

THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

"Women can be the rock on which a freer, safer, more prosperous Africa is built. They just need the opportunity." – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

BACKGROUND

The African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) is an initiative launched by the U.S. Department of State in July 2010. It identifies and builds networks of women entrepreneurs across Sub-Saharan Africa poised to transform their societies by owning, running, and operating small and medium businesses, and by becoming voices for social advocacy in their communities. Supporting economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is a policy priority for the United States. In Africa, women are the backbone of communities and the continent's greatest potential to unlocking economic growth as women provide the majority of labor with the least amount of resources. Through AWEP, the Department of State advances the Secretary's Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality through civic and economic participation in Sub-Saharan Africa.



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Secretary Clinton sports the custom AWEP fabric worn by the AWEP 2010 alumnae during the follow-on conference at the 2011 AGOA Forum held in Lusaka, Zambia.

MISSION STATEMENT

AWEP is an outreach, education, and engagement initiative that targets African women entrepreneurs to promote business growth, increase trade both regionally and to U.S. markets through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), create better business environments, and empower African women entrepreneurs to become voices of change in their communities.



Courtesy Photo: Flotea Massawe

*Handicraft training at Marvelous Flotea Company (Dar es Salaam, TZ)
Owned and Operated by 2010 AWEP Alumna Flotea Massawe*

AWEP PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE

The State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) professional exchange is AWEP's cornerstone engagement tailored to introduce AWEP delegates to U.S. business leaders, policymakers, companies and industry associations, non-profit organizations advocating for women's economic opportunities, and multilateral development organizations. These annual three-week exchanges coincide with the AGOA Forum when hosted in Washington, DC; and 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. partnerships through AGOA.

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

By July 2012, the AWEP network will grow to more than 100 alumnae with small- and medium-size enterprises in the agri-business, food processing, textile, fashion, home accessories and other sectors. AWEP alumnae have the opportunity to work with the U.S. Agency for International Development's three regional trade hubs in Botswana, Kenya, and Ghana (and its satellite in Senegal) to increase international export competitiveness and intra-regional trade. The State Department also works with the private sector to secure targeted public private partnerships that stimulate business growth, create better business environments, and increase the trade capacity of the small- and medium-size enterprises. Partners for 2012-2013 include the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, ExxonMobil Foundation, Intel Corporation, and the Vital Voices Global Partnership.

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