Offor
ENUGU REP



Emem Thomas
SOUTH SOUTH



Ayo Okpa - Iroha
DIASPORA REP

AWEAA Cohort Representatives for 2023/2025



Oluwatosin Sodimu
COHORT REP 2019



Mary Olayinka
COHORT REP 2020



Victory Onojah
COHORT REP 2021



Nwajiunor
Edgar-Odurombi
COHORT REP 2022



Wumi Omidiji
COHORT REP 2023

2025 Electoral Committee



Ishola Funmilayo
(2023)
CHAIRMAN



Chinyere Stephanie
Obiano (2021)
SECRETARY



Adediwura Sowande
(2022)



Mary Olayinka
(2020)



Adanne Uche
MEMBER

Constitution Review Committee



Olubusola Ajala



Oluwatosin Sodimu



Nsikeme
Etukidem



Modupe Nnebedum



Adaora
okeora-oforah

Special committees



Olubusola Ajala
LEGAL



Lois Ugbe
TECH



Ewajesu Fashina
PROJECTS

Dispute resolution committee



Olusola Sowemimo
CHAIRMAN



Adanne Uche
MEMBER



Oghenetega Gbadagri
MEMBER



Halima U. Bagudu
MEMBER



Benita Afolabi
*EXECUTIVE
REPRESENTATIVE*

Our Board of Trustees

1. DR MAYMUNAH KADIRI (CHAIRMAN)

2. MRS ABIMBOLA OSUCHUKWU

3. MR OLUFEMI MORENIKEJI

4. MRS ADEPEJU JAIYEGBA

5. MRS ENITAN KUKU-OMONJO

Our Sponsor



Our Partners



02

AWEAA in Action:
2023-2025
Highlights

Bridging Borders, Building Business: AWEAA Partners with Enterprise Development Centre & Global Entrepreneurship Network



The Women Enterprise Day was described as more than just another event; it was portrayed as a powerful gathering of visionaries, policymakers, industry leaders, and pioneering women entrepreneurs. It was hosted at the modern Providus Bank headquarters in Victoria Island, Lagos, and celebrated innovation, resilience, and the undeniable impact of women in the business world. For the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA), this milestone represented a significant chapter in their ongoing mission to empower and amplify the voices of female business leaders throughout Nigeria.

Spearheaded by the Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) of Pan-Atlantic University in partnership with the Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN), the Women Enterprise Day brought together local and global perspectives to tackle the pressing challenges

faced by women in business. AWEAA proudly stood alongside these esteemed institutions, reinforcing our commitment to entrepreneurship, access, and inclusion.

The event featured a keynote address by Mr. Will Stevens, Consul General of the U.S. Consulate in Lagos. His words were both inspiring and encouraging: “We’ve been focused on growing the U.S. trade and investment in Nigeria, and it’s working. In the last year alone, trade between the U.S. and Nigeria rose from \$10 billion to \$11.3 billion. Even more promising is the 7% increase in U.S. foreign direct investment into Nigeria.” He acknowledged the contributions of female entrepreneurs and AWEAA alumnae, recognising their role in building businesses, big and small, that drive value in the Nigerian and global economies. This recognition serves as a powerful motivation for the

AWEAA IN ACTION – 2023/2025 HIGHLIGHTS

AWEAA community to continue challenging the status quo.

The day featured two engaging panels with AWEAA alumnae and ecosystem stakeholders, focusing on essential topics such as sustainability, community building, and navigating the regulatory landscape.

The first panel addressed the theme of resilient and sustainable communities, featuring speakers such as Sola Adesakin, Lead Coach & Founder of Smart Stewards, Joy Igbojike, Founder of JaeBee Furniture Limited, and Tobi Sola-Abiola, a renowned media personality and entrepreneur. Their insights demonstrated that women are not merely building businesses; they are transforming communities, creating jobs, and fostering ecosystems of growth.

The second panel, moderated by AWEAA President Adebisi Odeleye, delved into “Policy & Regulatory Access for Women Entrepreneurs.” Panellists included

Bukunmi Adefulire-Nwankwo, Programme Associate at UNDP Nigeria; Oyindamola Egbeyemi, Director of Programmes & Coordination at LSETF; and Temitayo Adeoye, Director at the Lagos State Office of the Nigerian Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control. This interactive session provided entrepreneurs with direct access to key regulators and partners, clarifying how to leverage government and institutional programs for business expansion.

Reinforcing the message of economic empowerment, Providus Bank’s CEO, Mr. Walter Akpani, shared a compelling success story: “We provided a female startup with N20 million, and within two years, her revenue soared to N1.2 billion.” This exemplifies the transformative potential that arises when capital is placed in the hands of capable women entrepreneurs, who consistently prove their value time and again.



Count Her In: Invest in Women



The International Women's Day Program, AWEAA, served as a critical call to action for substantial structural change, emphasising that investing in women transcended the realm of social justice and acts as a catalyst for economic transformation.

During the event, it was urged that the Federal Government address multiple taxation and other policies that impede the growth of women-led SMEs. The speakers highlighted the inefficacy of cumbersome regulations, such as the requirement for multiple NAFDAC numbers for the same product, describing this as an unnecessary barrier not faced by entrepreneurs in more progressive economies.

Additionally, women entrepreneurs were encouraged to harness their networks, foster collaboration, and build resilience—strategies considered vital for navigating today's complex business landscape. There was a call for global institutions, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, to establish a gender-responsive financing ecosystem, ensuring that

women, who consistently demonstrate exemplary loan repayment rates are not left behind.

Research indicated that Nigeria's GDP could increase by up to 23% by 2025 if women were afforded equal participation in the economy. However, systemic barriers persisted, including excessive taxation, restrictive trade policies, and limited access to capital.

The Special Guest Speaker, Mrs. Hauwa Adeeyo - Special Adviser to the Governor of Lagos State on Commerce, alongside esteemed panellists such as Mrs. Ope Wemi Jones - CEO of a Consumer-Focused Company & former group head of Access Bank's W Initiative; Dr. Inya Lawal - President of Ascend Studios Foundation; and Dr. Maymunah Kadiri - Chair of the Board of Trustees - AWEAA; provided valuable insights on these pressing issues.

Representatives from regulatory bodies, including Mr. Bunmi Kole-Dawodu - Deputy Director of the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN); Oyindamola Egbeyemi - Director of

AWEAA IN ACTION – 2023/2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Programmes and Coordination at the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund; and Mrs. Ngozi G. Ibe - Deputy Director of Export Inclusion Division at the ITC SheTrades Nigeria Hub (NEPC), were also present to address the burning questions of entrepreneurs, aiming to enhance the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

Esteemed Alumnae shared their extensive expertise on scaling businesses, featuring insights from Dr. Yetty Ogunnubi - CEO, YD Company; Jokotade Shonowo of Posh Clicks; Hannah Osanyintolu of SISIHANNAH; Dr. Yemisi Soyombo CEO - icare Family Clinic; Oluwatobi

Sola-Abiola - Founder, Tea's Nature; Adanne Uche - CEO, Ady's Agro Processing Limited; Yinka Osifeso - Founder, Orekelewa; Benita Afolabi - MD, Keystone Global Resources Limited; Olusola Sowemimo - CEO, Ope

Farms; and Desola Jimmy-Eboma - CEO, FreshOla Organics; and the event was expertly moderated by Isabella Adediji - MD, Yellow Tamarind Productions.

This International Women's Day event was characterised not merely as a celebration of achievements but as a demand for action, equitable systems, streamlined regulations, accessible financing, and deliberate trade-friendly policies. It was emphasised that real progress hinged upon the effective implementation of these actions. Furthermore, a product export readiness assessment was conducted in collaboration with SheTrades, supported by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and SMEDAN.



International Trade Experience: Houston, Texas

For an extended period, numerous women entrepreneurs in Africa have established exceptional businesses that remain largely constrained by geographic boundaries. This narrative began to shift markedly when the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) made its international debut at the Fidelity International Trade & Creative Connect (FITCC) in Houston, Texas.

The event, which was hosted by Fidelity Bank Plc. and supported by the U.S. Consulate in Nigeria, convened global minds and industries at the George R. Brown Convention Centre. It transcended the traditional trade show format to become a movement demonstrating that access to international markets catalyses transformative change.

Over 15 AWEAA members from various sectors, including fashion, agriculture, cosmetics, food processing, jewellery, and manufacturing, participated in this pioneering trade mission. The immediate impact was significant; within just two days, participants generated revenues exceeding \$10,000, forged new international partnerships, and unlocked long-term trade opportunities.

AWEAA's presence at the trade fair underscored the importance of gaining access to new markets, a vital component for advancing women's entrepreneurship. The FITCC provided a platform for networking, pitching, and connecting with global investors and partners, aligning directly with the strategic objectives for the impact year.

The importance of this event extended beyond mere participation; it was a strategic initiative that illuminated a global truth: the world is ready to embrace African innovation. From shea-based skincare products to handwoven textiles and locally produced food items, African women are creating world-class goods that are poised for a global audience.

Access remains critical, and without it, even the finest products may never navigate beyond local markets.

However, with the right access; encompassing trade shows, buyers, partners, funding, logistics channels, and policy support; entire communities and economies stand to benefit from transformative growth.

Through this trade mission, AWEAA redefined the meaning of global thinking. There was a clear shift from localised empowerment to a stronger presence for women entrepreneurs on the world stage, effectively bridging the gap between local ingenuity and global opportunity.

As the reflections on this historic trade mission continues, it has become evident that when women gain access not only to essential tools but also to expansive markets, they not only enhance their enterprises but also effect positive change within their communities. This scaling of impact ultimately contributes to the creation of a more inclusive, resilient, and interconnected global economy.



Powering Growth Through Equipment Finance for Women Entrepreneurs

At the core of any successful business lies the right tools. Whether it's a mixer for a baker, an industrial machine for a fabric maker, or a jewellery cutter, access to proper equipment is pivotal for small businesses seeking to scale. This reality was highlighted at a recent event hosted by the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA), where exceptional alumnae left not only inspired but also equipped with grants designed to enhance their businesses.

Among the proud recipients were Amarachi Okpala Onwuamegbu (House of Maruna, 2021 Cohort/Anambra State), Oluwatosin Sodimu, Hannah Ephriam (2019 Cohort/Lagos State), Winifred Nnamdi (2023 Cohort/Enugu), and Oluwakemi Oyebanji (2022 Cohort/Oyo State). These entrepreneurs showcased their business visions, impact, and specific equipment needs during a pitch session, earning their well-deserved awards.

The significance of this initiative shows that Equipment Equals Efficiency, Quality, Job Creation, Confidence.

This initiative, backed by the U.S. Consulate, went beyond a mere act of generosity; it represents a substantial investment in women-led enterprises, and addressed one of the most pressing barriers to growth: limited access to financing and resources.

For many women, traditional bank loans seem unattainable, but grants like this continue to pave the way for dreams to evolve into thriving businesses. The community aspires for more women to gain access to such opportunities. Witnessing firsthand the transformative power of

equipping capable entrepreneurs with the necessary resources, it was clear that when women thrive, families flourish, economies prosper, and communities are revitalised.

There was a collective commitment to unlocking their potential, one tool, one grant, and one courageous pitch at a time!

Opening Doors: AWEAA teams up with UN Women to help women win big in Procurement

Many women entrepreneurs often feel that securing government or corporate contracts is out of reach, not due to a lack of quality products, but because the system seems too complex to navigate. To address this issue, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) collaborated with UN Women and DO-Take Action to change the narrative.

Through their Women's Economic Empowerment through Affirmative Procurement Training, women were guided through the entire procurement process, from crafting winning bids to decoding the language of tenders and contracts. One of the program's most valuable resources was a Compliance Help Desk, which helped clarify complex certifications, including

PENCOM, Tax Clearance, NSITF, and Insurance. For many participants, this was the breakthrough they had been waiting for.

Additionally, the program provided attendees with direct access to procurement experts, offering hands-on feedback and practical strategies to position their businesses for greater opportunities. Each participant received a certificate, but more significantly, they left with newfound confidence and a clear path forward.

At AWEAA, the mission extends beyond merely assisting women in business; it focuses on empowering them to achieve success.

Powering Pan-African Trade: AWEAA Joins Forces with UNDP and WCCIMA for the Launch of HerAfCFTA Nigeria

In a significant advancement toward economic empowerment and continental collaboration, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) announced its partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to launch HerAfCFTA Nigeria, an initiative designed to promote women's participation in Africa's evolving trade landscape.

Her AfCFTA, a result of UNDP's renewed strategic focus on Africa, positioned inter-African trade as a transformative vehicle for reducing poverty, creating jobs, and enhancing foreign exchange. With the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) opening up extensive market opportunities, the HerAfCFTA project aimed to ensure that women-led businesses were not left behind. The initiative was unveiled by the UNDP Regional Director for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa, alongside the Resident Representative, Elsie Attafuah, and the UNDP execution team led by Clare Henshaw, National Programmes Specialist and Team Lead, Inclusive Growth UNDP.

At the Nigerian launch, AWEAA played a pivotal role as part of the think tank and as a pioneering beneficiary of the initiative. Several dynamic women-led brands showcased their products, demonstrating that African women are ready to engage in cross-border trade and

scale up globally.

Among the inspiring brands representing AWEAA at the launch were:

- Apoti Lagos – Contemporary African furniture and design
- Dexy Creations – African Fashion
- Body Pantry – Natural skincare rooted in African ingredients
- Segunfunmi Foods – Nutritious, locally-sourced food products
- FreshOla - Indigenous ready to use spice mixes
- Moore Organics – African cosmetics brand
- YesChilli - Condiment and sauce manufacturer

This collaboration signalled a new era for women entrepreneurs in Nigeria and beyond. With improved access to regional markets, knowledge sharing, and opportunities for policy influence, HerAfCFTA represented more than just a launch; it served as a launchpad for AWEAA women at the forefront. The belief that when women engage in trade, economies thrive was firmly established. Through partnerships like this, the future of intra-African commerce emerged not only as inclusive but also as flourishing.



International Trade Centre(ITC), SheTrades and UK Missions in Nairobi – Oluwayemisi Deborah Oguh, Assistant General Secretary



Delegates from SheTrades, representing Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria, participated in a significant meeting that included AWEAA Nigerian alumnae companies such as Body Pantry, Demamy Concepts LLC, and Segunfunmi Foods Nigeria Ltd. The Program Management Officer for International Trade Center (ITC), SheTrades Desk Michelle Kristy explained that the primary purpose of this meeting was to review the progress made by the SheTrades delegates and to address the challenges faced by Women Led Businesses in Africa. They shared testimonials highlighting the positive impact of SheTrades training and support on their businesses.

Other participants also contributed their experiences, discussing the advantages gained and identifying areas where improvement was needed. It was suggested that the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Association be included in SheTrades initiatives, especially with input from the Kenyan SheTrades Head, who provided insights on potential partnerships with producers of diverse packaging materials in Kenya.

Packaging and logistics were recognised as major hurdles faced by many SheTrades members. In light of this, it was proposed that SheTrades take steps to facilitate access to solutions and establish connections with relevant service providers. Additionally, SheTrades committed to enhancing the flow of information regarding upcoming events and trade fairs, pledging to assist members in connecting with packaging and branding companies to improve their competitiveness in the market. SheTrades reaffirmed its dedication to regularly engaging with government bodies, including the Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC), to support businesses participating in trade fairs across various countries.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with commitments from SheTrades, ITC, and the UK Mission to continue supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs across Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and beyond. The initiatives proposed are expected to significantly enhance member capabilities and stimulate business growth in the region.

Alumnae Attends Global Entrepreneurs Congress (GEC) in Indianapolis, USA – Oluwatosin Adisa



My Experience at the 2025 Global Entrepreneurship Congress – AWE Alumni Spotlight

Attending the 2025 Global Entrepreneurship Congress (GEC) was not just a milestone but a meaningful reconnection with a global community of visionary thinkers, bold doers, and resilient dreamers. As an Alumna of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) and the Founder/CEO of Indwelt Studios, a Brand Communications company, I had the incredible opportunity to be part of the 2025 year's Congress, held in Indianapolis, United States; alongside brilliant changemakers globally.

The GEC was a melting pot of innovation, culture, and global conversations that matter. It was powerful to see entrepreneurship not just discussed in terms of business, but as a driver of social change, inclusion, and creative impact.

At Indwelt Studios, we believe deeply in the power of storytelling and strategy to

shift narratives and move industries forward, and the GEC 2025 reaffirmed that belief.

One of the most enriching aspects of the experience was connecting with fellow AWE sisters, including Ajibola Salako - founder of AMALA Ibadan and Mary Olayinka - founder of El Roi Diagnostics Centre, both of whom are doing extraordinary work in their respective fields.

Our shared journey as AWE alumni brought a special bond to our GEC experience, allowing us to reflect on how far we've come and how much more is ahead.

Whether in breakout sessions on inclusive innovation, networking conversations with global investors, or listening to keynote sessions on the future of entrepreneurship, I left GEC 2025 inspired and recharged. It was also a reminder that women entrepreneurs from Africa are not just participating in global dialogues; we're shaping them.

Grateful to AWEAA for continuing to open doors and platforms that spotlight women entrepreneurs doing the work, and doing it well. And here's to the growing tribe of visionaries building, creating, and transforming the world, one idea at a time.

AWEAA Women Show Up and Stand Out at ITC/NEPC and SMEDAN Exhibitions in Abuja

AWEAA members participated in two strategic exhibitions hosted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in collaboration with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), both of which were held in Abuja.

These events were more than just exhibitions; they were platforms of visibility, access, and influence. As women in business, it is crucial that we show up in the spaces where policies are shaped, funding is discussed, and strategic partnerships are formed. Participating in these exhibitions gave us the opportunity to showcase our products, interact directly with key parastatals, and most importantly, be seen and heard.

By physically presenting our businesses, we allowed decision-makers and ecosystem builders to witness firsthand the innovation, creativity, and resilience that AWEAA women bring to the commercial sector. These engagements are key to advancing our collective agenda because when government agencies and private sector leaders see us, they are more inclined to design programs that reflect our real challenges and potential for growth.

AWEAA was officially invited, and we opened up the opportunity to members across states. Women from Lagos, Ogun, Kaduna and Abuja showcased a variety of outstanding products, demonstrating the rich diversity and excellence within our network. Exhibiting members included:

- Victoria Okpanachi – Jodale Foods
- Ruqayya Gumsu - Vivido Natural
- Bera Tomato - Adaora Akojuru
- Oluwafunmilayo Ewa-Jesu – Vinelife Coconut
- Funmi Adeniyi – Body Pantry
- Firo Elhassan – Laalfi Farms
- Oluwadunsin Bolaji – Dunsin Craft Collections
- Obende Veronica - Ronnid
- Ada Oforah – Perfect Goshen Limited
- Lydia Adekola – Lyzbat Global Resources Limited
- Kylbry Spices - Pamela Manzir Odan
- Mabel Oluwatoyin George – Apoti
- Moronke Agbayewa - Segunfunmi Foods
- Adeola Idonije-Badmus – House of Shayfaari

We arrived in excellence, engaging in meaningful conversations with stakeholders, proudly showcasing made-in-Nigeria products, and sharing our business journeys with integrity and confidence.

Through this participation, we were able to connect with finance organisations and trade support institutions, opening new doors for increased access to funding, export readiness, and capacity development for our members.

Showing up matters. Letting our faces be seen and voices heard matters. When we are present, we don't just fill a space, we shape it. As we continue to build a network of empowered businesswomen across Nigeria, AWEAA remains committed to creating pathways that enable our members to be visible, supported, and successful.



Business Clinic: Fueling Growth Through Learning and Connection

At the core of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) is a deep commitment to learning, growth, and development. This mission comes to life through the AWEAA Business Clinic, an empowering platform designed to equip members with the knowledge and tools they need to build and scale successful businesses.

The Business Clinic brings together a dynamic lineup of experts, both from within the AWEAA network and the wider business ecosystem, to lead practical, no-fluff sessions on topics that matter most to women entrepreneurs. From demystifying the process of accessing funding to harnessing the power of e-commerce for business expansion to navigating the complex balance between love, money, and entrepreneurship, the clinic covers it all.

Each session is intentionally crafted to be interactive, relatable, and solution-driven. Members leave not only with actionable insights but also with renewed motivation and a sense of community support.

For AWEAA, the Business Clinic is more than just a training session; it's a movement. It's about helping women shift mindsets, spark growth, and build sustainable businesses that thrive in today's world. And as each clinic continues to inspire and empower, it reinforces a simple yet profound truth: when women learn and grow together, there's no limit to what they can achieve.

ACCESS TO BUSINESS FINANCE WITH LAGOS STATE EMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND (LSETF)

BUSINESS CLINIC
Thursday, 29th August 2024
3pm
Virtual Attendance

AWEAA Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association
LSETF Lagos State Employment Trust Fund

TOPIC: UNLOCKING THE FUNDING CODE

- How to position yourself for funding
- What investors look out for when funding
- Access to growth funding (Equity and Debt Funding)
- Acquisition and Exit Strategies

21ST JUNE, 2023 04:00PM

ONLINE BUSINESS CLINIC

Our Awesome Speakers:

GLORY ENTINNYA
Founder/CEO, Idea Bakery Africa

IFOMA UDOOH
Founder/CEO, Ideobud

MARYAM ADEBOLA-SALAMI
Founder/CEO, Modesty Care Nigeria

OLAPEJU UMAH
Founder, CEO, MyFooding

CONTACT:
09160001456
AWEALUMNAE@GMAIL.COM

REGISTRATION:
[HTTPS://B.LINK/AWEAA/BIZCLINIC](https://b.link/AWEAA/BIZCLINIC)

AWEAA + BUMPA HOST BUSINESS CLINIC

Ayodele Ogunkunle
Marketing Lead
Bumpa

Serah Kassim
Growth & Partnership Manager
Bumpa

VENUE: ZOOM
DATE: 2ND AUGUST, 2023
TIME: 2PM

CONTACT:
09160001456
AWEALUMNAE@GMAIL.COM

Virtual Business Clinic

LOVE BUSINESS & MONEY

Join us as we navigate the intersection of love, business and financial success in entrepreneurship.

11 A.M (WAT) | Friday February 23rd, 2024

ZOOM Meeting ID: 82020382879 Password: Febclinic

Adesola Adesakin
Finance & Wealth Coach

Adeola Kingsley-James
Rapid Transformational Therapist

@awealumnaenigeria info@awealumnae.org www.awealumnae.org

03

State Impact Reports

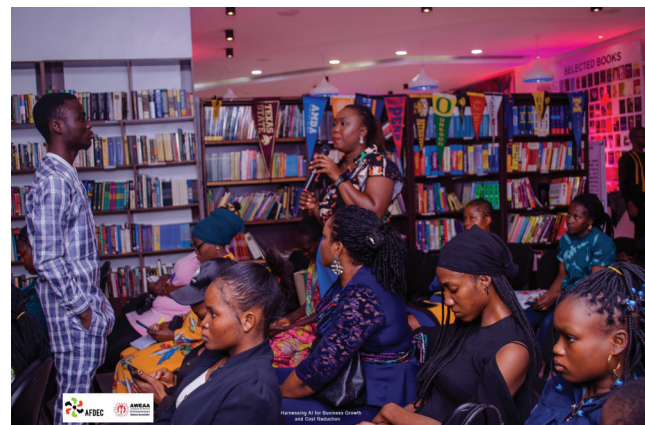
OYO STATE CHAPTER

Driving Change, Innovation & Impact: AWEAA Oyo State in Action

Omobolanle Afolasade Adedeji, State Coordinator

In the past 2 years AWEAA Oyo State Chapter has been a powerhouse of innovation, mentorship, and community impact. Under our coordination, we've lit up Oyo with initiatives that merge purpose with progress. From vibrant hangouts fostering sisterhood, to back-to-school drives equipping and inspiring hundreds of students, our work has championed education, tech, and green entrepreneurship. We've turned waste into wealth, celebrated women through

funding wins, and even brought artificial intelligence to grassroots entrepreneurs—empowering 500+ people in the process. Highlights include Children's Day educational materials, virtual business clinics, and a groundbreaking AI seminar with 80 participants. These achievements, fueled by our dynamic members, prove that when women unite, communities thrive. As our tenure closes, I'm proud to say: we are not just alumnae—we are architects of change. We are AWE.



ENUGU STATE CHAPTER

Empowering the Next Generation: AWEAA Enugu Trains Tertiary Students in Business and Entrepreneurship

Oby Okeke (State Coordinator, Enugu State)

When innovation meets intention, magic happens — and that's exactly what unfolded in Enugu State as the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) took bold strides to empower the next generation.

The AWEAA Enugu Chapter hosted an inspiring, hands-on business training for tertiary students, bringing together eager young minds ready to dream big and build bigger. The sessions dove into practical strategies — from launching startups to expanding into new markets — arming students with real tools for real-world impact.

The atmosphere buzzed with energy, ideas, and purpose as facilitators helped shape entrepreneurial thinking, confidence, and creativity.

Adding to the momentum was the special visit of AWEAA's President, Adebisi Odeleye, whose presence brought warmth, wisdom, and renewed drive to the chapter's mission. Her visit reinforced AWEAA's commitment to igniting change across all corners of Nigeria.

With this kind of investment in young talent, Enugu is not just raising entrepreneurs — it's raising trailblazers.



LAGOS STATE

Good Vibes & Great Women: AWEAA Lagos Ends the Year in Style

Each year comes with its highs and lows, but the AWEAA Lagos Chapter wrapped it up in the best way possible, with good food, great music, and even greater company. Our End-of-Year Hangout, held at Udyfoods (graciously hosted by our very own alumna), was the perfect chance to pause, exhale, and celebrate everything we'd walked through together in 2023. The atmosphere was relaxed, joyful, and deeply heartfelt. We didn't come to network or pitch; we came to simply be together.

From the moment we walked in, we were welcomed by the vibrant sounds of DJ Electra, who kept the energy high and the playlist even higher. The music set the mood, but it was the laughter, conversations, and spontaneous dancing that made the evening

truly magical. We ate well (because how else do you celebrate the end of a productive year?) and swapped stories, sharing our big wins and quiet victories, opening up about the challenges we faced, and reminding one another that we're not on this journey alone.

The hangout gave us a rare chance to slow down and truly connect, not just as business owners or founders, but as women, friends, and sisters in progress. There were hugs, there were tears, and yes, a few dance battles. Most of all, there was gratitude for the year we've had, for the growth we've seen, and for the AWEAA sisterhood that keeps showing up.

F.C.T. ABUJA CHAPTER

Tech, Ties, and Transformation: AWE Alumnae Host Northern Workshop

The Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) Alumnae Network held its first-ever Northern Region workshop and hangout, bringing together a dynamic community of women committed to business growth, digital innovation, and collective impact.

Held under the theme of empowerment through technology, the gathering was more than a workshop; it was a spark of inspiration. It created space for learning, connection, and the kind of collaboration that leads to long-term transformation.

Stories That Sell, Leads That Scale

The workshop featured three speakers:

- Dr Naomi Osemudua, who delivered a masterclass on "Storytelling for Business Growth"
- Lois Ugbe, who unpacked the art and strategy behind "Lead Generation"

- Dr Inya Lawal, who charged up the women to ensure they always show up

Both sessions were not only informative but deeply engaging, prompting reflective conversations among participants on how to strengthen their brands and connect with customers in more meaningful, tech-enabled ways.

Beyond the keynotes, the hangout session provided attendees with an opportunity to relax, connect, and build new relationships. From informal chats to purposeful planning, the atmosphere was alive with the spirit of possibility.

A major outcome of the session was the birth of new alumni-led initiatives for the Northern Region, aimed at spotlighting alumnae businesses and fostering visibility, sales, and strategic partnerships.

ANAMBRA STATE CHAPTER

Promoting Women-Led Businesses Through Digital Technology

The AWEAA Anambra Chapter hosted a dynamic session on “Promoting Women-Led Businesses Through the Use of Digital Technology.” Participants gained valuable insights on how to leverage digital tools to scale their businesses. Successful women entrepreneurs shared inspiring stories and strategies,

creating an atmosphere rich with encouragement and vision. Hands-on sessions helped attendees build relevant digital skills, while the overall experience fostered collaboration, peer learning, and meaningful connections.



04

Members Milestone

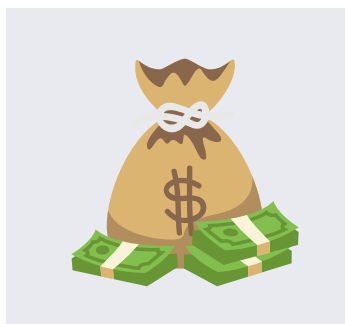
AWEAA Women Breaking Barriers

We spotlight exceptional alumni who are charting new territories and maximising opportunities shared on the platform.



150% Spike in Glamsworld's Revenue - Olukemi Oyebanji (2022 Cohort/Oyo State)

The grant I received from AWEAA in 2024 had a significant impact on my business operations. Prior to the grant, we had to alternate the use of our machines due to power limitations. With the acquisition of a 5.5KVA generator through the grant, we are now able to operate all equipment simultaneously. This upgrade has significantly improved our production efficiency and reduced our turnaround time. As a result, we've experienced a 150% increase in revenue and are now able to serve a larger customer base more effectively and consistently.



How the U.S. Consulate Grant for Machinery Boosted Hannah Ephraim's Jewellery Production Capacity Oluwatosin Sodimu (2019 Cohort/Lagos State)

Through the generous support of the U.S. Consulate, we received a grant that enabled us to acquire a vital piece of equipment, the magnetic tumbler machine, which has significantly improved the quality and efficiency of our jewellery production at Hannah Ephraim.

Previously, polishing our stainless steel jewellery pieces was labour-intensive and time-consuming. The magnetic tumbler has revolutionised our finishing process by delivering faster, more consistent, and high-quality polishing results. This has allowed us to scale production, reduce turnaround time, and meet growing customer demand with precision.

More importantly, this advancement has created opportunities for us to train and employ more women, empowering them with skills in modern jewellery-making technology. It aligns perfectly with our mission to build Africa's leading stainless steel jewellery brand while fostering inclusive growth and sustainability.

We're deeply grateful for the support from the U.S. Consulate. This investment has not only elevated our production standards but also contributed to our vision of positioning Africa as a global player in the jewellery industry.



Cocoa, Connections & Kigali: Brewing Big Dreams with Loom Craft Chocolate

Uzoamaka Igweike (2020 Cohort/Abuja)

In 2024, the UNDP, through AWEAA, sponsored my attendance at the YouthConnekt Africa Summit in Kigali, Rwanda —a transformative event that provided valuable exposure to Loom Craft Chocolate and offered insights into youth-led innovation across Africa.

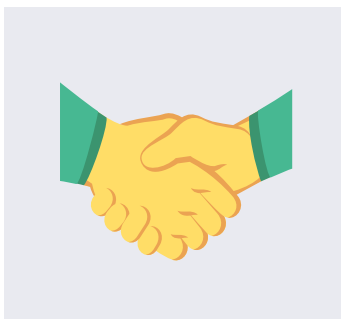
The summit united thousands of young entrepreneurs, policymakers, and development partners to discuss inclusive growth, job creation, and sustainable development. For Loom Craft Chocolate, it paved the way for strategic partnerships, export opportunities, and fresh ideas to scale our impact. Connecting with fellow African entrepreneurs highlighted common challenges and solutions related to market access, funding, and capacity building.

The UNDP's support for initiatives like YouthConnekt is vital, as it empowers young leaders to drive economic and social change in their communities. This experience strengthened my dedication to developing a sustainable cocoa value chain and emphasised the importance of investing in Africa's youth as key drivers of development. I left Kigali inspired, connected, and motivated to accelerate positive change.



HACCP and FDA Certification for members

Through AWEAA, I was able to apply for and go through the NEPC-sponsored program for HACCP certification



WACCIMA, 'Herfinance' program

Mary Olayinka - 2020 Cohort

I have been able to benefit from WACCIMA, "herfinance" program for business structure and pitch

Their stories remind us that African women are not waiting to be empowered; they are building power.

05

Thought
Leadership
Corner

GMOs in Nigeria: Between Promise and Provocation

*Dr Dorcas Tolu Fadoju (PhD), Senior Analyst, Dawn Commission
Founder, Aunty Lola's Global Company Limited (2020 Cohort)*



Walk into a Nigerian market and mention the word “GMO”, chances are, you’ll spark an argument before you finish your sentence. For some, genetically modified organisms are the lifeline that will help farmers feed a swelling population in the face of climate change. For others, they are the Trojan horse of the food system, a foreign controlled experiment that could cost Nigeria its food sovereignty. But here’s the thing: before we pick a side, we need to understand exactly what’s at stake.

So, What Are We Really Talking About? A GMO is any plant, animal, or microorganism whose DNA has been intentionally tweaked in a lab to give it specific traits. This is not your grandmother’s selective breeding, where farmers cross plants for better yield over generations. This is science with a scalpel inserting, deleting, or rewriting genes with precision tools like CRISPR.

- Imagine maize that carries a bacterial gene so pests can’t touch it.
- Or rice engineered to produce more vitamin A to fight malnutrition.
- Even fish that grow at double speed to meet seafood demand.

These transformations can happen in years, not decades. The science is fast, the debates, much slower.

Nigeria’s GMO Reality Check

Nigeria has already stepped into the GMO space:

- Bt Cowpea (Beans): Pest resistant, reducing pesticide sprays and saving yields that would otherwise be destroyed by the Maruca pod borer.
- GMO Maize: Approved for drought tolerance and stem borer resistance, a potential game-changer in the water stressed North.

These crops offer higher yields, but they also raise

thorny questions: Will they push out indigenous varieties? Will farmers become dependent on expensive patented seeds? And how will export markets that reject GMOs react to Nigerian produce?

The Animal Question

GMOs aren't just about plants. Think poultry that can't catch Newcastle disease, cattle that stay productive under scorching heat, or tilapia that hit market size in record time. Nigeria isn't there yet but the research is brewing. And so is the ethical tension: how far should science go in reshaping what we eat?

The Gates Effect

When the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was accused in 2024 of promoting GMOs in Africa through partnerships with multinational seed companies, critics saw a slippery slope toward foreign control of African agriculture. Gates' counterargument? Biotech is just another tool in the fight against hunger. The clash revealed something important: the GMO debate is as much about power and trust as it is about science.

Policy, Perception, and the People's Voice

Nigeria's National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) is the referee in this game, vetting GMO products before they hit farms or shelves. But public trust is fragile. Many Nigerians don't know what's in their food, and suspicion thrives in the information

gap. Without transparent processes and farmer participation, even the safest innovations will meet resistance.

Beyond Yes or No

Framing GMOs as "saviour" or "villain" oversimplifies the challenge. They are a tool like tractors or irrigation whose value depends on how they are used.

Nigeria's reality is sobering: by 2050, over 400 million mouths to feed, erratic rains, more pests, and shrinking farmland. The question isn't should we or shouldn't we use GMOs, it's under what terms, whose control, and with what safeguards.

Poorly planned adoption could mean dependency on foreign seed giants, and higher costs for farmers. But targeted, transparent, and deployment of drought-tolerant maize, pest resistant cowpea etc could strengthen food security without compromising sovereignty. Communication is the key between all stakeholders because in the end, and we must give choices to farmers and consumers, this isn't just about genes modification alone but also about shaping the future of our food system, our economy, and our independence.

“

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The Benefit of Oral Health For Overall Wellness

Dr Funmi Adeniyi - Clinical Director, Luxe Dental (2020 Cohort)

Mr Kolade, who is 45 years old, visited his dentist after cracking a tooth while chewing on a bone after a hearty bowl of pepper soup. He had no idea that his overall health was in jeopardy. A C-suite manager in a multinational firm, married with 2 beautiful children, had been so consumed with rising up the career ladder, closing deals, networking and enjoying life when he had a few days off work. The last thing on his mind was a dental visit before this juicy bone had brought him in to see his dentist.

His dentist took one look at his mouth, noticed multiple tooth fractures and rapidly advancing gum (periodontal) disease, and diagnosed an underlying health problem. "Those were red flags that something was not right."

Mr Kolade was asked to see his primary care doctor to get to the root of the problem. He was diagnosed and treated for high blood pressure and diabetes. Five months later, he suffered a heart attack! It is often said that your mouth is a mirror of your general health. Too often, the health of your mouth is overlooked when considering your overall well-being. But our bodies are a holistic system – each part affects the other. Your overall health affects your dental health, and vice versa. Oral health is much more than just healthy teeth; it also includes the health of many other tissues, such as the gums, bones, ligaments, muscles, glands, and nerves. Additionally, oral health impacts some of our most fundamental human functions, thereby influencing an individual's self-image and overall sense of well-being. These are often taken for granted, yet they represent the very essence of our humanity.

They allow us to speak and smile; sigh and kiss; smell, taste, touch, chew, and swallow; cry out in pain; and convey a world of feelings and emotions through facial expressions. Taking good care of your oral health extends far beyond maintaining healthy teeth and gums. It also improves your quality of life.

In recent years, poor oral health, particularly gum disease, has been associated with several general health conditions.

What problems could poor oral health cause?

- Heart disease,
- Endocarditis
- Strokes,
- Diabetes,
- Alzheimer's disease
- HIV/AIDS

8 Ways To Ensure Good Oral Health

- Thoroughly brush your teeth, gums, tongue, and cheeks at least twice daily (brush after meals, using a soft toothbrush with a small head) using a toothpaste. Brush for two minutes each time.
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or sooner if bristles are splayed or worn.
- Floss daily.
- Ensure a healthy diet by limiting sugary and acidic foods and drinks.
- Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol.
- Drink more water.
- Visit your dentist every six months for a check-up, or more frequently if you are experiencing any concerns.
- Orthodontics also play a role in your oral health. Having straight teeth is about more than just a pretty smile – aligned teeth and jaws make for easier cleaning, and less chance of grinding, cracking, chipping and decay.
- Also, contact your dentist as soon as an oral health problem arises. Taking care of your oral health is an investment in your overall health.



The CEO Glow-Up: How Self-Care Fuels Success

Torera Banjo - Founder Toriara Naturals (2022 Cohort)

Running a business in Nigeria - or anywhere with such a relentless pace - can be exhilarating, but let's be honest, it's also draining. From endless meetings to unpredictable traffic, managing teams and delivering results, the hustle never slows. But here's the truth I have learnt as a founder: you cannot pour from an empty cup.

I've seen it in my own journey at Toriara Naturals, a brand rooted in self-love, rest, and rejuvenation. The more I nurture myself, the more clarity, creativity, and courage I bring into my work. Self-care isn't indulgence, it's fuel. It's the quiet force that allows us to keep showing up with vision and energy.

Why it matters for us as Entrepreneur?

Our bodies and minds are our most important business assets. Just as we maintain our business systems, we need to maintain us. The entrepreneurship hustle culture can be rewarding, but without intentional pauses, burnout creeps in often silently. Embedding small, consistent self-care rituals into your daily, weekly, and monthly flow keeps you balanced, resilient, and able to lead with joy.

The good news is that Self-care doesn't have to be time-consuming. Even in the busiest schedule, there's space for nourishing moments that ground you and help you reset.

Here's a gentle, quick, and deeply nurturing 5-Step Self-Care Routine on the Go:

1. The Reset Cleanse (2–3 minutes)

After a long day, step into the shower and wash away the noise literally. Use a gentle, natural body wash that soothes your senses. Close your eyes. Let the water carry the stress away.

2. The Glow Polish (3–5 minutes)

While your skin is still warm, exfoliate with a soft, creamy scrub. Imagine you're polishing off not just dull skin, but the fatigue and mental clutter of the day. Feel your body lighten.

3. The Comfort Wrap (2 minutes)

Massage in a rich body butter or nourishing oil. This isn't just skincare, it's self-affection. Take a deep breath as you work it into your skin. Let this be a moment where you say to yourself, "I deserve this."

4. The Mind Pause (5 minutes)

Sit, light a candle or simply find a quiet corner. Close your eyes. Breathe in for four counts, hold for four, exhale for four. Even in the everyday noise, you can create an island of peace.

5. The Gratitude Close (1 minute)

Before bed, think of one thing you're grateful for today big or small. This helps you end the day in abundance, not depletion.

These steps together take less than 15 minutes, but the ripple effect on your energy and mindset is lasting.

I know you have goals, deadlines, and dreams bigger than the skyline. But remember: your well-being is the foundation that holds it all up. Prioritize it, fiercely. You'll find that when you care for yourself, your business and your life flourish in ways you never imagined.

Dear boss lady, weaving self-care into your entrepreneurial life isn't an indulgence it's a radical act of preservation and empowerment.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The Nexus of Nature: Leading a Green Movement with Purpose- Cultivating a Green-Conscious Nigeria

Olusola Sowemimo (Founder, Ope Farms, Convener, Nexus of Nature)

On May 1st, 2025, a dream rooted in soil and purpose came alive.

At the Science of Trade Conference held at the Landmark Event Centre, Oniru, we launched Nexus of Nature — a movement designed to reshape how we think, act, and grow in harmony with our environment.

With the Honourable Commissioner for Trade, Commerce & Cooperatives, Mrs. Folashade Ambrose Medebem, officiating the launch, and key stakeholders like Mr. Emmanuel Fatai Audu (Permanent Secretary representing the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Lagos State) and Mr. Ayo Sotinrin (Managing Director, Bank of Agriculture) present, the foundation of something transformational was laid.

At its heart, Nexus of Nature is not only an initiative, it's a movement. It exists to unite conversations around sustainability, health, trade, and innovation under one roof.

As the convener, I envisioned a space where the power of nature could be matched with the precision of strategy — and this is why the Organic Hub was born as an interactive, dynamic pavilion within the Science of Trade Conference. It became a rallying point for stakeholders across the organic food ecosystem, clean technology, and green entrepreneurship. It was not only about now, we talked about the future: A Green Economy Institute: Building from the Ground Up.

One of our major long-term ambitions is the establishment of Nigeria's first Green Economy Institute — a learning, incubation, and training centre focused on:

- Organic farming and regenerative agriculture
- Eco-conscious business models
- Sustainable energy and clean tech

- Policy design for inclusive green growth

We are laying the foundation for a space where everything green can be taught, modeled, and scaled. The institute will inform, and above all, transform.

Our Core Mission

- Promote green investments and inclusive economic development
- Educate on the power of organic and sustainable farming
- Inspire cross-sector collaboration for a healthier planet
- Build a community of green champions through action and advocacy

The Nexus of Nature is growing. With every voice added, every hand joined, and every idea birthed, we are reshaping the future of green enterprise in Nigeria.

We believe in:

- Growing food that heals
- Leading businesses that give back to the earth
- Creating knowledge that outlives us

We're calling on dreamers, doers, policymakers, farmers, techies, and teachers. The future is green and we all have a part to play. Let's keep growing this green movement — one voice, one action, one harvest at a time.

The Future is Circular: Why Every Business Must Embrace the Circular Economy

Uchenna Ibe, (CEO, Ivy League Collections/2021 Cohort)



In today's world of environmental urgency and resource scarcity, adopting a circular economy is no longer optional. Moving away from the linear model of produce, use, and dispose toward a regenerative system is essential for long-term resilience and growth.

Many industries now see the circular economy as a pathway to innovation and differentiation. It encourages us to rethink how we design, produce, and consume, thereby creating value while protecting our planet.

Why It Matters

The traditional linear model relies on extracting raw materials, manufacturing, and waste disposal, which drives environmental degradation and increases costs. In fashion, success often means producing and selling more garments, which can fuel overproduction and waste. Similarly, beverage companies focusing solely on single-use bottles miss opportunities for loyalty through refill or reuse programs.

Our advocacy has emphasised the importance of circular principles, such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, and product longevity, particularly in the hospitality, fashion, and interior design sectors. By integrating these concepts into mainstream standards, we demonstrate that sustainability and profitability can coexist.

The Benefits

The circular economy offers a transformative alternative by designing waste out of the system, extending product lifecycles, and regenerating natural systems. Brands adopting models like rental, repair, and resale maintain consumer engagement and generate revenue without increasing resource extraction. For example, refill programs foster loyalty and reduce environmental footprints.

Leaders must champion this shift. Circular practices enable companies to differentiate themselves, build trust, and mitigate risks associated with resource volatility and regulatory changes. They also open new revenue streams, reduce costs, and promote social inclusion through vocational training.

Ivy League Collections, for instance, has empowered over the years 1,600 young people with skills, demonstrating the social impact of sustainable business models.

Transitioning to a circular economy is vital for future-proofing organisations, fostering innovation, resilience, and social change. Embracing these principles ensures a sustainable future for both business and the planet.



06

Partner
Collaborations

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Collaborating for Greater Impact

From the U.S. Embassy to local governments and private sector allies, our partners have amplified our work. Together, we've hosted clinics, sponsored innovation labs, and pushed for inclusive policies. These collaborations demonstrate that a shared vision yields deeper results.



PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Empowering the Next Generation: Inside the 2025 Lagos Student Entrepreneurship Certificate Program



In a vibrant display of innovation and international collaboration, the 2025 Lagos Entrepreneurship Certificate Program (LSECP) has emerged as a transformative initiative for student entrepreneurs across Lagos. Organised by the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) in partnership with the U.S. Consulate, this six-week virtual training program equipped over 100 students from Lagos-based universities and polytechnics with essential business skills, mentorship, and startup support.

At the graduation, Julie McKay, Public Affairs Officer of U.S. Consulate General Lagos, said the U.S. Consulate supports the training of entrepreneurs because programs like this help strengthen the relationship between Nigeria and the USA to be safer, stronger and more prosperous.

Designed to bridge the gap between academic theory and entrepreneurial practice, LSECP delivered hands-on training through expert-led sessions on business planning, funding, marketing, legal structuring, and digital tools. Facilitators included prominent industry voices such as Ewajesu Fasina, Oluwakemi Oyebanji, Uzoamaka Igweike, Oby Okeke and representatives from Bumpa, among others.

The program culminated in a business pitch competition where students showcased scalable startup ideas. Notably, 20 participants received vital equipment grants ranging from sewing machines to baking mixers, while 15 others secured free business registrations through the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), paving the way for formal market entry sponsored by a member of our Board of Trustees, Barr. Peju Jaiyeoba. Members of the Association served as trainers and mentors for student entrepreneurs.

A highlight of the program was its closeout ceremony, where representatives from the U.S. Consulate awarded participants with certificates and startup kits, reinforcing the initiative's global engagement objective. Through mentorship from AWEAA members and interaction with key ecosystem leaders, participants left with sharpened business acumen and heightened confidence.

LSECP continues to drive cross-sector innovation, empowering young entrepreneurs in fields such as fashion, food, technology, wellness, and retail, while strengthening institutional ties between the U.S. Mission and local entrepreneurship networks.

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

When West Met East: AWEAA Nigeria Meets Kenya in a Cross-Regional Network

Beautiful things happen when powerful women from across borders come together! Ideas flow, connections spark, and the seeds of continental transformation are planted. That was exactly the energy when we (AWEAA Nigeria) linked up with our counterparts in Kenya for a vibrant afternoon of knowledge sharing, networking, and sisterhood.

This wasn't just another meetup. This was a meeting between West Africa and East Africa. It was Nigeria; bold, brilliant, and business-savvy in conversation with Kenya; strategic, driven, and dynamic. Together, we embodied the spirit of African resilience, leadership, and innovation.

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," doesn't just lead by numbers; we lead with grit, creativity, and entrepreneurial fire. Kenya, the economic heartbeat of East Africa, brings structure, innovation, and tenacity. This meeting of minds felt less like a networking event and more like the beginning of a continental movement.

The conversations were rich! From discussing the unique processes used in each country to dissecting

the shared challenges faced by women entrepreneurs across the continent, the energy in the room was palpable. Real talk. Real solutions. Real sisterhood.

Nigeria is now supporting Kenya in establishing its own Alumnae Association. That's what community is about: reaching across borders to lift one another. Because when women support women, especially across countries, we begin to shift the narrative of what's possible for African entrepreneurs.

The room was filled with laughter, ideas, inspiration, and even the start of a few cross-border collaborations. It wasn't just a moment; it was the beginning of a movement.

As one Kenyan alum put it, "This is the kind of Africa we dream of; connected, collaborative, and committed to lifting each other."



PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Waste to Wealth



In the heart of Ibadan, Oyo State, a group of passionate young people gathered at The Waste Museum by Jumoke Olowookere (2019 Cohort) for a truly transformative experience, a Waste Upcycling Skill Training organised by the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA), in partnership with the U.S. Mission in Nigeria. What began as a simple introduction to the world of upcycling quickly evolved into a week of discovery, creativity, and empowerment.

From discarded tyres to plastic bottles, participants were shown how everyday waste could be turned into beautiful, functional pieces of furniture. Guided by experts in sustainable design, they learned not only how to sort and prepare materials but also how to craft items that could earn them a living. The training focused on creating items such as colourful tyre coffee tables, sturdy outdoor seats, and ottomans made from plastic bottles, all designed to be both practical and marketable.

Inside the walls of The Waste Museum, inspiration filled the air. Participants toured the space, asked questions,

and transformed discarded materials into products that were as stylish as they were sustainable through painting, weaving, building, and shaping. It was more than just a skill-building workshop; it was a crash course in environmental responsibility, entrepreneurship, and creative confidence.

By the end of the training, the transformation was clear — not just in the furniture that had taken shape, but in the faces of the participants, now beaming with pride. The graduation ceremony marked a new beginning, as each participant left with the knowledge and tools to make a tangible difference in their communities, in their homes, and in their futures.

This initiative is another bold step in AWEAA's mission to equip youth with practical skills that merge sustainability with opportunity. Through this program, waste became wealth, and young Nigerians became change-makers, ready to clean up their environment and cash in on their creativity.

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Bright Ideas, Big Dreams: How “Project 50 Kids” is Sparking a New Wave of Young Entrepreneurs in Ogun State

Who says you have to wait until adulthood to become an entrepreneur? Definitely not the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) Alumnae Association. In partnership with the U.S. Consulate Lagos and other supporters, AWEAA recently launched Project 50 Kids, a bold and exciting initiative that’s helping secondary school students in Ogun State tap into their creativity, build real-world business skills, and dream bigger than ever before.

The project brought together over 60 students from 10 different public and private secondary schools. Alongside their teachers, these students stepped into a hands-on, energy-packed program designed to open their eyes to the world of entrepreneurship, and it did just that.

Facilitators were alumnae from South West Nigeria: Damilola Onebamion, Issah Aishat Oluwatosin, Jumoke Olowo-Waste, Victoria Ajayi, Juliet Obi, Oluwayemisi Oguh, and Oluwadunsin Bolaji. The project was coordinated by Funmilola Agbayewa. “It was about showing these students how to believe in themselves, use their talents, and turn big ideas into real opportunities.”

From learning how to create and pitch business ideas to discovering how their hobbies could become

money-making ventures, the students absorbed lessons on everything from creativity and financial literacy to environmental awareness and soft skills, such as confidence and communication. Even better? They got to meet and interact with real entrepreneurs who shared their journeys, struggles, and wins, proving that success is within reach at any age.

Teachers who tagged along were just as inspired, calling the experience refreshing and eye-opening. “It’s amazing to see how quickly young minds come alive when given the right tools and encouragement,” one teacher shared.

But the best part? Project 50 Kids is more than just a one-off event. It’s planting seeds for long-term change, giving students not only the skills to succeed but the mindset to lead. And with AWEAA and the U.S. Consulate behind it, the program is setting the stage for a generation of young changemakers ready to take on the world.

In a time when creativity, innovation, and confidence are more important than ever, Project 50 Kids proves that the future is in good hands, and it’s already getting to work.



PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

AWEAA Celebrates International Day of the Girl Child

In a world where opportunities for girls are still limited by cultural, economic, and societal barriers, we continue to shine a light on the power of empowerment. In celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child, with the support of the U.S. Consulate in Lagos, the Association hosted an inspiring and transformative experience for public secondary school girls in Lagos, reminding them that their dreams are valid and their futures are powerful.

Held in a welcoming and thoughtful atmosphere of the American Corner, Ikeja, the event featured a movie screening experience that went far beyond entertainment. It was a strategic and meaningful tool to spark conversations around leadership, unity, courage, and growth. The film, rich in lessons and symbolism, stirred the girls' imagination, teaching them the importance of collaboration, vision, and resilience in the face of obstacles.

More than just a day out of school, this gathering was a call to action. Alumnae who are big sisters emphasised the pivotal role of girls in Nigeria's economic growth, urging them to rise above limitations and pursue their ambitions boldly. The event underscored a message that cannot be repeated enough: Girls are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are the change-makers of today.

By reaching girls at the secondary school level, the association plants seeds of self-belief and ambition. "This event served as a catalyst for inspiring the next generation of leaders. We want them to know they are not invisible. They are seen. They are heard. And they matter."

The theme of unity and collaboration resonated strongly, both in the film and in the subsequent discussions. Students like Abujere Elisabeth from Festac Girls Senior Secondary School shared how the movie helped her understand the value of teamwork and leadership. Idera Jackrot from Ayangbure Junior Secondary School in Ikorodu expressed heartfelt gratitude, pledging to carry the lessons forward and put them into action.

At its core, this celebration wasn't just about girls watching a movie. It was about shifting mindsets, opening eyes, and unlocking potential. It was about showing young girls that the future is theirs, and they don't have to wait to claim it.

The girls left inspired, and the rest of us were reminded that investing in them is one of the most powerful ways to build a better, more equitable future for all.



PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Caring Beyond Commerce: AWEAA's Women's Health Outreach Lights Up Alade Market

Pharm. Kafayat Badaru, Founder, Santeforte Pharmacy/2020 Cohort.

In a vibrant blend of compassion and community impact, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) hosted a robust women's health medical outreach at Alade Market, Lagos, bringing essential health services directly to the heart of where women live and work.

This project, organised by the health sector of AWEAA, was designed as both an inreach for association members and an outreach for the wider community, especially market women who often prioritise their families and businesses over their well-being.

The Iyalode of Alade Market, Chief Aina Adenuga, encouraged traders to maximise the opportunity and seek further medication if necessary.

With strong support from health partners Luxe Dental (Dr Funmi Adeniyi), El Rol Diagnosis Centre (Mary Olayinka), Segunfunmi Cancer Support Foundation (Funmilola Agbayewa) and Santéforte Pharmacy (Kafayat Badaru), the outreach delivered a full suite of services including blood pressure checks, BMI

measurements, nutrition counselling, dental screenings, and breast cancer screenings.

The turnout was remarkable, with over 100 market women receiving free health assessments, valuable education, and warm encouragement. From the cheerful chatter during dental checkups to the hopeful questions asked during breast screenings, the day was filled with connection, care, and a renewed sense of purpose. Many of the market participants shared that they had never had a dental or breast check-up before; the kind of feedback that reminds us why our work matters.

AWE Women's Health Awareness instilled a strong sense that this was just the beginning of a longer journey, one toward better self-care, early detection, and lasting lifestyle changes.

AWEAA is grateful to everyone who made the outreach a success, from the medical volunteers and partners to the women who showed up for themselves. Together, they proved that when women are supported, healthier communities thrive.



PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

Event Report: Global Youth Skills Day Celebration at America Corner, Abuja



In celebration of Global Youth Skills Day, the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Alumnae Association (AWEAA) hosted a dynamic and engaging skills development event at America Corner, Abuja, in partnership with the United States Embassy in Abuja. The program brought together facilitators and young participants in a shared mission to explore and build valuable skills in product and UX design.

The event commenced with an interactive session where participants and facilitators examined various product and UX design models. The atmosphere was charged with energy and anticipation, reflecting the enthusiasm of the youth eager to learn and innovate.

Throughout the day, participants were immersed in hands-on activities, design thinking exercises, and collaborative discussions designed to nurture creativity, problem-solving, and digital skills essential for the

modern workforce. The facilitators included Dr Inya Lawal, President of Ascend Studios Foundation, Abuja FCT Alumnae; Dr Naomi Osemudua; Lois Ugbe; Blessing Abolorunke; Joy Oghenemano; and Damilola Anwo-Ade, Founder of Sprout Digital.

The event successfully inspired and empowered young attendees, providing them with practical exposure to the principles of user-centred design. It also reinforced the importance of youth empowerment through targeted skill development, aligning with the broader goals of Global Youth Skills Day.

The celebration at America Corner Abuja marked a significant step in advancing youth capacity-building efforts. Through AWEAA's leadership and the support of strategic partners, the event created a platform for learning, innovation, and growth, leaving participants motivated and better equipped for future opportunities.

PARTNER COLLABORATIONS

AWEAA's Back-to-School Drive Empowers Students Across Nigeria



The African Women Entrepreneurs and Advocates Association (AWEAA), led by Benita Afolabi and Juliet Obi of Kidspreneur Africa, carried out a transformative Back-to-School Drive across Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Enugu, Abuja, Uyo, Anambra, Lagos Mainland, and Lagos Island.

AWEAA alums and state reps visited schools, engaging students in meaningful conversations on the importance of education and entrepreneurship. These sessions inspired students to see themselves not only as learners but as future leaders and innovators.

In addition to mentorship, students received essential school supplies, including notebooks, while others got personal care donated by Toke Cosmetics and Unilever. These items support both academic readiness and personal hygiene, key factors in a child's confidence and well-being.

This initiative reflects AWEAA's commitment to grassroots impact and empowerment, proving that sustainable change begins with investing in our youth.



07

The Road Ahead



CLOSING REFLECTION

We are the Women We've been waiting For!

This magazine has shown what happens when women lead with purpose and act in unity. As we continue our journey, may we never forget: we are not just participants in Africa's future, we are its architects!



Empowered Women. Empowering Africa.

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