

IFUW and UN Women join forces for dynamic panel discussion on women entrepreneurs in Africa

Nairobi, Kenya, 26 March 2015 – The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)), in partnership with UN Women Regional Office for [Eastern and Southern Africa](#), today co-hosted a regional seminar on “Perspectives on Women’s Education for Entrepreneurship in Africa”, welcoming a full house of audience participation at the Windsor Hotel, Nairobi. The multi-stakeholder panel, including representation from international organisations and the diplomatic and private sectors, shared professional and personal insights into the realities experienced by African women in their pursuit of economic opportunity through entrepreneurship.

Moderating the panel, IFUW Executive Director, Daniéle Castle, opened the seminar by framing the theme: “Despite Africa boasting the highest rate of women’s entrepreneurship in the world, the region sees a substantial portion of women entrepreneurs concentrated in the informal, micro, low-growth, and low-profit areas.” The panellists proceeded to evaluate the socio-economic landscape for women entrepreneurs in Africa, including by evaluating the role that education, financial literacy and business skills training can play in helping to scale up production and create higher profits for women-owned enterprises.

During her presentation, co-host and UN Women representative, Florence Butegwa, emphasised that leadership is key to transforming the education system, the way teachers are trained, the curricula, and the orientation of girls and their parents. A gender- and entrepreneurship-responsive education system requires a complete shift in individual and collective mindsets around gendered roles, relationships, power and leadership. This, she highlighted, is the fundamental shift that is at the core of UN Women work.

Representing the International Labour Organisation (ILO)’s Women Entrepreneurship Development and Economic Empowerment project ([WEDEE](#)), Jane Maigua – the National Programme Co-ordinator for Kenya – highlighted several types of market-based interventions carried out under the WEDEE in order to create national infrastructure and programmes for business development to support women entrepreneurs. In Kenya specifically, the ILO has worked in partnership with business development agencies to build a pool of 300 trainers to provide business services and training to Kenyan women. Within the region, WEDEE is currently being implemented in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Judith Owigar, Co-Founder and Operations Director at [AkiraChix](#) – a leading women’s network impacting technology in Africa – shared her personal journey as a woman entrepreneur, including highlighting the successes and the challenges she encountered along the way. Underscoring the key role technology can play in empowering women, Judith explained the importance of having women-only spaces and networks, which serve as important platforms and enablers for learning, entrepreneurship and peer support.

Former Ambassador of Rwanda to Kenya, as well as IFUW and Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW) member, Joy Mukanyange, shared her perspectives on best practices in devising quality professional and vocational training in order to foster, promote and prepare women leaders. “There is tremendous un-tapped potential from the many young women and girls graduating high school and university to drive Africa’s economic growth. This will, however, require a complete paradigm shift as regards training and education for business and entrepreneurship. Public/private sector partnership in promoting women in business and enterprise is key, as well as rewarding corporate responsibility that promotes women in business and enterprise.”

Following the presentations from the panel, the discussion was opened up to the floor. An active discussion ensued from an engaged audience, displaying strong interest in the future of Africa’s women entrepreneurs.

- ends -



Press Release



The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. IFUW is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

Learn about our grants & fellowships and our advocacy work.

For more information, please contact: Aoife Hegarty T: +41 22 731 23 80; Email: ah@ifuw.org

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) (@IFUWomen)

[UN Women](#) is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

For more information, please contact: Rose Ogola T: +254 20 762 4301; Email: rose.ogola@unwomen.org

Follow UN Women on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#): (@UN_Women).