

AWEP-IVLP Program Evaluation Report

July 2017

Prepared by General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT)

GENERAL DYNAMICS
Information Technology

In collaboration with The District Communications Group (DCG)
Under the BPA for DOS IIP Research



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AWEP-IVLP PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT

July 2017
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To download a full copy of this report and its executive summary, visit
<http://eca.state.gov/impact/evaluation-eca>

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGOA – African Growth and Opportunity Act

AWEF – African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program

CSR – corporate social responsibility

DCG – The District Communications Group

DOS – U.S. Department of State

ECA –Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

GDIT – General Dynamics Information Technology

IVLP – International Visitor Leadership Program

MCA – Millennium Challenge Account

MCC – Millennium Challenge Corporation

Executive Summary

Evaluation Overview

Since 2010, the U.S. Department of State has sponsored the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP), an outreach, education, and engagement initiative that assists women entrepreneurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa. One component of AWEP is an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), which brings approximately 30 African women entrepreneurs to the United States each year for a 3-week professional exchange. In 2015, the Evaluation Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) contracted GDIT and The District Communications Group to conduct a study evaluating the extent to which the AWEP-IVLP program met the following U.S. foreign policy goals:¹

- Increase trade both regionally and to U.S. markets, including through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
- Promote the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs
- Create better business environments for African women entrepreneurs
- Empower African women entrepreneurs to become voices of change/social advocacy in their communities

The study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. In-country fieldwork was conducted in four countries in East and West Africa (Benin, Ghana, Kenya, and Madagascar) between June and July 2016. Each fieldwork visit included site visits to AWEP-IVLP participants' businesses, as well as in-depth interviews with participants, impactees (employees and others who were impacted by the participants' follow-up activities), local professionals with expertise in women's business and entrepreneurship, and U.S. Embassy officials and staff. The fieldwork was supplemented by telephone in-depth interviews with 20 participants from various countries in Central and Southern Africa, as well as a telephone survey, to which 87 participants across sub-Saharan Africa responded (with a response rate of 48%). In total, the study collected data from 133 of the 181 AWEP-IVLP participants (from the 5 cohorts between 2011 and 2015), as well as 35 impactees, 8 experts, and 10 Embassy personnel.

A. Key Findings

IMPACTS OF AWEP-IVLP ON U.S.–AFRICA AND REGIONAL TRADE

- As a result of AWEP-IVLP participation, 72% of surveyed participants *expanded into new local, regional, and/or international markets*. Interviewed participants attributed their success to their expanded networks, improved product quality, and improved marketing strategies. In particular, staying in touch with fellow AWEP-IVLP alumnae via social media networks has given participants opportunities to export or introduce their products to other African countries. These new networks have contributed to *increasing trade regionally*.
- Only a third (35%) of surveyed participants gained *access to U.S. markets* through the program, largely due to difficulties meeting export requirements, paying fees, and

¹ Adapted from the AWEP Mission Statement: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs. "African Women's Entrepreneurship Program." <https://www.state.gov/p/af/rt/awep/index.htm>. Accessed June 19, 2017.

completing necessary paperwork. Nonetheless, several interviewed participants were able to capitalize on contacts made during the program. Success stories include:

- ❖ A Beninese participant began supplying soaps to Whole Foods in Washington, DC, after meeting a store representative at the AWEP-IVLP business fair.
- ❖ A Kenyan participant established a contract with Walmart for her crafts, and said she was planning to build a warehouse in the United States to fulfill anticipated orders.
- ❖ A Malagasy participant received an unprecedented order for 600,000 hats and bags from a U.S. customer met at a trade show during the program.

IMPACTS OF AWEP-IVLP ON WOMEN'S BUSINESSES IN AFRICA

- Most surveyed participants felt that AWEP-IVLP had *improved their key business abilities* (much/very much), including communication with employees and customers (90%), branding and marketing (84%), and sales strategies (81%).
 - **Impactees:** Nearly all interviewed impactees also benefited from learning new skills from the participants.
- Thanks to the program, 9 in 10 surveyed participants felt *more confident* about their business abilities, more optimistic about their futures, and better equipped to deal with potential uncertainty.
 - **Impactees:** Many interviewed impactees also felt more confident in their skills thanks to encouragement and training from the participants.
- More than 80% of surveyed participants *expanded their business networks*, including fellow women entrepreneurs from their AWEP-IVLP cohort across Africa, U.S. women entrepreneurs and other business representatives, and U.S. Embassy contacts in their countries.
 - **Impactees:** Some interviewed participants also have shared new contacts with impactees.
- After the program, participants used their new abilities, ideas, and networks *to improve their businesses*. The majority of surveyed participants developed new management procedures (72%); made better use of technology, e.g. social media (71%); improved their marketing (68%); improved their business plan (66%); and adopted industry standards for quality (66%).
- Interviewed participants emphasized the importance of employing a *more inclusive leadership style* that involves training and empowering employees, as well as *marketing via social media and internet*. Whereas many of them had no digital marketing platform prior to the program, most interviewed participants reported that afterwards they began using WhatsApp, Facebook, and/or company websites to promote and sell their products.
- Most surveyed participants (86%) agreed that AWEP-IVLP had helped them *grow their business* (much/very much). Most notably, more than 60% reported both *increased sales and increased revenue or profits*. A few interviewed participants said they had doubled or tripled their sales thanks to improvements and expansions made since the program. By exposing participants to new marketing techniques, product quality improvements, and management procedures, the program supports the foreign policy goal of *promoting the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs*.

- **Impactees:** Some impactees accessed new customers for their businesses thanks to new contacts that participants shared with them or business improvements made with skills learned from participants.

IMPACTS OF AWEP-IVLP ON AFRICAN WOMEN'S BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS AND COMMUNITIES

- After the program, nearly all the surveyed participants felt motivated to *become leaders in their communities* (98%) and encouraged business partners and peers to help their communities (95%).
- Most interviewed and surveyed participants agreed that the AWEP-IVLP program had encouraged them to employ *corporate social responsibility* practices in their businesses. More than two-thirds of surveyed participants reported that the program had influenced their businesses' environment-friendly practices (70%); procedures to improve employees' work-life balance (69%); and policies ensuring fair treatment and pay for workers (69%). In addition, more than 50% of surveyed participants reported that their businesses had given away free products to help people in their communities.
- The program is effective in *empowering women entrepreneurs to become voices of change*. Nearly all surveyed participants (97%) felt encouraged to *advocate for African women* after the program. Indeed, interviewed participants described becoming vocal advocates for women in business both through new and established organizations (82% of surveyed participants) and by advocating for changes in laws (53%). Impactees confirmed that many participants have come to be seen as role models among girls and women in their communities.
- The program also influenced 85% of participants to *volunteer or do community service for women*. In particular, many interviewed participants have provided training and/or mentoring to women and youth, as well as helped women in the business world, *creating better business environments for women entrepreneurs* in their communities.

IMPACTS OF AWEP-IVLP ON WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Two-thirds (67 percent) of the surveyed participants reported that the AWEP-IVLP program had motivated them to pursue additional educational opportunities. Interviewed participants most commonly mentioned pursuing higher education or professional training.
 - **Impactees:** Some of the interviewed impactees—particularly participants' employees—also obtained professional training thanks to the participants' encouragement. Furthermore, thanks to the business and communication skills learned from participants, some impactees were able to obtain new jobs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation demonstrated that AWEP-IVLP has effectively supported three of the four foreign policy goals listed above. However, the goal of increasing trade both regionally (within Africa) and from Africa to U.S. markets has only partially been met. While many participants have increased their exports within Africa, only a few have succeeded in exporting to the United States. Based on the data collected and direct field observations, the evaluation team offers the following recommendations.

Recommendations for AWEP-IVLP Program Activities:

- Allow more time for industry-specific site visits and networking with U.S. business representatives to help participants *access U.S. markets*.
- Provide extensive guidance on how to export to the United States, especially under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)²—which provides duty-free exporting for eligible products—in order to help *increase trade to the United States*.

Recommendations for Embassy Follow-up with Alumnae:

- Provide more guidance on the requirements for exporting to the United States, perhaps by offering a workshop on how to take advantage of the preferential export terms available under AGOA.
- Provide more professional development workshops to help *create better business environments for African women entrepreneurs and promote the growth of their businesses*.
- Help to facilitate opportunities, such as the existing annual Embassy bazaar offered in some countries, for AWEP-IVLP alumnae to market their products to potential customers, in order to further *promote the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs*.
- Help to facilitate networking and opportunities for AWEP-IVLP alumnae to collaborate on projects benefiting women in business, in order to *create better business environments for African women entrepreneurs*.

² AGOA provides duty-free market access to the United States for approximately 6,500 products from 38 sub-Saharan African beneficiary countries, as of June 2017. <https://agoa.info/>

Introduction

A. AWEP-IVLP Overview

Since 2010, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) has sponsored the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP), an outreach, education, and engagement initiative that assists women entrepreneurs throughout sub-Saharan Africa. A key component of AWEP is the International Visitor Leadership Program (AWEP-IVLP), coordinated by the Office of International Visitors within the DOS Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).³

Definition of Terms

- AWEP refers to the broader DOS African Women's Entrepreneurship Program.
- AWEP-IVLP refers to the IVLP component of the AWEP program.

AWEP-IVLP brings approximately 30 African women entrepreneurs to the United States each year for a 3-week professional exchange. Between 2011 and 2015 (the period covered by this study), 181 women from 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa participated in the program. The program activities, such as meetings, workshops, and site visits, are designed to help the participants build business alliances, develop advocacy and communication skills, identify resources to advance women's entrepreneurship, and take advantage of opportunities for U.S. business partnerships. The program creates networking opportunities between the AWEP-IVLP participants and U.S. businesspeople to share innovative business strategies and best practices. In addition, the AWEP-IVLP experience assists sub-Saharan African businesswomen in understanding and expanding the roles that women can play as advocates for changes in laws, regulations, and incentives that support a business environment conducive to women's participation.

Between 2011 and 2015, the program focused on three main sectors: agribusiness and food processing; textiles and fashion; and home accessories. Program activities included: a) learning about business trends, trade opportunities and market development in the agribusiness, textiles and fashion, and home accessories sectors; b) providing an overview of American business development, emphasizing how U.S. entrepreneurs foster innovation, economic growth and job creation; c) learning how barriers have been reduced, increasing opportunities for U.S. women entrepreneurs through changes in business practices and the

AWEP-IVLP Program at a Glance

History and Scale

- Started in 2010 with mixed French- and English-speaking groups; now groups are separated
- More than 200 women entrepreneurs from 48 sub-Saharan African countries have participated

Program Components

- Exposure to U.S. businesses
- U.S. culture and democratic values
- Leadership and confidence building
- Community service and civic engagement
- Use of technology (social media)

Activities

- Field visits to similar industries
- Workshops
- Multi-speaker events
- Cultural events
- Meetings with U.S. business and government representatives

³ AWEP has local chapters in various countries around the continent for women entrepreneurs to support each other. Some AWEP-IVLP participants become involved in or create local chapters after returning home from the exchange program.

evolution of U.S. laws and regulations; d) developing skills, such as leading and growing a business, marketing and communication, advocating for women's economic empowerment, and social entrepreneurship; e) meetings with women-run enterprises in agribusiness and food processing, textiles and fashion, and home accessories; f) learning about industry standards, codes of ethics and corporate social responsibility; and g) gaining knowledge about entrepreneurship through discussions with U.S. entrepreneurs, marketers, bankers, business advocacy groups, leading entrepreneurship organizations, schools and government officials.

B. Evaluation Overview and Methodology

In 2015, ECA's Evaluation Division contracted GDIT, in collaboration with The District Communications Group (DCG), to conduct an evaluation assessing the extent to which the AWEF-IVLP program met the following U.S. foreign policy goals:⁴

1. Increase trade both regionally and to U.S. markets, including through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
2. Promote the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs
3. Create better business environments for African women entrepreneurs
4. Empower African women entrepreneurs to become voices of change/social advocacy in their communities

The evaluation employed an innovative, mixed-methods design in order to collect data from as many participants as possible, as well as other stakeholders. Qualitative and quantitative methods included: face-to-face and telephone in-depth interviews with participants;⁵ face-to-face in-depth interviews with impactees (as defined below); a telephone survey of participants;⁶ and face-to-face in-depth interviews with other stakeholders (local experts and U.S. Embassy officials and staff).

Research participants. The terms and definitions used in this report are as follows:

- *Surveyed participant* or *survey respondent* refers to the AWEF-IVLP participants who responded to the telephone survey (87 respondents).
- *Interviewed participant* refers both to participants who were interviewed in person

Profile of Surveyed Participants

Age

40% between 20-40 years
44% between 40-55 years
16% over 55

Education (highest attainment)

75% university (partial or completed)
14% trade/technical school (partial or completed)
8% completed secondary school
3% partial secondary school

Previous U.S. Travel

42% 1 time
20% 2 to 3 times
20% 4 to 6 times
18% 6 or more times

N=87 survey respondents.

All percentages are rounded.

⁴ Adapted from the AWEF Mission Statement: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs. "African Women's Entrepreneurship Program." <https://www.state.gov/p/af/rt/awep/index.htm>. Accessed June 19, 2017.

⁵ In the original evaluation design, GDIT planned to organize two focus groups (via telephone or Skype), one with participants from Francophone countries and one with participants from Anglophone countries. However, it proved impossible to hold these groups, due to time differences and technological difficulties. The focus groups were replaced with the 20 telephone in-depth interviews.

⁶ The survey was conducted using the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) method, where the interviewer asks questions by telephone and records the answers on a computer, which increases the efficiency of data collection.

during the fieldwork site visits (26 respondents) and those who were interviewed by telephone (20 respondents).

- *Impactee* refers to employees and others who have been impacted by participants' follow-up activities, such as business partners or community members who have been mentored by participants (35 respondents). The impactees were identified by participants in each fieldwork country and were interviewed in person to discuss the impacts of participants' activities on their own careers, businesses, and/or broader communities.
- *Expert* refers to local professionals with expertise on women's entrepreneurship who were interviewed in person during the fieldwork (8 respondents). Experts included university professors and leaders of business organizations.
- *AWEP-IVLP cohort* refers to the group of women who participated in the same AWEP-IVLP visit (2011 cohort, 2012 cohort, etc.).
- *AWEP-IVLP alumnae* refers generally to all AWEP-IVLP participants from the five cohorts between 2011 and 2015.

In-country fieldwork was conducted in four countries (Ghana, Benin, Kenya, and Madagascar) between June and July 2016. These countries were selected based on several criteria: equal representation of East and West Africa and of Francophone and Anglophone countries; presence of 6-8 AWEP-IVLP participants (2011–2015 cohorts); location of most participants in or near the main city; presence of a quality local research partner; and presence of program experts at the U.S. Post. The fieldwork team was composed of two GDIT/DCG representatives and the ECA senior research representative.

The in-country fieldwork was supplemented by telephone in-depth interviews with 20 participants from various countries in Central and Southern Africa, as well as a telephone survey of participants throughout sub-Saharan Africa, to which 87 participants responded (with a response rate of 48%). (See Table 2 for complete list of countries.) The in-depth interviews and survey interviews were conducted by fluent speakers in the participant's language of choice (English, French, or Portuguese). All French and Portuguese responses were translated into English by professional translators for the purpose of data analysis.

The fieldwork team worked closely with a local research partner based in Ghana, which served as the hub for the research as well as the site for the first fieldwork visit. In Ghana, the GDIT/DCG team worked with the local partner to pilot and test the research methods to be applied in the other countries, as well as to supervise the launch of the telephone interviews and survey. The local partner at the research hub was also responsible for compiling all the data collected.

As shown in Table 1 and Table 2, the evaluation team collected data from 133 AWEP-IVLP participants across sub-Saharan Africa (out of 181 total participants from 2011 to 2015), as well as 35 impactees, 8 experts, and 10 Embassy personnel in the 4 fieldwork countries.

Table 1. Research Audience by Method and Geographic Region

Methods and geographical distribution of activities		Place of Performance	Participants	Impactees	Experts	Embassy staff	Total
<i>Fieldwork in 4 countries East and West Africa (Ghana, Benin, Kenya, Madagascar)</i>							
Qualitative	In-Country In-Depth Interviews	4 countries	26*	35†	8	10	
<i>Fieldwork at the Hub (Central, South, Overall)</i>							
Qualitative	Telephone In-Depth Interviews – Francophone countries	Selected countries	10				
Qualitative	Telephone In-Depth Interviews – Anglophone countries	Selected countries	10				
Quantitative	Telephone survey	All of sub-Saharan Africa	87				
Total Research Audience			133**	35	8	10	186

*One of the Madagascar interviews was conducted by telephone, because the participant now lives outside the country.

†The 35 impactees include 19 employees; 8 community members; 3 business partners; 2 suppliers; 2 interns; and 1 client. Ten of the impactees (mostly employees) are male.

**133 represents the total number of research encounters (in-depth interviews and survey). However, the total number of participants reached may be slightly lower than 133, because a few of the survey respondents also participated in an in-depth interview.

Table 2. Country Distribution of AWEP-IVLP Participants Responding to Evaluation

Country	Languages	Telephone Survey	Telephone In-Depth Interviews	In-Country In-Depth Interviews	Total
Angola	Portuguese†	3			3
Benin	French			6	6
Botswana	English		3		3
Burkina Faso	French	4			4
Cabo Verde	Portuguese	2			2
Cameroon	French	1			1
Central African Republic	French		1		1
Chad	French		3		3
Comoros	French	1			1
Congo (Republic)	French	1	2		3
Congo (D.R.C.)	French		1		1
Cote D'Ivoire	French	4			4
Ethiopia	English	6			6
Gabon	French	2	2		4
The Gambia	English	3			3
Ghana	English			8	8
Guinea	French	4			4
Kenya	English			5	5
Lesotho	English	1			1
Liberia	English	3			3

Madagascar	French		1	6	7
Malawi	English	1			1
Mali	French	3			3
Mauritania	French	2			2
Mauritius	English/French	4			4
Mozambique	English/ Portuguese	3			3
Namibia	English	2	1		3
Niger	French	3			3
Nigeria	English	5			5
Rwanda	English/French	4	1		5
Sao Tome and Principe	Portuguese	2			2
Senegal	French	2			2
Sierra Leone	English	1			1
South Africa	English		3		3
Sudan	English	1			1
Swaziland	English	2	2		4
Tanzania	English	5			5
Togo	French	2			2
Uganda	English	1			1
Zambia	English	2			2
Zimbabwe	English	6			6

*Note: The total numbers here do not reflect the duplications of interviewed participants who also responded to the survey.

† Portuguese-speaking participants participated in AWEP-IVLP as part of an Anglophone or Francophone cohort, depending on their language competency.

Beyond staffing the evaluation team with subject matter experts in qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis, GDIT undertook the following measures to ensure the highest quality data were collected: in-person local research partner training (including training recruiters and interviewers) by the fieldwork team, strict translation procedures for all data collection instruments and outputs, and close supervision of survey data entry.

C. Program Context: Understanding African Socioeconomic Environments

In order to interpret and evaluate the successes and challenges of the AWEP-IVLP program in meeting foreign policy goals, it is critical first to understand the African socioeconomic contexts from which the AWEP-IVLP participants hail and in which they are operating and striving to grow their businesses. The following critical contextual elements were identified by experts from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, and Madagascar, and by participants themselves, in in-depth interviews.

In Africa women are key to the economy, according to the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs.⁷ In particular, women own most of the businesses in the informal sector, which accounts for 55 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP and 80 percent of the labor force. Nine in ten women workers (rural and urban) have informal jobs in Africa.⁸

⁷ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs. "African Women's Entrepreneurship Program." <https://www.state.gov/p/af/rt/awep/index.htm>. Accessed June 19, 2017.

⁸ African Development Bank. "Recognizing Africa's Informal Sector" (March 27, 2013). <https://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/recognizing-africas-informal-sector-11645/>. Accessed June 29, 2017.

Factors that motivate African women to become entrepreneurs. In addition to earning income to support their families, interviewed experts identified other key reasons why women become entrepreneurs:

- **Financial autonomy.** As mentioned by experts from Benin and Ghana, women invest in entrepreneurship in both urban and rural areas for emancipation vis-à-vis men. A woman who is economically independent and does not have to rely on financial resources from her husband has more decision-making power.
- **Gaining visibility in society.** Experts from Benin, Kenya, and Madagascar noted that women also become entrepreneurs to be more visible in society, to have a voice, and to contribute to their communities.

There is the need to become visible. When you don't have economic power, you cannot speak up in this society. You also need to provide for your children.
—Expert, Benin

Challenges faced by women within the business environment. Experts and Embassy staff identified many challenges faced by African women entrepreneurs.

- **Limited access to finance.** One of the most prevalent issues—mentioned by experts or Embassy officials in Benin, Ghana, and Kenya—is the lack of access to finance and the inability of women, particularly in rural areas, to own the title to their land, preventing them from using the land for collateral for a bank loan.
- **Family responsibilities and lack of support from husbands.** Women entrepreneurs in Africa have the challenge of balancing family life and responsibilities with the life of being an entrepreneur. According to an expert in Benin, in many parts of Africa there are perceptions that women entrepreneurs prioritize their businesses over their families or that a woman who is financially autonomous no longer respects her husband. Furthermore, according to the expert, some men suspect that women who travel and trade across the border have inappropriate relationships with men in customs. Therefore, husbands do not always support their wives' business endeavors.
- **Limited access to education.** In some African countries, women have less access to education than men. For example, in Madagascar, according to experts, girls are not always able to finish school because they need to help their siblings and their mothers, and they are expected to get married at a young age. Experts also noted that illiteracy among women is an issue in Ghana and Benin. A Ghanaian expert pointed out that women in rural areas have difficulty using a computer or smartphone because of their limited literacy skills. As a result, some interviewed participants in various countries mentioned that they have had a hard time finding skilled women personnel.
- **Limited access to business networks.** Experts in Ghana pointed out that women also face limitations obtaining access to business networks. Men typically have more connections in the business world than women do, which makes it harder for women to achieve success in their businesses.
- **Barriers to exporting.** Women entrepreneurs have difficulty covering the cost of exporting and meeting tariff requirements, according to interviewed participants. In Ghana, for

Rural Kenyan women buy property, but the title is put in the husband's name. Urban women are now acquiring property in their name, but some are not informing their partners that they have the property.
—Expert, Kenya

example, an expert explained that the application cost and taxes on exports are too high for most women entrepreneurs to afford. Although most participants had products that could be eligible for duty-free exporting through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA),⁹ many found the requirements and paperwork too complicated or felt that the chances of their application being accepted would be very low if they had a small business.

Other challenges in African business environments. Experts, Embassy staff, and interviewed participants also mentioned other general factors, such as the political and economic conditions in a particular country, that can have a negative impact on women entrepreneurs in Africa. For example, according to an Embassy official, in Madagascar the ongoing political instability “has made the business and investment environment particularly challenging,” resulting in the country temporarily losing AGOA eligibility (from 2010 to 2014).¹⁰ Also, an expert pointed out that Ghana has had some problems with electricity in recent years, which has negatively impacted production and distribution of products.

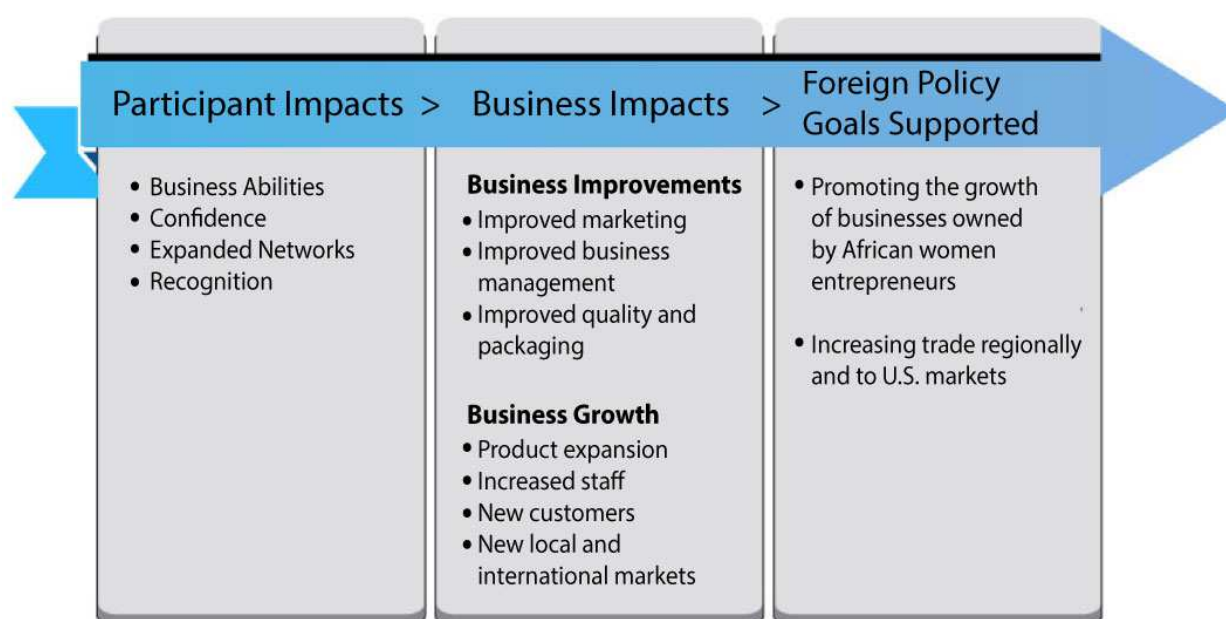
⁹ AGOA provides duty-free market access to the United States for approximately 6,500 products from 38 sub-Saharan African beneficiary countries, as of June 2017. <https://agoa.info/>

¹⁰ Office of the United States Trade Representative. “President Obama removes Swaziland, reinstates Madagascar for AGOA Benefits” (June 26, 2014). <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2014/June/President-Obama-removes-Swaziland-reinstates-Madagascar-for-AGOA-Benefits>. Accessed June 29, 2017.

I. Impacts of AWEP-IVLP on Women's Businesses in Africa

During the AWEP-IVLP program, participants had the opportunity to visit U.S. businesses owned by women entrepreneurs and to attend workshops and trade shows. All of these activities helped participants to increase their business abilities, gain confidence, and expand their networks locally and internationally. Upon returning home, participants used their new abilities, ideas, and networks to improve and expand their businesses and markets. They also shared their knowledge and contacts with impactees, such as fellow entrepreneurs, who were then able to improve their own businesses as a result. This chapter details the impacts of AWEP-IVLP on both participants' and impactees' businesses, illustrating how the program supports the foreign policy goals of promoting the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs and increasing trade both regionally and to U.S. markets.

Figure 1. AWEP-IVLP Supports African Women's Business Growth and Increased Trade



A. Advancing Women's Business Abilities

AWEP-IVLP participants developed new business abilities and skills through their program experience (Sec. 1 below). After returning home, they shared what they learned with their employees and other business contacts, thus multiplying the effect of the program by advancing the business abilities of other women in their communities (Sec. 2 below).

1. Participants Develop Business Abilities during AWEP-IVLP

While in the United States, participants visited U.S. businesses, where they had the opportunity to see the production processes used and the quality standards that U.S. businesses uphold, as well as to receive input from potential importers on how to improve and market their products. In addition, participants attended workshops on topics like business strategies, social media marketing, innovation, and pitching. Many interviewed participants also mentioned learning innovative ideas and business strategies from fellow participants in their AWEP-IVLP cohort.

As illustrated in Table 3, the majority of survey respondents felt that they had substantially improved their abilities (much or very much) in a wide range of critical areas. Most notably, 90 percent improved their *communication skills* with employees, customers, and other business contacts.

Furthermore, 84 percent of respondents reported increased ability to *brand and market* their businesses. In the interviews, many participants highlighted that they had learned about *social media marketing* through the social media workshop, and subsequently began using social media for marketing and/or selling their products. In addition, interviewed participants valued learning about the importance of attractive *packaging to improve their branding*. After the program, they exchanged products with other AWEP-IVLP participants, which gave them additional ideas for improving their branding.

Participants Get Ideas for Improving Their Business

The business visits were helpful. In Santa Fe, I gained a lot of ideas for my own creations. I also got advice from possible importers—a lot of constructive criticism from people who could potentially buy from us.

—Participant, Madagascar

AWEP (IVLP) brought us together to be able to network and provided the environment for us to start having conversations on how we could improve our businesses.

—Participant, Namibia

It was educational. We learned a lot about how to run our businesses, how to improve our businesses.

—Participant, Botswana

Table 3. Increased Business Abilities after AWEP-IVLP

<i>How much did AWEP-IVLP increase your ability in relation to ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
Communicating with employees, business partners, consumers, or local authorities	90%
Branding and marketing your business	84%
Building and maintaining business relationships/networking at the local and international level	81%
Sales strategy	81%
Your specific sector or industry	75%
How to access new/expanded markets for your products or services and process for meeting quality standards	72%
Developing a business plan for growth	68%
Financial and banking products and services	48%
N=87	

2. Participants Share Knowledge and Train Impactees in New Skills

Upon returning from the United States, AWEP-IVLP participants felt inspired and motivated to share the information they had learned with their employees, suppliers, and other women in their communities. In addition to sharing such information informally, as shown in Table 4, more than two-thirds of surveyed participants also gave talks or presentations, both at work and in their communities.

Table 4. Sharing Knowledge Gained during AWEP-IVLP

<i>How much have you shared the information that you learned during AWEP-IVLP? (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
Talked informally in small groups or one-on-one	82%
Gave talks/presentations at work	69%
Gave talks/presentations in community	67%
Shared materials received during AWEP-IVLP	51%
N=87	

Sharing information with employees and other impactees. Interviewed participants found that sharing what they learned with their employees was important to ensure that their program-inspired changes and improvements were accepted and understood. Indeed, many of the interviewed employees (impactees) confirmed that after the program, participants spent time with them explaining new procedures, approaches, techniques, and ideas.

Participants Transfer Knowledge to Employees

Every day, I provide training—even if it's 5 minutes only. Even if you learn only one word a day—after 365 days, you've learned 365.

—Participant, Madagascar

When [the participant] came back, she educated us in how to do things better. She shared new ideas about improvements in the production process.

—Impactee, Ghana

Impactees develop new skills and abilities.

Nearly all interviewed impactees reported learning new skills from the participants, especially the following:

- How to improve product quality and standardize production
- Communication with customers
- Packaging and labeling
- Time management
- How to work as a team
- Employing creativity in their work
- Values, such as responsibility, honesty, teamwork, and punctuality

In addition, two impactees in Kenya reported that the participants shared what they had learned from the program about organizational strategy, which helped the impactees develop new strategies for their own businesses.

Participants share information with the broader community. Some surveyed participants (13 percent) mentioned that they also shared information from the program via social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp.¹¹ Some interviewed participants

AWEP-IVLP Educates Women in Critical Business Skills

Before AWEP (IVLP), when I sold a product, if the cost was 40 and I sold it for 50, I thought I earned 10. But ... I learned everything that you need to include as part of costs. [Now] I share my knowledge with those in my workshops, but also others outside my business, like in Niger.

—Participant, Madagascar

¹¹ The survey question, "Please tell me how much you have shared information that you learned during the AWEP-IVLP experience," included an open-ended sub-question where respondents could identify "other methods" used besides those included in Table 4. In response to this question, 13 percent of respondents spontaneously mentioned social media.

were motivated after the program to help educate other women in their communities, such as by teaching periodic workshops. A few interviewed participants mentioned having been invited to give presentations about the program outside their countries.

B. Entrepreneurs Gain Confidence and Recognition

A major outcome of the program for participants was gaining self-confidence. Thanks to AWEPP-IVLP, 9 in 10 survey respondents felt more confident about their business abilities, more optimistic about their futures, and better equipped to deal with potential uncertainty.

Table 5. Increased Confidence Resulting from AWEPP-IVLP

<i>To what extent has your participation in AWEPP-IVLP helped you ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
To feel more positive/optimistic about your future prospects	92%
To feel equipped to deal with potential uncertainty in the future	90%
To be more confident about your abilities	90%
To make important financial decisions in your life or for your family	62%
N=87	

Participants gain confidence. Interviewed participants explained that the program gave them the confidence they needed to grow their businesses and to be good managers. Furthermore, it helped them realize that they were not the only ones encountering challenges, and that they had a network of businesswomen to whom they could turn with questions and for advice.

Impactees gain confidence. Many interviewed impactees also felt more confident in their skills and job capabilities, thanks to encouragement and training from the participants. For instance, a participant's employee in Ghana mentioned that her confidence started to increase when she felt that the participant believed in her and gave her more responsibilities.

Optimism and confidence about the future.

Most of the interviewed participants and impactees were optimistic about their futures. For example, participants expressed confidence that their companies would grow in the next few years, and most impactees envisioned having their own businesses in the future. Furthermore, interviewed participants felt better equipped to face uncertainty in their future, thanks to the support of a new network of businesswomen developed through the AWEPP-IVLP exchange, as well as resources for potential assistance obtaining access to credit.

Participants Gain Confidence and Optimism

AWEPP (IVLP) restored our confidence. It gave us confidence to learn, to keep going, because we know that if we keep working, we'll reach a [higher] standard.
—Participant, Congo

The program really gave me confidence in myself. I had not dared, and afterwards, I thought, "Okay, I can do this!"
—Participant, Madagascar

Right now, I'm empowering myself to be able to deal with anything that will come in the future.
—Participant, Botswana

Gaining recognition and publicity. In addition to greater confidence, program participation resulted in publicity and greater recognition for some participants. Interviewed participants explained that the AWEP-IVLP program is quite prestigious, so participants often receive media coverage after returning home. Furthermore, some participants have received awards for their business or community service activities resulting from AWEP-IVLP participation:

Participants Gain Recognition and Credibility

Before I went to the U.S., nobody knew me in Benin. When I came back, I participated in many TV programs.... After that, organizations started calling me ... giving me trophies.... People now believe in what I do.

–Participant, Benin

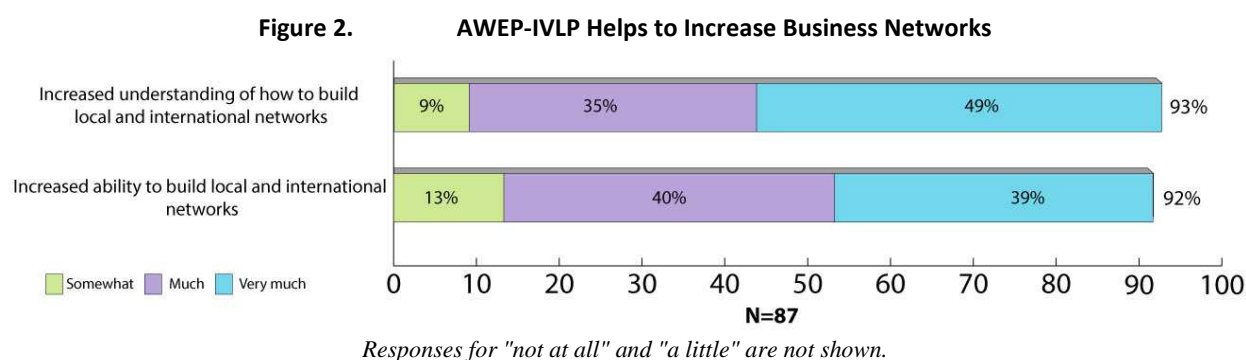
It gives you some credibility to be identified with the AWEP (IVLP) program. It opens doors to the outside world. There wasn't anything special that I wasn't doing before and am doing now; people just pay us more attention now.

–Participant, Madagascar

- **Congolese participant (DRC) wins award for innovative products.** Some of her ideas resulted from visiting women with similar businesses in the United States as well as stores and supermarkets such as Whole Foods. The award has given increased exposure to her business and products.
- **Ghanaian participant named Woman Entrepreneur of the Year** for her work and contributions to her community.
- **Beninese participant wins first prize in business plan competition.** She explained that learning how to give a business pitch during an AWEP-IVLP workshop helped her present her case effectively to the competition judges.

C. Expanded Business Networks

The AWEP-IVLP program has enabled participants to expand their business networks to include fellow women entrepreneurs across Africa, U.S. women entrepreneurs and business representatives, and U.S. Embassy contacts in their country. In fact, 9 in 10 surveyed participants reported that the program had increased their ability to build networks both locally and internationally, as shown in Figure 2.



Fellow African women entrepreneurs

(AWEF-IVLP cohort). As mentioned earlier, interviewed participants stressed that meeting other African women entrepreneurs in their AWEF-IVLP cohort and developing a supportive business network in Africa was one of the greatest benefits of the program. Many interviewed participants reported maintaining frequent contact with their cohort throughout the continent via Facebook and WhatsApp groups. They have used these social media groups to share information about their businesses—such as market prices, product information, and marketing suggestions—as well as to explore possibilities for collaboration and promoting each other’s products. In some cases, AWEF-IVLP alumnae from the same country have collaborated on projects to benefit a specific community, such as the Junior AWEF program in Benin. (See Sec. II.B, Advocacy for Women.)

One of the things I love [as a] byproduct of the AWEF (IVLP) program is that it gives you a continental network of female entrepreneurs.

—Participant, Botswana

U.S. businesses and women entrepreneurs. AWEF-IVLP participants had the opportunity to meet U.S. businesspeople during site visits, trade shows, and workshops, and many participants considered these meetings the most valuable element of the program.¹² As a result, several interviewed participants established contacts with U.S. businesses, in some cases for potential sales. For example, a Kenyan participant said that making a connection with Walmart—with whom she eventually established a contract for exporting—was the most important outcome of her AWEF-IVLP experience. A Ghanaian participant who visited Procter and Gamble said she was still in contact with them. (See Sec. I.F for contracts that resulted from these contacts.)

U.S. Embassies. As a result of program participation, most of the interviewed participants established a good working relationship with the U.S. Embassy staff in their country, which has been beneficial to them. Some participants have been invited to the annual Embassy bazaar to exhibit their products. In Ghana, the Embassy’s Economic Section organized a business plan workshop for AWEF-IVLP alumnae, which an interviewed participant described as very useful. Also, Embassies have invited the AWEF-IVLP alumnae to their alumni association activities, where they can meet potential business partners.

Impactees also have benefited from participants’ relationships with U.S. Embassies. For example, some participants made it possible for women entrepreneurs they have mentored to present their products at Embassy bazaars and/or introduced them to Embassy staff who could advise them on how to apply for U.S.-sponsored exchange programs. In fact, one of the interviewed impactees was referred to participate in an upcoming AWEF-IVLP program.

¹² In the survey, 21 percent of respondents selected “meetings with American professionals or government officials” as the program activity that most positively impacted their business. See Sec. IV.B, Satisfaction with Program Activities.

D. Business Improvements

Empowered with greater confidence, participants returned home eager to put their new abilities and ideas into action to improve their businesses.

Table 6. Participants Improve Business Processes and Procedures

<i>To what extent has your participation in AWEV-IVLP helped you ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
To develop tools/procedures that advanced your business economic situation	72%
To access or make better use of technology and innovations	71%
To promote your business through marketing/advertising/communications	68%
To establish/update/improve your business plan	66%
To adopt/improve industry standards for quality	66%
N=87	

Business management. The majority of survey respondents (72 percent) agreed that the program helped them develop new procedures that improved their businesses. Several improved management practices were commonly mentioned by interviewed participants:

- Greater involvement of employees in business strategies
- More attention to customer service
- Improved organization of time, files, and products

For example, a participant from Madagascar was inspired by a company she visited in the United States to adopt a more inclusive leadership style and treat her employees like a family. Some interviewed impactees (participants' employees) affirmed that they felt more included and empowered by the leadership changes that participants adopted. For example, an impactee in Benin appreciated that the participant began to involve employees more in decision-making. A Kenyan participant trained an employee to manage the production work of 35 women in her village, demonstrating trust in the employee's abilities with all aspects of the production process.

AWEV-IVLP Helps Participants Get Organized

After AWEV (IVLP), I saw that you could get organized differently so that you now have time to think about other things. Now, I have management software that allows me see what's coming in and what's coming out in all three of my businesses.

—Participant, Benin

AWEV-IVLP Inspires Inclusive Leadership Style

There was a company that really caught my attention—the owner had 300 people, and he managed them as if they were part of his family.

—Participant, Madagascar

AWEV (IVLP) has helped us to look at leadership differently, so we can better manage those we work with. We understood that employees are actually collaborators and not necessarily inferior. We learned to learn from everyone, even the minor ones in our business.

—Participant, Benin

Marketing and social media. As shown in Table 6 above, more than two-thirds of surveyed participants improved their marketing (68 percent) and increased their use of technology (71 percent) following the program. Interviewed participants adopted various new marketing and communication strategies, especially social media. For example, a Beninese participant created a formal marketing plan and began using a wide variety of tools to promote her business, such as TV, radio, advertising websites, and Facebook. While many of the interviewed participants did not have a digital platform before the program, most of them had a website (such as an e-commerce platform), Facebook page, and/or WhatsApp account at the time of the evaluation.

AWEPP-IVLP Leads to More Strategic Marketing

It's after AWEPP (IVLP) that I developed a marketing plan. Without communication, nothing moves. Communication is key.

—Participant, Benin

Improved standards/quality. Two-thirds of surveyed participants (66 percent) agreed that the program helped them adopt industry standards for quality—which they observed during their visits to U.S. businesses—in their own businesses. Most commonly, they mentioned improvements in the quality of the production process. Several of the interviewed participants and impactees mentioned that the improved quality has resulted in increased customer satisfaction, and in some cases even has helped businesses expand to international markets. (See Sec. I.E, Business Growth, and Sec. I.F, Expanding into New Markets.)

AWEPP-IVLP Leads to Improved Product Standards and Quality

Before [the participant] came, we did not have good quality. We call her “Eye of a Ruler” because of the high-quality standards that she has established.

—Impactee, Kenya

Before, when we were cutting for clothing, we did it a bit haphazardly. ... Now, I use patterns. This always gives us the same measures, so the shirts are identical. When it's size 42, it's actually always size 42.

—Impactee, Benin

Improved packaging/display. An important standard, to which some interviewed participants had given little attention before, was packaging and product/service display. After seeing how products and services are presented in the United States, several interviewed participants made improvements to their packaging or display to make them more attractive to customers and/or to improve their branding.

AWEPP-IVLP Leads to Improved Packaging/Display

The way that this soap is displayed, I got the idea from Marshalls. ... People who come here ... are really impressed. They've never seen such a thing. I learned this in Chicago.

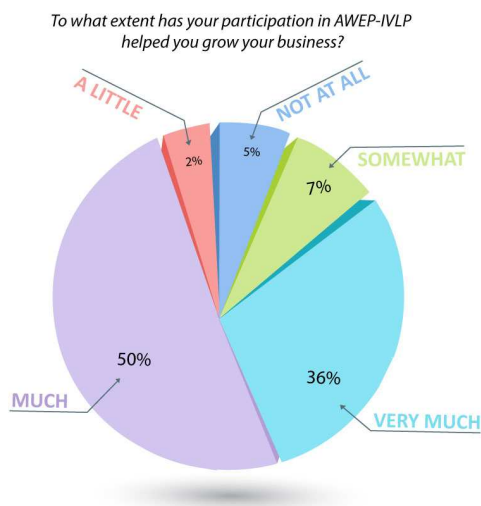
—Participant, Benin

We were taught about the importance of packaging ... so it's something that I have also taken very seriously. ... So that is one thing that helped [to attract clients].

—Participant, Botswana

E. Business Growth

The AWEPP-IVLP program contributes to the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs, one of the foreign policy goals of the program: 86 percent of survey respondents agreed that their participation had helped them grow their business much or very much.

Figure 3. AWEP-IVLP Helps Participants Grow Their Businesses¹³

The specific areas of business growth that surveyed participants most commonly reported are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7. Business Growth

<i>To what extent has AWEP-IVLP participation contributed to ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
Increased sales	66%
Increased revenue and/or profits	61%
Increased or more diversified buyers/customers and/or sellers/suppliers	56%
Expanded range of products/services sold	55%
Increased number of employees	50%
Expansion into additional sectors/industries	36%
N=87	

Most notably, **more than 60 percent of survey respondents reported both increased sales and increased revenue/profits** thanks to their AWEP-IVLP participation. A few interviewed participants said they had **doubled or tripled their sales**. Interviewed participants credited various factors to their success, including:

- Selling via social media
- Improved marketing
- Expanded range of products
- Expanded distribution

Furthermore, at least 50 percent of the surveyed participants also reported growth in terms of expanding their staff, their range of products, and their pool of customers and sellers/suppliers; some impactees also experienced business growth in these areas. Interviewed participants and impactees provided examples:

¹³ All survey respondents responded to all questions. Thus, here and throughout this report, all percentages indicate the percentage of the total pool of 87 respondents.

- A Congolese participant reported that she had ***doubled the number of employees since the program.***
- A participant in Chad said that the program ***inspired her to open a new factory with 200+ new employees.***
- A Beninese participant, whose business exports shea butter products, ***expanded her national network of women producers to approximately 1,000 women.***
- ***Kenyan impactee expands client base.***
The impactee, owner of a counseling/coaching business, was able to expand her client base after an AWEPP-IVLP participant shared knowledge from the program with her. The impactee even provided coaching to a male client, despite the cultural separation between genders in the country.
- ***Ghanaian impactee gains access to new potential buyers.*** A participant shared contacts from her AWEPP-IVLP experience with an impactee, introducing her to potential clients in Ghana, Europe, and the United States, where the impactee hoped to export her products in the near future.

AWEPP-IVLP Inspires Participants to Expand Their Range of Products

A lady ... who started her own bag company gave me a lot of courage ... She was telling us how she started and where she was [now].

So when I looked at myself, I said, "I can also do it." ... So we are [now] producing two types of eggs: the indigenous and the foreign.

—Participant, South Africa

Other areas of successful business growth include financing and new businesses:

- ***Beninese participant's business receives \$200,000 grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).*** As a result of the program, the participant outsourced various functions of her family's essential oil business, which helped them win a grant through MCC's Access to Financial Services Project to support the growth of the business.¹⁴
- ***Ghanaian participant opens business in new sector.*** The participant, who operated a clothing business at the time of AWEPP-IVLP participation, started to delegate more business responsibilities to her staff after returning from the program, which allowed her to explore other business opportunities. As a result, she was able to expand into a completely new sector and open a currency exchange business.

AWEPP-IVLP Leads to Substantial Business Growth

AWEPP (IVLP) led to a big boom in my business life. ... For example, in furnishings, I learned ... to produce a variety of things and expand the range of furnishings that I offer. I'm selling double or triple what I usually sold.

—Participant, Chad

Our revenue increased. After we externalized different functions of the business, we won financing from the MCA [Millennium Challenge Account] of 100 million [West African francs, or \$200,000] to buy equipment to improve our business.*

—Participant, Benin

*The MCA is the financing mechanism of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent U.S. Government agency.

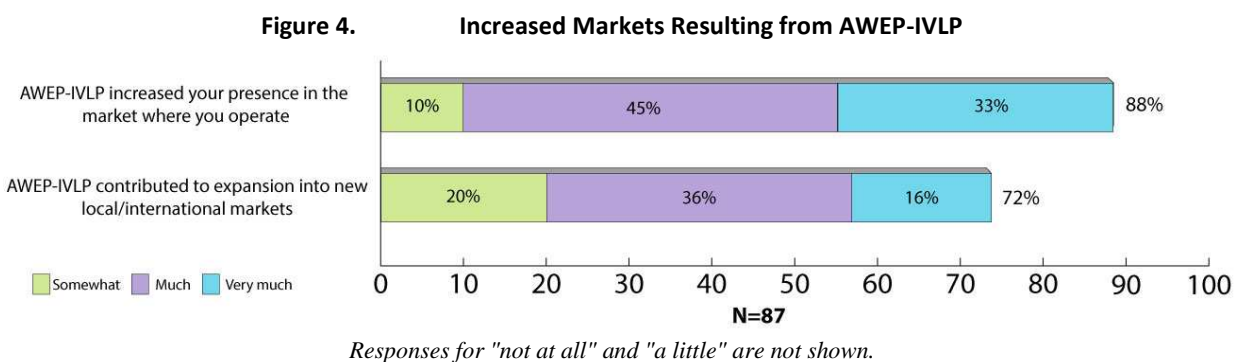
In addition, the program motivated some participants to establish partnerships for their businesses rather than working alone.

¹⁴ The following MCC publication explains that the participant's business was part of a three-business consortium that collectively won a \$500,000 grant: Millennium Challenge Corporation. "MCC's Compact Is Improving Benin's Business Climate" (October 7, 2011). <https://www.mcc.gov/content/uploads/2017/05/success-2011002065801-benin-tripartite.pdf>. Accessed July 5, 2017. According to the participant, her business received the equivalent of \$200,000 of this grant.

- A participant in the Central African Republic said that the program helped her to understand how to **create a partnership with a microfinance institution** run by women who make bags.
- A participant in Chad “got the idea” from the program to **work with other associations**, whereas before she had worked alone.

F. Expanding into New Markets

Most surveyed participants reported that their markets had increased as a result of AWEP-IVLP, as shown in Figure 4.



1. Local and African Markets

Thanks to the business improvements, growth, and expanded networks resulting from the program, many participants were able to access new markets locally and/or in other African countries. Interviewed participants identified various factors leading to their increased exports in Africa, including:

- AWEP-IVLP alumnae networks
- Adoption of successful marketing strategies learned during the program
- Improved product quality

The following are examples of participants breaking into new local and African markets. Interviewed participants in Ghana were particularly successful in this regard.

- Participants from Gabon and Ghana decided to expand their product distribution and succeeded in selling at **local supermarkets**.
- Two Ghanaian participants—one with a chocolate business and another with a clothing business—reported breaking into the market of **local retail companies**.
- A Ghanaian participant started to sell her products in the **duty-free section of the Accra airport**.
- A participant in Congo secured a distributor for her products **in South Africa and neighboring countries**.

Participants Access New Local/Regional Markets

I started to explore new ways to place my products, like talking to supermarkets and gas stations.

—Participant, Ghana

The business is getting larger and the distribution points are increasing because I just signed a contract with a South African company that's going to distribute my products in South Africa and the neighboring countries.

—Participant, Congo

- A Ghanaian participant was invited by an AWEPP-IVLP alumna *in East Africa* to attend fairs and bazaars to exhibit her products there. The alumna also introduced her to key businesspeople in the region.

2. U.S. and International Markets

Many interviewed participants found the AWEPP-IVLP experience eye-opening in terms of the potential for selling their products to U.S. and other international markets. Indeed, the program helped participants understand market demands and how to reach those markets. Since returning home, some interviewed participants adopted strategies learned during the program for improved product quality, packaging, and marketing with an eye toward reaching international markets.

However, as shown in Figure 5, only a third of participants have gained access to U.S. markets (at least somewhat). As discussed in the Introduction, interviewed participants reported difficulties meeting the export requirements, paying the fees, and completing the necessary paperwork to export products to the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). For example, a participant in Benin with a shea butter business has successfully exported to Europe and Asia—where raw shea butter can be exported in plastic containers—but has been unsuccessful exporting to the United States due to AGOA’s stricter export standards, requiring that shea butter be packaged in glass. In addition, some participants found the cost of transporting products to the United States prohibitive.

Participants Target International Markets

I used to sell mostly here. But now I know that in the U.S., there is a market that is really large, so I am slowly going to abandon the local market and focus on the international market.

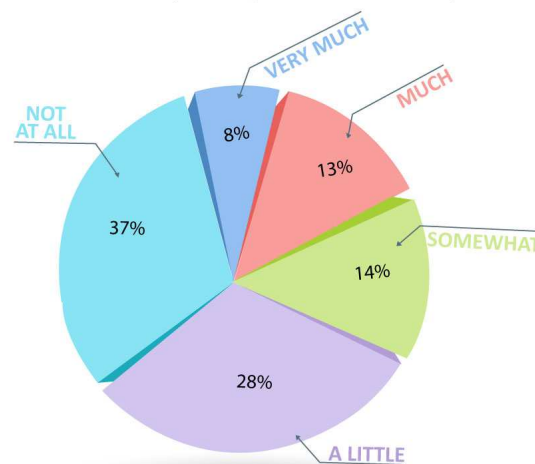
—Participant, Madagascar

Coming back, you try and focus on your business, making it globally focused and ... offering your product to the international market and see what you need to change to get more marketable and sell in that environment that's different from yours.

—Participant, Namibia

Figure 5. Gaining Access to U.S. Markets

To what extent has AWEPP-IVLP helped you develop new markets and/or business partnerships with U.S. citizens or companies?



Nevertheless, at least a few interviewed participants from all four fieldwork countries—and one impactee—did share success in this regard. As noted earlier, the program gave participants the

opportunity to meet U.S. companies, which for some resulted in actual sales or regular distribution agreements, and for others resulted in new contacts with whom they hoped to do business in the future. Some of the success stories include:

- **Beninese participant supplies Whole Foods.** The participant met a representative of Whole Foods at the AWEP-IVLP business fair in Washington, DC, and received a contract to supply her soap products there.

I deliver to the Whole Foods in Washington, DC. There is someone at Whole Foods that takes care of the entire transaction, from getting the product here and shipping it over there. I simply put the product in packages and they take care of getting it to the store in DC.

—Participant, Benin
- **Kenyan participant establishes relationship with Walmart.** The participant, manager of a crafts business, established a contract with Walmart, as well as an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution to supply beadwork samples. She described the Walmart contract as her greatest success from the program. In order to fulfill anticipated orders, she began working with an Embassy-provided mentor to develop a supply strategy, and had plans to open a warehouse in the United States.
- **Malagasy participant expands business to meet U.S. demand.** The participant attended a trade show during the program, which resulted in an order for 600,000 items (mostly hats and bags). This prompted her to begin constructing a new building that would be able to produce the requested quantity, which was far beyond her capacity at the time.
- **Kenyan impactee makes unprecedented sale to U.S. buyer.** An impactee (male) in Kenya was able to access the U.S. market thanks to a participant introducing him to an importer of African crafts whom she met during the AWEP-IVLP visit. The importer ordered a large quantity of carved animals. The participant mentored the impactee as to how to improve the quality of his product to meet U.S. standards and coached him on which animals to produce. The impactee shared that the process of product development took nearly a year, after which he finally was able to ship the container of carved animals to the customer. *“I had never seen so much money,”* he said.

In summary, while business growth was not universal among AWEP-IVLP participants, the program has contributed significantly to promoting business growth for women entrepreneurs—and some male entrepreneurs (impactees)—as well as increasing trade both regionally within Africa and, to a lesser extent, to U.S. markets.

II. Impacts of AWEF-IVLP on Business Environments and Communities

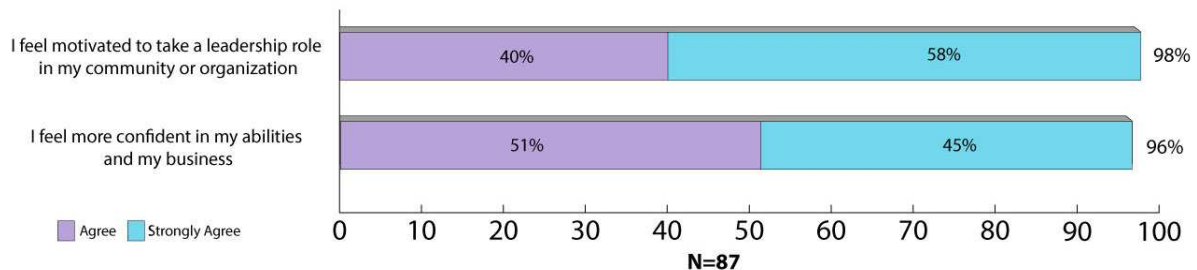
One major impact of the AWEF-IVLP program on participants was a new or greater commitment to helping other women and their communities at large. During their U.S. visit, they visited women's businesses, many of which focused on sustainable products, fair trade, and other socially conscious practices, so participants were exposed to new ways of practicing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and giving back to their communities. Furthermore, most survey respondents felt that the program helped them to gain confidence as well as motivation to take on a leadership role in their businesses or communities.

AWEF-IVLP Inspires Participants to Serve Their Communities

The program encourages me to do things for my community.
—Participant, Ghana

We learned during the program to be leaders and have a vision.
—Participant, Benin

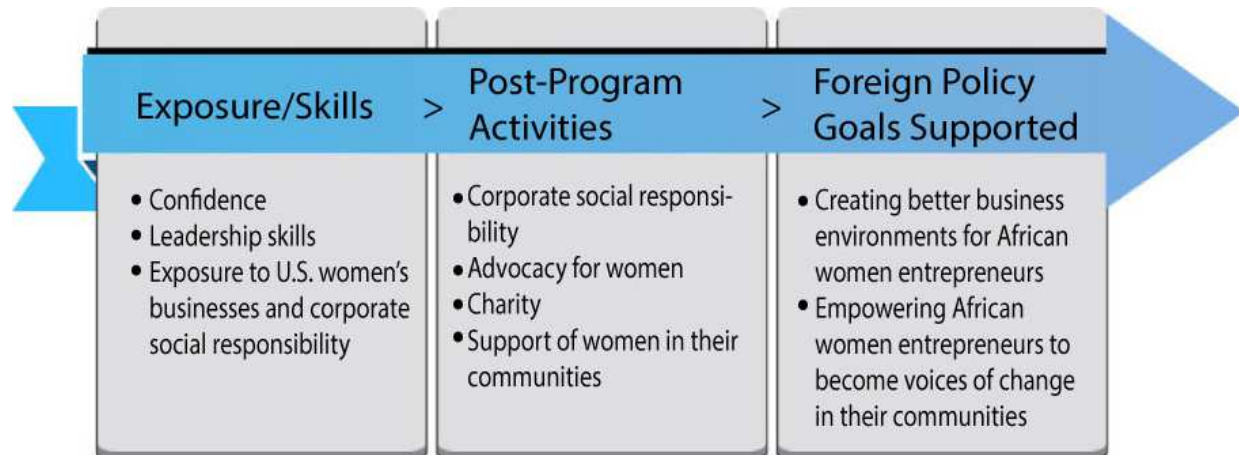
Figure 6. AWEF-IVLP Leads to Increased Confidence and Motivation for Leadership



Responses for "not at all" and "a little" are not shown.

When they returned home, participants were inspired to increase their CSR practices, to advocate for and support women, and to do more community service or other charitable efforts. This section will illustrate how their efforts have contributed to the foreign policy goals of creating better business environments for African women entrepreneurs and empowering them to become voices of change in their communities.

Figure 7. Confidence/Leadership Lead to Community Service and Foreign Policy Goals



A. Corporate Social Responsibility

As discussed in Section I, often the first changes that participants made after returning from the program were improvements to their own businesses. This included increased corporate social responsibility (CSR), as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8. AWEV-IVLP Influence on Corporate Social Responsibility

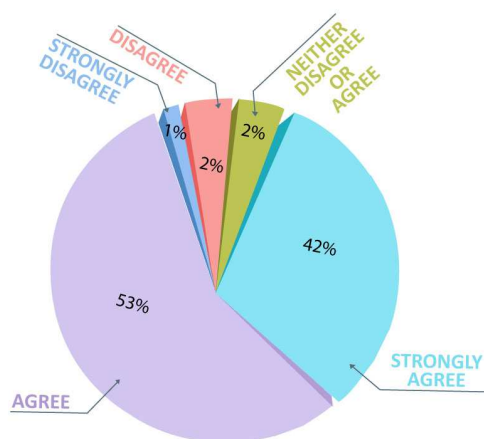
<i>How much has your AWEV-IVLP participation helped your business/employees ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
To ensure environmentally friendly production practices	70%
To introduce new ideas/policies/procedures to improve work-life balance	69%
To introduce new ideas/policies/procedures that ensure that employees are treated and remunerated fairly	69%
To produce environmentally friendly products	67%
To perform volunteer activities or community service	53%
To give away a product or service free to the community	52%
N=87	

Some interviewed participants said they already were practicing various forms of CSR prior to AWEV-IVLP participation, but that the program encouraged them to continue making an effort to do so. For example, a participant in South Africa has provided food to old age homes and orphanages. She was doing this before, but the program inspired her to “go deeper” with charitable work. Furthermore, nearly all the surveyed participants (95 percent) also have encouraged business partners and peers to help the community:

Corporate social responsibility, it turns out, is an important way of developing society. It's about working on society's behalf. I am looking at ways of integrating corporate social responsibility.
 –Participant, Madagascar

Figure 8. Encouraging Others to Help the Community

How strongly do you agree or disagree that as a result of AWEV-IVLP you now encourage business partners and peers to help the community?



Welfare of employees and business associates. As shown in Table 8 above, most surveyed participants (69 percent) have been encouraged by the program to introduce new procedures to improve work-life balance and to ensure fair treatment and remuneration for employees. For example, an interviewed participant in Ghana reported providing childcare assistance and improved access to water in her community. Other participants have provided loans or assisted with children's school fees. Yet another participant, who has a fashion business in Kenya, has taught her employees how to make soap, so that when business is slow and she cannot pay them, they can sell soap as an alternative income source.

Participants Support Employees

I opened a daycare for them. We also built a well in the village so the women don't have to walk 18 kilometers for water.

–Participant, Ghana

The goal of the enterprise is not only financial but also for people to be able to live comfortably.

–Participant, Benin

Health/safety. AWEP-IVLP participants also have taken measures to ensure the well-being of employees and suppliers. For example, some have provided personal protective equipment and instructed workers in the importance of using the equipment. Other examples include:

- A Kenyan participant has helped workers to get access to modern woodworking equipment that provides a higher level of safety.
- Another Kenyan participant began developing a line of leather clothing to provide increased safety for moto-taxi workers, who have a high rate of injuries and fatalities.
- A participant in Madagascar has provided health care and social security benefits to her employees.

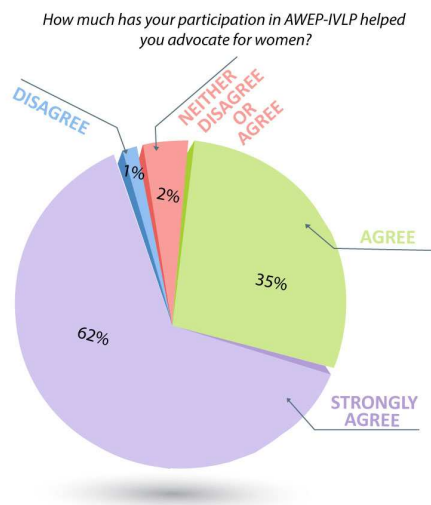
Environmental choices. More than two-thirds of surveyed participants were motivated by the program to produce environmentally friendly products (67 percent) and to ensure that their production processes were environmentally friendly (71 percent). Interviewed participants shared a number of environmental actions that they have taken, such as helping suppliers of wood carvings to plant trees so as to develop a sustainable production cycle; incentivizing breeders to use cruelty-free ways to raise animals; working with leather tanners to produce leather with the least environmental impact; and using natural dyes to produce textiles.

Giving free products/services to the community. More than half of the surveyed participants (52 percent) said that the AWEP-IVLP experience had motivated them to give away products or services to the community. For example, a participant in Benin who produces healthy cookies has used her profits to help nourish children. A participant in Botswana explained that at the local hospital, there are sometimes babies abandoned by their mothers. She has used some of her profits to buy necessities for these babies. *“I had already been doing that, but the program also inspired me,”* she said.

B. Advocacy for Women

Nearly all the surveyed participants (97 percent) agreed that after the program, they felt encouraged to advocate for African women.

Figure 9. Participants' Motivation to Advocate for African Women after AWEP-IVLP



As discussed earlier (Sec. I.B), AWEP-IVLP gave participants more confidence in their abilities and in their role as agents of change in their communities. Throughout the interviews, participants described taking on leadership roles in their communities as vocal advocates for women's rights and needs, leading new organizations, launching new initiatives to help girls and women, and informally advocating for women's issues among their personal networks. In particular, they have advocated for women in business. For example, an interviewed participant in Swaziland reported becoming a leader in her community by promoting women's rights and women's access to information and credit. She appreciated that the program had made her a "better leader" who is adaptable to different situations.

Table 9. Advocacy for Women

<i>How much has your AWEP-IVLP participation helped you ... (Much/Very Much)</i>	Percent
To become involved in new women's advocacy groups	82%
To introduce new ideas about improving women's lives to a local group (lectures, workshops, presentations)	76%
To propose/write/reform a new law to advocate for women	53%
To write/publish book/article advocating for women	44%
N=87	

Involvement in women's advocacy groups. As shown in Table 9, 82 percent of surveyed participants have become involved (or more involved) in women's advocacy groups because of the AWEP-IVLP experience. In particular, several participants reported starting local associations for women entrepreneurs. For example, an interviewed participant in Rwanda established a group through which the women have provided each other with loans and training. In addition, participants in Benin have created a Junior AWEP group, which one described as

“an incubator for AWEPP.” According to an Embassy staff member, this program teaches female high school students about entrepreneurship and leadership.

Advocating for changes in laws. More than half (53 percent) of the surveyed participants reported that they had advocated for new laws that would help women. However, only a few interviewees referenced legal advocacy work. For example, a participant in Kenya mentioned that as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, she was trying to change current import-related legislation to protect the Kenyan market from Chinese imports. (Although this change would benefit women entrepreneurs, the legislation was designed to help the Kenyan economy generally.) Other participants in Kenya and South Africa mentioned advocating for changing unspecified legislation or policies.

Informal advocacy. In addition to doing formal advocacy through organizations and presentations, many participants reported doing informal advocacy by talking to people in their communities. For example, a participant from Kenya explained, “*I am making change one person at a time.*” Two impactees in Ghana noted that AWEPP-IVLP participants have come to be seen as role models among girls and women in their communities.

Participants Become Role Models for Girls

Women like [the participant] are becoming role models for other women. They are making the difference.

–Impactee, Ghana

[She] is an example of a successful woman who started with a small business and made it grow day by day with effort and dedication. Young girls in the neighborhood look up to her.

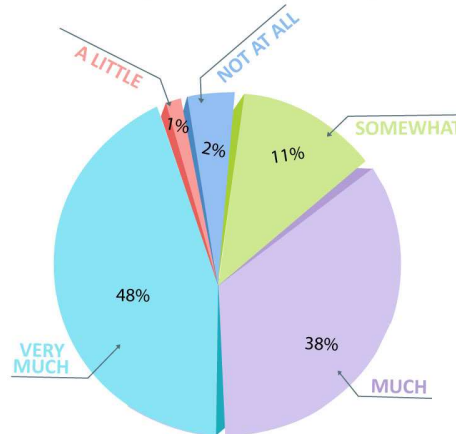
–Impactee, Ghana

C. Supporting Women in Their Communities

As noted above, AWEPP-IVLP participation motivated participants to give back to their communities. Indeed, the great majority (85 percent) of surveyed participants agreed that the program had helped them (much or very much) to volunteer or do community service benefiting women.

Figure 10. AWEPP-IVLP Helps Participants to Serve Women in Their Communities

How much has your participation in AWEPP-IVLP helped you to perform volunteer activities or community service that benefits women in your community?



In particular, many participants have provided training and/or mentoring to women and youth, as well as helped women in the business world, thus creating better business environments for women entrepreneurs in their communities.

Mentoring. Many interviewed participants, as well as impactees, shared that they were involved in mentoring other women and girls, particularly in how to start and operate a business, and how to be entrepreneurs. In addition, participants have mentored girls, such as high school students, to guide them in their studies and future careers, or to teach them business skills. For example, a participant in Benin shared that she was coaching girls who were interested in creating a startup.

Furthermore, participants have mentored employees, some of whom subsequently felt empowered to mentor others. These impactees emphasized the importance of hard work and its benefits to the women.

Helping women in business. In addition to mentoring, numerous participants across Africa have helped other women in the business sector, either by hiring them to work at their company or helping them develop their own businesses. For example, several participants mentioned helping other women market their products. In this vein, a participant in Botswana said she was helping some women in villages to market their handcrafted jewelry. Another participant, in the Central African Republic, shared that she was running a program to help women in the community become financially independent by establishing partnerships with the private sector.

In conclusion, the AWEP-IVLP program has increased participants' confidence, leadership abilities, and public visibility, empowering them to become agents of change for women in their businesses and communities. Furthermore, the program has provided them with enhanced business skills and networks that enable them to help other women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, as well as to create better business environments for women.

Impactees Mentor Others

Here, in Madagascar, it is important to train women. Women are those who work the hardest and who provide for their families. I tell these women that if they learn how to work well, how to have a product that is consistently good, this will be beneficial.

—Impactee, Madagascar

When [the participant] coaches young women as part of AWEP, I go along and I provide some of the training. I also talk about my experiences—I focus on the practical side of things. I want these young women to know that they can succeed.

—Impactee, Benin

I've worked with two young people who just received their secondary school diploma. ... They were simply interested in the restaurant business. After 6 months, they said they want to become employees.

—Impactee, Madagascar

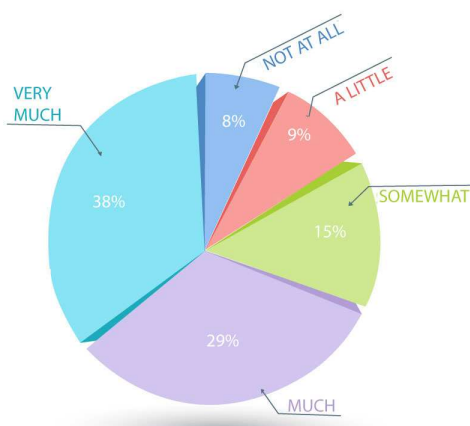
III. Impacts of AWEP-IVLP on Women's Educational and Career Development

The AWEP-IVLP program has motivated participants to seek more education and training. In turn, participants have encouraged their employees to obtain training and to develop professionally. As a result, many impactees have experienced career growth through the assistance of participants.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of the surveyed participants reported that the program had motivated them to pursue additional educational opportunities, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. AWEP-IVLP Participants Feel Encouraged to Access Educational Opportunities

To what extent has your participation in AWEP-IVLP encouraged or enabled you to access additional educational opportunities?



A Kenyan participant explained that the program engenders the belief that education is important and that businesswomen need ongoing professional development. In the interviews, participants most commonly mentioned pursuing higher education or professional training.

Higher education. Many interviewed participants reported that the AWEP-IVLP exchange gave them the confidence or motivation to pursue a university degree, which they might not have considered before. For example, a participant from Ghana had started working on her MBA. Likewise, several impactees shared that they were pursuing higher education thanks to the encouragement of participants. For example, an impactee in Ghana said that she planned to study business in the future, and another planned to pursue a master's degree. An impactee in Benin planned to start taking computer courses, which she felt would be important if she wanted to open a store in the future.

Professional training. Some participants were motivated by the AWEP-IVLP experience to apply to and participate in a variety of local and international training programs, some of them quite prestigious. Following are some examples:

- A Beninese participant stated that her AWEP-IVLP participation “gave [her] the opportunity” to attend the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Nairobi, which brought together entrepreneurs with mentors and high-level government officials, including then U.S. President Obama and the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Global Entrepreneurship Summit is an annual event that was initiated by President Obama in 2010. <http://www.ges2015.org/>

- A participant from Ghana participated in a workshop offered by Vital Voices, a U.S.-based NGO that provides training for women entrepreneurs in developing countries to network, grow their businesses, and increase their leadership impact in their communities.¹⁶
- A participant from Rwanda attended a 3-month program at the Institute of Economic Empowerment for Women, a nonprofit in Oklahoma.
- A Malagasy participant gained the confidence from AWEP-IVLP to apply for a leadership training program in Paris: *“It gave me new life. ... I’m enrolled in a politics course in Paris for African leaders because I’m confident that I’m capable of doing things.”*

Other participants have pursued additional training in entrepreneurship, international product standards, and export laws. In addition, the program experience motivated some Francophone participants to study English so that they could communicate better with potential U.S. customers.

According to interviewed impactees, AWEP-IVLP participants also have encouraged their employees to obtain more training. As a result, some of the interviewed impactees (employees) participated in business training programs or more specific trainings, such as workshops on AGOA. These impactees valued the participants’ willingness to give them time to study and to become better professionals, especially considering that some of them were interested in opening their own businesses in the future.

[The participant] encourages me to pursue trainings outside of the business. I’ve taken courses provided by ANATRAB [National Association of Pineapple Processing Companies of Benin]. Also, if [she] finds some relevant information online, she will send me the link to it. I also did a training on AGOA.

—Impactee, Benin

Furthermore, because of the business and communication skills learned from participants, some impactees were able to obtain new jobs. For example, an employee at a hotel in Ghana run by one of the participants was offered a second part-time job at a well-respected bank due to his improved customer service abilities at the hotel. Another impactee, an employee of a program participant in Benin, started to produce her own products and sell them on the side in order to earn additional revenue.

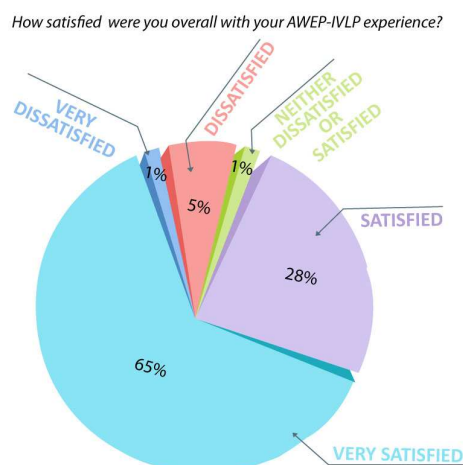
In summary, the AWEP-IVLP program motivates African women entrepreneurs to grow professionally, which can indirectly contribute to their current or future business growth and to that of their employees and associates.

¹⁶ <https://www.vitalvoices.org/>

IV. AWEPP-IVLP Program Experience

Interviewed participants generally perceived the AWEPP-IVLP program as prestigious and inspiring. Indeed, the vast majority of survey respondents (93 percent) were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall experience.

Figure 12. Overall Program Satisfaction



Interviewed participants explained that the program was eye-opening with respect to how to do business, how to engage employees and customers, and how to give back to their communities.

When I went to the U.S., it was like my mind opened on a different level. I saw possibilities that I did not know existed.
—Participant, Kenya

A. Motivation to Participate in AWEPP-IVLP

The interviews revealed a variety of factors that motivated entrepreneurs to participate in the program.¹⁷

- **To network with other African women entrepreneurs.** Participants were eager for the opportunity to meet businesswomen from other parts of Africa and to exchange experiences.
- **To improve their businesses.** Some interviewed participants were motivated to obtain business knowledge, to see how they could improve their businesses by using U.S. standards, and to learn how to make an impact on their communities and on society.
- **To increase exposure for their businesses and to meet potential buyers.** Some participants hoped to establish contact with U.S. business representatives who might consider them interesting business partners.

Motivation to Participate in AWEPP-IVLP

What really attracted me was the exchange among African women. I wanted to hear about what other women are living.

—Participant, Madagascar

I wanted to step out of my business and see things differently.

—Participant, Kenya

¹⁷ The survey did not ask participants what had motivated them to participate in the program.

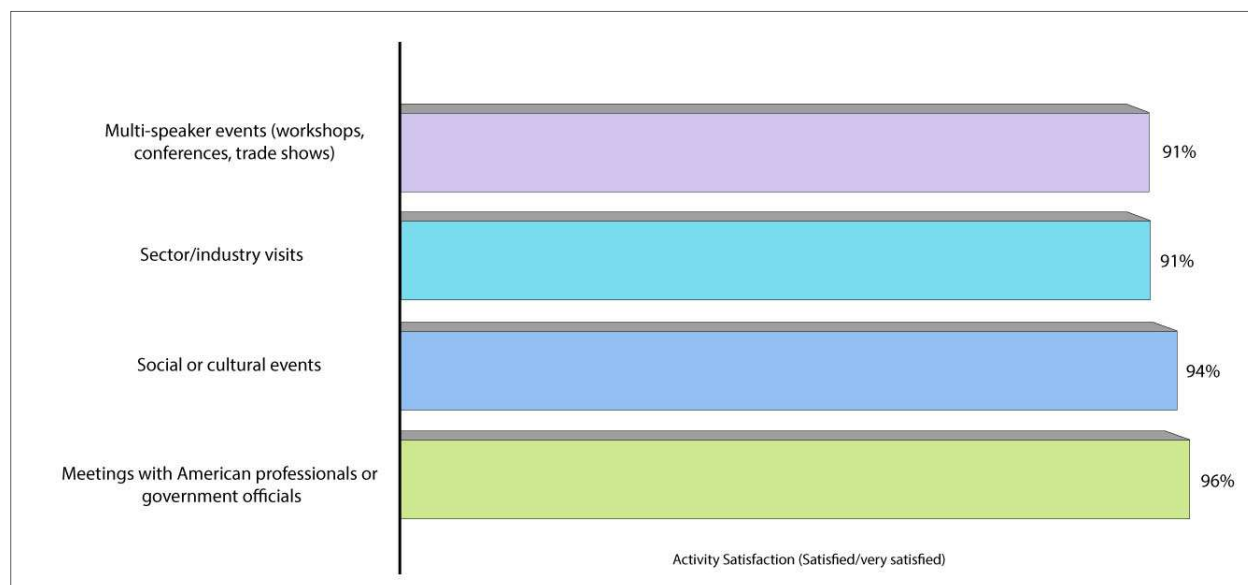
- **To learn how U.S. businesses work and how to export to the United States.** Participants were attracted to the opportunity to meet with U.S. businesswomen and potential investors. They felt motivated to understand how business is done in the United States and what buyers want, with the hope of looking for export opportunities.
- **To have an American experience.** The participants' motivation to participate was related to their interest in the people, society, and culture of the United States. Nearly all the surveyed participants (96 percent) reported that they were interested or very interested in the United States.

For many participants, participating in this program represented a recognition of their work and an opportunity to broaden their horizons and to expand their conceptual capabilities.

B. Satisfaction with Program Activities

Most of the interviewed participants agreed that the AWEV-IVLP experience met their expectations and was valuable for their businesses. Additionally, more than 9 in 10 survey respondents were satisfied (or very satisfied) with all of the main program activities, as shown in Figure 13.

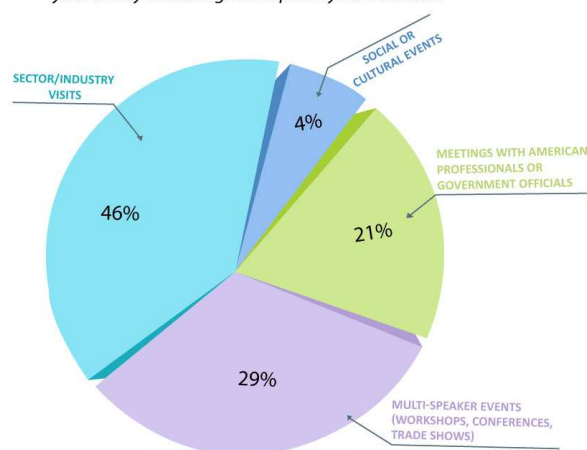
Figure 13. Satisfaction with Program Activities



Nonetheless, when participants were asked to select the one activity that made the most impact on their businesses, the **sector/industry visits** emerged as the most valuable activity by far (selected by 46 percent of respondents; see Fig. 14). During the interviews, participants frequently mentioned the relevance and usefulness of visiting different companies, seeing their production processes, and hearing entrepreneurs' stories of how they built their businesses.

Figure 14. Most Valuable Program Activity

Which event or activity impacted most positively your ability to manage or improve your business?



Secondly, nearly a third of survey respondents (29 percent) found the *workshops and other multi-speaker events* most valuable for their businesses. In the interviews, participants highlighted the following workshops as especially useful:

- **Social media workshop**, which taught them how to use social media to sell their products.
- **Innovation workshop**, which gave them ideas for creating innovative designs and products.
- **Best business strategy workshop**, which enabled them to connect with U.S. companies that do similar work.

In addition, a participant in Benin found the workshop on giving business pitches particularly useful, as it helped her eventually win an award (see Sec. I.B).

For 21 percent of surveyed participants, *meetings with Americans from the business and government spheres* had the most impact on their business. Interviewed participants greatly valued the opportunity to establish contact with representatives of both smaller, women-owned businesses and major U.S. companies such as Walmart and Whole Foods. As a perk, some participants also appreciated the opportunity to meet U.S. Government officials, such as State Department staff. A few even had the chance to meet then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, which was a highlight of their experience.

Interacting with other African participants in the AWEPIVLP cohort. As noted earlier, many participants attended the program partly to connect with other African women entrepreneurs. Interviewed participants confirmed that interactions with fellow participants in their program cohort—from other countries and different business sectors—was very valuable for them in terms of networking and business ideas.

Although most participants were satisfied with their experience, a few expressed disappointment because they did not get to visit businesses in their specific industry. For example, a Malagasy participant who produces fruit juices was disappointed that she did not learn packaging and marketing strategies for her field. Likewise, participants from Benin and Swaziland who have textile businesses said that they did not learn much about their industry from a U.S. perspective.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation team offers the following conclusions and recommendations based on the data collected during this evaluation, direct observations during fieldwork, and in-depth analysis of AWEP-IVLP program outcomes vis-à-vis specific U.S. foreign policy goals:

- Increase trade both regionally and to U.S. markets, including through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
- Promote the growth of businesses owned by African women entrepreneurs
- Create better business environments for African women entrepreneurs
- Empower African women entrepreneurs to become voices of change/social advocacy in their communities

A. Conclusions

This evaluation revealed that the AWEP-IVLP program has made a significant impact on African women entrepreneurs and their businesses, as well as helped to foster regional trade and, to a lesser extent, exports from Africa to the United States.

Many participants made changes to their businesses as a result of what they saw and experienced in the United States. They improved their production and quality standards, changed their labels and packages to make them more attractive, reorganized their businesses for customers to have a better experience, developed marketing and business plans, and diversified their products or services. These changes resulted in *business growth* for the majority of participants, including increased sales and profits, as well as business expansion.

During the program, participants became aware of the benefits of using social media to exhibit their products. While many of the interviewed participants did not have a digital platform before the program, most of them had a website, Facebook page and/or WhatsApp account at the time of the evaluation. Many participants have used their online presence to advertise their products, and some even have started selling their products online to local markets, to other African countries, and/or to international markets.

Furthermore, participants reported benefitting substantially from the opportunities for networking during the program, both with U.S. businesses and fellow African women entrepreneurs in their program cohort. As a result, participants have created several WhatsApp and Facebook groups for their particular cohort across Africa. These social media networks have helped to foster *increased regional trade*, as they have enabled participants to export or introduce their products to other African countries with the assistance of on-the-ground alumnae who provide local knowledge and advice based on local market conditions.

Through contacts established between participants and U.S. businesses met during the AWEP-IVLP visit, the program also has made a small contribution to *increasing exports from Africa to U.S. markets*. For example, a few participants have successfully established contracts to export goods to U.S. stores like Whole Foods and Walmart. However, because of higher product standards, tariffs, transportation costs, and lack of assistance regarding how to take advantage of AGOA export terms (as discussed in Sec. I.F), many participants have not had the opportunity to do business with U.S. companies since the program. (See Recommendations below.)

Beyond business skills, participants also gained an understanding of the effectiveness of an inclusive leadership style, where employees of all levels are valued and their opinions are sought. Many participants have applied this leadership style to their organization and felt that it resulted in a more positive, collaborative, and productive team of employees.

Most participants also agreed that their program participation increased their overall level of confidence, which helped them to take on leadership roles in their communities. For example, participants were motivated after the program to support other women in their communities by employing women in their own businesses and teaching them skills that would enable them to open a business in the future. In addition, some participants have collaborated with fellow AWEP-IVLP alumnae in their countries to conduct activities and programs to benefit their communities. For instance, in Benin participants created Junior AWEP to teach young women in high schools about entrepreneurship, to share their experiences, and to provide advice on how to start and manage their own businesses. These activities illustrate ways in which the program has contributed to *empowering African women entrepreneurs to become voices of change* and to *creating better business environments for women entrepreneurs* in their communities.

B. Recommendations

Various recommendations emerged from AWEP-IVLP participants, impactees, U.S. Embassy staff, and direct observations by the evaluation team for how the program could further promote U.S.–Africa trade, as well as promote increased business growth and improved business environments for women entrepreneurs in Africa.

AWEP-IVLP program improvements. While participants were quite satisfied with their experience overall, they offered several suggestions for improving the program:

- ***More preparation prior to U.S. visit.*** Some participants mentioned that they did not have a clear understanding of what to expect during the visit and felt that they were not fully prepared. They recommended that AWEP-IVLP alumnae talk to participants before they leave for the United States to explain the benefits of the program and how to make the best of it.
- ***More time for field visits.*** As discussed in Section IV, participants considered the field visits to be the most valuable element of the program, and they would appreciate having more time dedicated to these activities.
- ***More networking with U.S. businesspeople.*** Some participants suggested having more time to network with and learn from U.S. women entrepreneurs and other potential business partners.
- ***More information on how to export to the United States.*** Participants also were interested in learning the process and understanding how to meet the requirements for exporting to the United States.

Embassy follow-up with alumnae. As discussed in Section I, those participants who have had follow-up contact with the U.S. Embassy have been very appreciative of this relationship and the opportunities provided, such as being invited to exhibit at the annual Embassy bazaar. Nonetheless, many felt that they did not receive enough follow-up as to how to put into practice

what they learned in the program. For example, they did not know whom to contact for advice on how to take advantage of AGOA or how to contact U.S. companies in their countries.

- **More assistance preparing for the U.S. market:** As discussed earlier, although many participants were motivated by the program to export to the United States and even took steps to prepare their products for the U.S. market, only a few had succeeded in doing so by the time of the evaluation. Many participants felt that they faced barriers to exporting and wanted Embassies to provide guidance on the steps or requirements to be able to export to the United States, as well as on how to qualify for AGOA duty-free export treatment. Follow-up with alumnae in this area could contribute to *increased trade from Africa to the United States*.
- **More contact and networking:** Networking was one of the most beneficial aspects of the program for participants in terms of growing their sales markets (thus *increasing trade regionally*). While participants have taken the initiative to establish AWEP-IVLP alumnae networks via Facebook and WhatsApp groups, some of those interviewed said they would like Embassies to be more engaged with alumnae by email, social media, or face-to-face. Embassies could offer alumnae opportunities for better exposure; help promote their services and products; and coordinate specific projects for them to work together to benefit other women entrepreneurs. In addition, some interviewed participants expressed interest in an annual meeting or workshop for AWEP-IVLP alumnae from all over Africa to have the opportunity to keep exchanging experiences and suggestions to improve their businesses.
- **Business workshops:** Participants from Ghana and Kenya were invited to participate in a series of business plan workshops, which they found very useful for their businesses. They suggested that the Embassies offer such workshops more often, including on other topics such as communication and social media. Ongoing professional development of AWEP-IVLP alumnae—who are often leaders in their local business communities—would help ECA continue to support the foreign policy goals of *promoting business growth* and *creating better business environments for women entrepreneurs*.

Recommendations from Participants

Coming together [with other alumnae] and continuing to have these conversations is closing the gap in the business community and is helping us network together.
—Participant, Namibia

I would recommend a more customized follow-up program for each AWEP (IVLP) alumna ... to see you through in your business endeavors.
—Participant, Madagascar

Although Posts often have limited resources for alumnae activities, the evaluation team recommends that ECA consider supporting Posts in implementing at least some of these suggestions.

VI. Study Limitations

While the evaluation team conducted comprehensive mixed-methods research to collect the most robust data possible, no evaluation study is free of limitations. The generalizability of the data collected during the evaluation is potentially constrained by the following:

- ***Difficulty contacting participants:*** The contact information (telephone, email) provided by ECA was used to contact all participants. However, in many cases, the contact information was outdated. The evaluation team made every effort to obtain updated contact information and to reach as many of the 181 participants as possible through multiple contact attempts. Nonetheless, some participants were unresponsive or were deemed unreachable due to invalid contact information.
- ***Fieldwork countries:*** In-country fieldwork was conducted in a sampling of 4 countries out of the 48 represented by program participants (from the 2011–2015 cohorts). In order to ensure that the evaluation represented data from a wider range of African countries, in-depth interviews and a telephone survey were conducted with participants in 37 additional countries. Nonetheless, the evaluation team was only able to make direct observations of participants' businesses in the four fieldwork countries.
- ***Fieldwork challenges:*** The evaluation team succeeded in interviewing the vast majority of program participants in the four fieldwork countries; most of these interviews took place at the participant's place of business, allowing the team to make direct observations. However, in a few cases, the team was unable to visit participants' businesses because they were located far from the capital city where fieldwork was conducted. These participants were interviewed either in person in the capital or by conference call. In Madagascar, one of the participants had to be interviewed by telephone because she no longer resided in the country.
- ***In-depth interview sample:*** Twenty AWEP-IVLP participants were selected for the telephone in-depth interviews (10 from Anglophone countries and 10 from Francophone countries). The information provided in the in-depth interviews in this report reflects only the opinions of the interviewed participants and does not necessarily represent the experiences of all AWEP-IVLP participants.
- ***Impactee data:*** The evaluation design included interviews with impactees in the four fieldwork countries who could speak to the impacts of participants' AWEP-IVLP experience on other businesswomen and the wider community. The evaluation team successfully interviewed 35 impactees (8-11 per country). However, some participants had trouble identifying impactees who could be interviewed or providing contact information for them. Furthermore, the information gathered from impactees was sometimes limited due to their hesitance to speak openly with the evaluation team and/or difficulty responding to questions because of their very limited education (often only primary). Nonetheless, their perspectives are invaluable, and the evaluation team rigorously analyzed the impactee data that was collected.