

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD



2020 Empretec Women in Business Awards



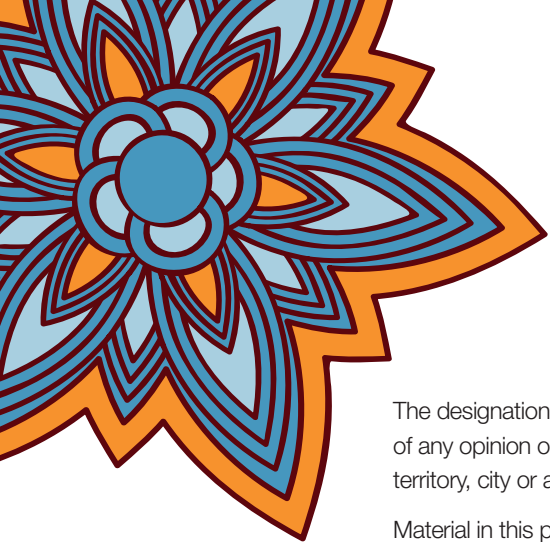
UNITED NATIONS



2020
Empretec
Women in Business Awards



UNITED NATIONS
Geneva, 2020



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Preface

From 2010-2019, on average, 68% of firms across the world did not have any women in ownership, while only 16% were owned by women². There are significant economic and social costs associated with women's underrepresentation in business including lower economic growth and fewer decent employment. Losses of income from women's inactivity can reach up to 30% of gross domestic product in countries with high gender inequalities³.

To raise awareness on this costly gender gap and to promote women's entrepreneurship, in 2008 UNCTAD launched the *Empretec Women in Business Awards*, aimed to recognize the contributions of inspiring women entrepreneurs, to celebrate their success and to empower women. As UNCTAD actively contributes to raising awareness on social and environmental pillars of the 2030 Agenda and promoting inclusive and sustainable businesses that can support Member States in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNCTAD also introduced three special categories (i) circular economy, (ii) sustainable agriculture and (iii) inclusive business, to highlight the contribution of women entrepreneurs.

In 2020, more than 30 nominations were received from 13 Empretec centres across the world. The finalists were selected by a panel of distinguished experts in business and entrepreneurship based on three criteria: innovation, leadership, and impact on their community. All finalists have put their expertise and passion into their businesses, in a variety of sectors, ranging from agribusiness to tourism, manufacturing and education. They have overcome obstacles and persevered to establish and grow successful companies, creating jobs and giving back to their communities, spearheading cultural changes, and serving as role models.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a major negative shock on women in business. A common thread of all finalists this year is their resilience amid the pandemic thanks to their Empretec training. They identified opportunities during the crisis, remained committed to their employees, took calculated risks and initiative. Many had already adopted inclusive business models, with clear links to the achievement of the SDGs. Balancing motherhood and their careers, they have also accomplished the right work life balance, taking full advantage of the flexibility and independence gained in running their own businesses.

UNCTAD's Empretec Women in Business Award together with the special category awards will be presented during a virtual ceremony on 10 December 2020.

The Empretec Team

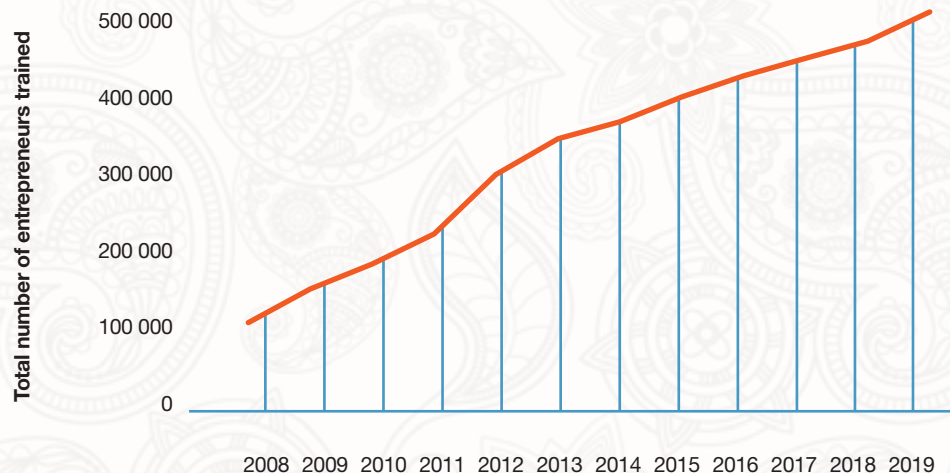


About Empretec and the Women in Business Award

Empretec

Empretec is UNCTAD's flagship capacity-building programme coordinated from Geneva, Switzerland, by the Enterprise Branch of the Division of Investment and Enterprise. The programme aims to promote entrepreneurship and enhance the productive capacity and international competitiveness of micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries and economies in transition. The Empretec Programme is implemented through its National Centres, established in 41 countries. Since its inception in 1988, Empretec has trained around 500,000 people, helping them establish or expand businesses, creating thousands of jobs in the process. Empretec's core product, the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW), promotes a methodology of behavioural change that helps entrepreneurs put their ideas into action and aids fledgling businesses to grow. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/225 acknowledges the value of UNCTAD's Empretec programme and encourages Member States to invest in entrepreneurship skills development.

The Empretec Networks Approaching 500 000 by 2020



The Empretec Women in Business Award

UNCTAD created the Empretec Women in Business Award as an acknowledgment of the great achievements of women entrepreneurs trained by the Empretec programme. The award, granted every two years, has made a real impact on the lives of past recipients. It has improved their access to further training, widened their markets and resources and boosted their motivation to continue growing their enterprises. It has also helped these women become role models in their communities. Recipients excelled in developing innovative business ideas, providing jobs, and increasing incomes in their communities.

The first series of awards was launched during the UNCTAD XII Ministerial Conference in, Ghana, in 2008. The second series of awards was presented in April 2010 at the annual session of UNCTAD's Investment, Enterprise, and Development Commission in, Switzerland. The 2012 awards took place in, Qatar, during UNCTAD XIII and the World Investment Forum, the 2014 edition took place in Switzerland during the World Investment Forum, and the 2016 in, Kenya, during UNCTAD XIV. The 2018 edition took place in Switzerland during the World Investment Forum.



Ms. Uneiza Ali Issufo (Mozambique), Winner of the Empretec Women in Business Award 2018

The Empretec Women in Business Awards Ceremony 2020

At this celebration of remarkable women entrepreneurs, the Women in Business Award 2020 is dedicated to the theme of "Resilience" in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. The Award is also expected to inspire the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs to start resilient ventures that aim for positive social and environmental impact with inclusive, circular and sustainable business models.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong negative impact on women entrepreneurs given their overrepresentation in sectors particularly affected by lockdowns, i.e. retail trade, hotels and restaurants and education, and existing structural inequalities including limited access to finance, technology, markets, networks and social protection and informality. The increased care burden during the lockdown was a major impediment on women entrepreneurs unlike their male peers. As such, firms managed by women were 27% more likely to file for insolvency or bankruptcy during the peak of the pandemic⁴.

The 2020 finalists faced even bigger business and personal challenges during the pandemic. They were forced to reassess their budget and financial plans and adjust the production and servicing processes. Nevertheless, a common thread among all finalists is that they were highly resilient to the negative health and economic shock. In an extremely uncertain business environment, they had to balance multiple challenges including survival of their business, keeping their employees, and maintaining the health of their families. They all attest to the significant contribution of the Empretec methodology in dealing with the crisis. They were able to survive the impact of the pandemic by diving deep into the personal entrepreneurial competencies, they took calculated risks, re-arranged their business models, while maintaining their employees. Some even managed to expand their businesses, creating valuable jobs, including for the vulnerable.

In recovering from the pandemic and the economic recession, the businesses that are run



by the 2020 finalists will inspire the next generation of women entrepreneurs to move beyond financial returns and aim for positive social and environmental impacts. This is in line with the UN Secretary-General's Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity Report⁵ which emphasizes the opportunity for a green, inclusive, and resilient recovery toward sustainable development. Some finalists have already made the brave switch to circular production and sustainable agriculture to minimize waste and to protect the environment. At the same time, some finalists are operating inclusive business models to a various extent, engaging vulnerable groups in their supply chains. The profiles of finalists indeed show that they are economically empowering other women.



⁵ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_report_socio-economic_impact_of_covid19.pdf



The
2020
Finalists

Paula Itatí de la Vega Sánchez

Founder, Bioita

ARGENTINA



“Being sustainable means to produce in an environmentally friendly way, at low costs and with a fair margin, so that the society as a whole can benefit.”



Bioita manufactures different sorts of cutlery, such as knives, spoons, forks, straws, and plates, out of sugarcane, thus reducing the use and disposal of plastic materials.

Itatí started to make cane cutlery with a partner. In 2017, the partnership broke and she found herself without money, without a company, with a child and pregnant. Itatí was also busy completing her thesis. Despite the uncertain and delicate situation, she did not give up on any of her plans. Up until giving birth to her second child, Itatí worked taking care of gardens and orchards, and continued her thesis work, despite many challenges.

A month after her second child was born, she got back to her idea of producing biodegradable cutlery. Thanks to a 100 USD loan from her father, Itatí designed a brand for her products, bought some supplies and carpentry tools, and hired a photographer to help her products stand out. She worked days and nights, often taking her children with her to work.

As an Agricultural Engineering student, she did not know much about finance or marketing. She knew she needed training and so decided to sign up for an Empretec workshop. To attend classes, work and take care of her kids, she had to learn how to delegate and sought help – a nanny for her kids, and other people to work with her and make cane cutlery in her workshop. Empretec taught her how to overcome fear, by calculating risks and then taking bold steps. *“It helped me forge myself as an entrepreneur, increase my confidence and empower me as a woman and mother.”* She was able to improve efficiency in production and the quality of her products. She learned how to deal better with customers, and how to expand her network. Overall, Empretec improved both her life and her business, helping her allocate proper time for herself, her family, and the company.

Knowing too well what it means to be a single mother, Itatí is helping other women and disadvantaged people in her community who find it difficult to make ends meet. That is why Bioita is employing between 10 and 15 women (single mothers, disabled, retirees) in manufacturing its environmentally friendly products. The company offers flexible working hours, and the possibility to make some products at home so that the work does not conflict with household activities and family. *“I encourage staff participation and always listen to suggestions and ideas on how to improve our products”*, says Itatí. She also

organizes workshops to enable people in her community to manufacture other products out of sugarcane. Of the 24 people who attended workshops so far, 8 started their own business.

Since re-starting her business three years ago, Itatí has experienced outstanding growth, recording a ten-fold increase in total sales. Another important lesson she learned during the Empretec workshop is that entrepreneurs and SMEs also have the responsibility to move the country forward in times of crisis.

Though the spread of COVID-19 pandemic affected Bioita, it also gave Itatí an opportunity to assess processes and re-organize the production, analyse numbers, plan, think about different marketing strategies, conduct training, contact other entrepreneurs and exploring partnerships. As a result, she started producing little bags for the cutlery kits that can be used as masks to fight the spread of the virus. As a way to help people during lockdown times, she also included in the kits some seeds with instructions for planting and links to her social media, where she posts tutorials on how to make sugarcane products.

Itatí is confident that the post-COVID recovery will bring further growth for Bioita, as the brand is getting attention and the company’s productive capacity can be flexibly increased, thanks to new machinery and more efficient processes put in place after she received a State loan at favourable conditions. Bioita has been selected to participate in the Latin America Green Awards 500 best projects and the Mayma Programme for sustainable enterprises, and has been establishing partnerships with organic producers and communities in another province.

Itatí is sure that being among the 10 finalists of the UNCTAD’s Empretec Women in Business Award 2020 will provide Bioita with even more visibility and open endless opportunities for her business to grow.



www.facebook.com/pidlavs

Agda Óliver

Owner, Meu Mecânico

BRAZIL



“Our biggest challenge was and still is the prejudice against women working in the car repair business. In Brazil, Meu Mecânico is the first car repair service for women by women, offering transparent services in a safe and comfortable environment.”



Established in 2010 in Ceilândia (Distrito Federal), Meu Mecânico is a car repair company mostly targeting female customers.

Agda is the owner of Meu Mecânico, which employs seven people, the majority of whom are women from her community. In a typically male-dominated profession, Agda is deliberately hiring and training women who share her same passion for cars, thus creating the empathy needed to offer high-quality services to her clients.

Through partnerships, the company is constantly innovating and expanding its services, such as accommodating its clients at a nearby beauty salon while waiting for their vehicles to be serviced.

No wonder Agda's favourite entrepreneurial competency is commitment, which means personal engagement, teamwork and excellent customer service. These are all values that transpire from her company. In addition, she is very much connected with her community: *"I organize free lectures and workshops that teach women how to take care of their cars and not be fooled in auto repair shops. I explain the language of the car, I show how cars speak to us and that it is important to know more about something which is usually considered a subject for men."*

She recognizes that Empretec was a great opportunity of building and strengthening networks. She learned to interact with other people, with whom she is always in touch, and to make new contacts that benefitted her company.

Another key learning from Empretec was why and how to delegate. *"When I started my company, I did not know how to delegate tasks. I believed I was the only one able to take care of car servicing with quality, but I realized that, on my own, I would not grow. After Empretec, it was so natural to delegate, and this allowed me to have more time to better manage my business."*

The revenues of Agda's car repair company increased by 25%, over the past three years. However, owing to the lockdown following the COVID-19 pandemic, Meu Mecânico had to close for some months and forced Agda to take urgent decisions, such as using her financial reserves and cancel some contracts. Yet, she did not waste this time just waiting for the situation to improve. She looked for new opportunities, kept in touch with her customers through online platforms and remained ready for a quick re-start as soon as she can reopen her business. She

offered online tutorials and focused on how to re-organize the company to be more efficient and performing. *"I strive to keep customers satisfied in the long term, over profits in the short term"*, says Agda.

Her plans for the future remain clear and bold. In 2021, Agda wants to open the first mechanics school for women, focusing on both theory and practical training, with a view to prepare them for the job market. In the following years, she aims at opening four new stores: one in the Federal District (Distrito Federal) and the others in three different States (Goiás, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais).



www.meumecanicoweb.com.br

Sandra Milena Sánchez Valenzuela
Director General, Agencia Internacional SHARK
COLOMBIA



“We are developing a new approach to digital marketing through gamification that will allow our customers’ clients to get to know and access their services in a more dynamic and captivating way.”



Agencia Internacional SHARK offers established companies as well as start-ups a range of services spanning from website design and creation, to digital marketing and branding, thus supporting their growth and digital media presence.

Sandra started the agency thanks to the income generated through one of the core experiences of the Empretec training: The Business Creation Exercise. She won the exercise and was able to generate enough income for the following three months, during which she was able to establish and start Agencia Internacional SHARK.

Sandra engages her staff to generate new ideas, provides them with regular training and offers a flexible working environment to allow them to balance private and professional lives. When in the first half of 2018 80 per cent of the company's clients suspended, postponed or cancelled the contracts they had with the agency, Sandra had to reduce costs to survive - including possibly laying off some of her staff or even closing the business. Instead, she decided to re-organize the company and her sale strategy, keeping all her staff.

"I continue to apply to my business all the behaviours learned during the Empretec workshop. I cannot leave any out, since each one is needed to make the agency work at its best. If I had to choose the ones that are really key to success, I would pick persistence, discipline, information seeking and opportunity seeking", says Sandra, who adds: "Thanks to Empretec, I have been able to strengthen my competencies as an entrepreneur and, above all, my confidence in pursuing one of my dreams. As well as knowing my weaknesses. The experience lived at each stage was very enriching, and I am very grateful to all the people at Cafam (Empretec centre in Colombia) for their advice."

The COVID-19 pandemic did affect the agency, though being a digital company, it was not difficult for Sandra to switch to teleworking. The agency continued to provide its clients with remote support and advice on how to turn the challenges of doing business, including social restriction and supply chains disruption, in to new opportunities to sell products and services online.

The lockdown months presented the company with an opportunity to deliver online seminars and workshops on digital marketing through virtual platforms. Despite all this, the company has been increasing its staff and the project sales for 2020, though understandably lower than in 2019, are better

than in 2018, when Sandra had to take a bold decision on whether to keep the business open.

Looking at the future, the company aims at expanding both at the national and international level, with a physical presence in Panama and Puerto Rico.



www.sharkagencia.com

Ana María Villavicencio Flores

Owner and Chef, Finca Agroturística Don Antonio
ECUADOR



“At the farm we follow an agro-ecological approach, free of chemicals. All our products are therefore preservative-free and do not contain any artificial colour. Finca Agroturística Don Antonio is committed to promoting sustainable agriculture.”



Located one-hour drive east of the city of Cuenca, Finca Agroturística Don Antonio offers tourists a unique experience in the countryside, where they can be involved in typical farming activities, such as feeding animals, sowing and harvesting horticultural products, horse-riding, and taste homemade food while learning about the culinary traditions of the area. While most of its customers are locals, the farm and its restaurant are also starting to attract some international tourists, especially from North America and Europe.

Ana María is the owner and Chef of Finca Agroturística Don Antonio, which employs four full-time people and 10 more on a part-time or as-needed basis. She works and supports a network of local suppliers of products that cannot be produced at the farm, including a group of *toquilleras*, who manufacture straw hats, bags and various items.

“What differentiates our business from others is the culinary innovation, the quality of our food and products, and the family atmosphere we offer our clients”, says Ana María.

She attended the Empretec workshop in 2018, as a prize for winning the *Emprende Turismo 2018* award, promoted by the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador. Thanks to Empretec, she was able to get a clearer vision of how to grow her business. Moreover, the incubation process was of great help to make the right start with the farm, optimizing resources, setting goals for the future, and working to achieve her objectives.

“When you set a goal and put all your effort into it, you can achieve a lot of things. This is what I share with my staff, suppliers and the people I support in my community. I give them advice on how to improve and, above all, encourage them not to stop if they want to achieve their goals. You have to work hard and overcome each and every obstacle, one by one, until you achieve your goals”, stresses Ana María.

Social distancing measures and travel restrictions hit hard the activities of Finca Agroturística Don Antonio, but the training received through Empretec helped Ana María look for other strategies to continue serving her customers and keep the business running. Since the beginning of the activities, her business recorded a 30 per cent increase in total sales.

Among the objectives she set for the near future, Ana María intends to upgrade the processing plant for homemade products and sell them to international markets (European Union). This

will provide people in her community with job opportunities but also might inspire others to follow in her footsteps and become entrepreneurs themselves. For this reason, she regularly teaches girls at a local school how to make dairy products, so they could eventually start their own business one day.



youtu.be/3GtcUzSbqNI

Kayan Motashaw

Founder, LivRite Foods

INDIA



"No goal is a real goal unless it is time bound."



Kayan is the founder of LivRite Foods manufacturing a range of premium honey products under *Beelicious* label that are traceable and responsibly sourced with positive social impact. Her adoption model, *Hive Alive*, allows consumers to adopt their own bee families at a small cost, while LivRite takes care of all aspects and delivers fresh honey directly to the consumer. By circumventing the retail intermediaries, Kayan passes the margins to local beekeepers who enjoy additional income year-round, while increasing the bee population. Her thriving business includes 18 employees on payroll and collaborates with 35 beekeepers. Before the lockdown, total sales increased almost sevenfold in four years.

During her studies of Apiculture industry and associated travels, Kayan identified a key problem: honey was a highly manipulated product that required strict quality control over the supply chain. At the beginning of her venture, when she had to rely on a third party to process honey, she realized that what she received was completely different from what she had approved on the field. She therefore quickly invested in costly machinery and equipment for her own processing plant taking a large risk as her company became asset heavy early on. She believes it was the most important choice she had to make early on to build her reputation for commitment to high-quality products.

Kayan notes that the Empretec Training Workshop “*has been a transformational experience, a wakeup call, a mirror placed before [her] that made her introspect very deeply*”. Thanks to her training, she is aware of how good business practices translate into good business outcomes. When faced with challenges, her mind immediately recalls the personal entrepreneurial competencies she has mastered during her training. At times, her training helped her avoid bad decisions. She recalls that it was challenging for her to delegate responsibility and rely on people as agents to expedite work. Kayan still keeps in touch with her fellow Empretec. In fact, one of the largest contracts LivRite has signed was thanks to a fellow Empretec.

As a woman leader, Kayan found that to inspire and motivate others, especially men, words were not enough. As beekeepers in her supply chain are largely men, she realized she had to be patient until the beekeepers saw the benefits of her innovative business strategy. Over time, as they saw the material benefits of adhering to better practices and producing a superior quality product, Kayan noticed a change in their conversations and body language. For female employees, she found that

sharing her own struggles and problems helped improve their relationship.

Kayan is confident that Empretec has prepared her well to navigate through the difficult times imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. She still uses the personal entrepreneurial competencies as her checklist before taking a decision. As many others, she has tapped into personal savings to pay overheads and salaries. She re-worked her business strategy, product portfolio and expedited the launch of honey spoons. She has also moved her manufacturing plant closer to her supply chain to minimize the negative impact of travel restrictions. She argues that switching to alternative strategies in the face of crises was a difficult issue for her but Empretec clearly showed her the importance of making the switch at the right time without missing the opportunity. As her product is an immunity-booster, she has already seen a substantial boost in demand for her products and remains positive for what the future will bring.



www.beelicious.in



Afnan Kamel Ali

Founder, Eureka tech academy

JORDAN



"This generation will make the change. This generation is Innovative Arab Generation."



Afnan started Eureka Tech Academy in 2014 in Amman with an ambitious objective to prepare the youth in Jordan and in the region to be inventors and tech entrepreneurs. Concerned by the gap in the education system which was not able to prepare children for the fourth industrial revolution and aware of the importance of shaping young minds at early ages, Afnan developed a comprehensive multi-level program to support children in learning technology, innovation and engineering so that they can become innovators and programmers. Following 10 unique levels, children aged 6-16 can fulfil their curiosity in, robotics, internet-of-things (IOT), mobile apps and games development, among others. At advanced levels, children are also equipped with commercializing their ideas and products and receive dedicated training for writing patents, business plans and conducting research and development.

After developing the offline curriculum in tech-education for students and teachers, Afnan moved into online learning. Eureka has recently become the first online tech academy in the region with a market of 70 million children who can receive training in Arabic. The online curriculum is also portable for educators who could use the content and resources for tech-education at schools. Eureka has also started targeting tertiary education institutions and students following IT and engineering programmes to support their learning process giving them unique opportunities to apply and practice their digital skills.

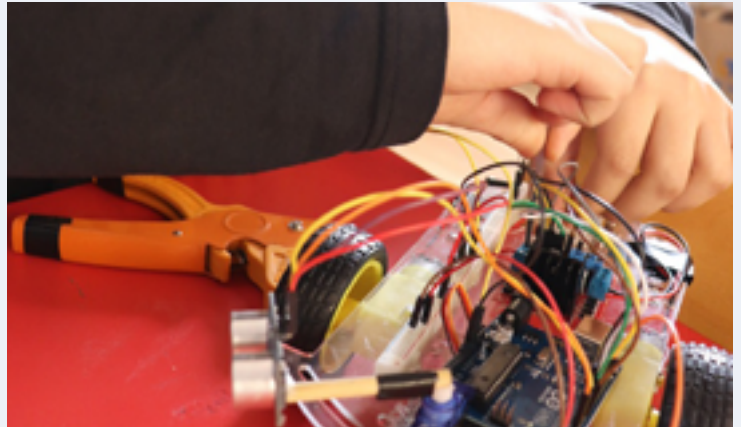
In her entrepreneurial journey, Afnan has achieved substantial impact on her business and employees. Having trained over 5,000 children, she achieved 26% growth rate in sales revenues over the last three years. The size of her business doubled in the same period and continues to increase sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to online learning. She expanded within and beyond the borders of Jordan.

Afnan is a passionate leader who identifies her strong team as a success factor. While Afnan attained gender parity among all employees, she ensured that all management roles are carried out by women. She offers training courses to women employees to improve business development and communication skills. She recalls that entering this male-dominated sector as young women was difficult to gain respect and trust from others which proved critical for raising funding. She followed a step-by-step growth trajectory building relationships over time.

Afnan argues that Empretec had a direct personal impact shifting

her mindset toward becoming an innovative entrepreneur. Since her childhood, she had envisioned to be an inventor, but needed a push for risk taking. She recalls herself as an overthinker before Empretec. After the training, she was more inclined to push her comfort zone, widen her network and make long-term plans. She benefited from Empretec during the COVID-19 pandemic as well, thanks to the flexible mindset with contingency plans. Her move towards online training which started 2 years ago was a risky but visionary move.

Afnan's long-term goal is to become the Khan Academy of the Middle East thereby training children on technology and innovation with highly attractive content and animations. In the next 10 years, Afnan envisions that Eureka programme will be a critical tool for 50% of the schools in the region. In this way, she hopes to contribute to the new generation of young innovators and tech-entrepreneurs, training 1 million innovators, particularly young girls, by 2023 who can build a Silicon Valley type ecosystem in the Arab region.



eurekatechacademy.com

Sandra Anne Ghouse

Founder, Owner & MD, 3E Training & Education

MALAYSIA



“We are Empowerment Specialists dealing with People Development & Productivity Improvement via our 6 pillars of Engagement, Empowerment and Enhancement programs.”



3E Training & Education Sdn Bhd is a soft skill corporate training company that engages, enhances, and empowers its clients. It tailors and suits its programmes to fit client's needs. All these programs are designed to help women in careers of secretaries, supervisors, clerks and even factory workers. In addition, the company has team building programmes, public speaking programmes, and micro-entrepreneurship programmes that help women, including the marginalised, single mothers, refugees, and retrenched women be more confident and more empowered in their job.

The training industry for women in Malaysia is about RM 15 billion (3.6 billion USD) and continues to grow. However, the market is competitive. 3E Training & Education Sdn Bhd stands out because of its 30 years of experience as soft skill corporate trainers, people developers and performance improvers. Its most important customers are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It is located in the Klang Valley of Malaysia but serve all states. As the company expands its products, team, marketing initiatives and collaborators, it will continue to expand its business throughout Malaysia and also intends to export their services regionally and globally.

3E Training & Education Sdn Bhd is truly FOR WOMEN BY WOMEN. The team consists of diverse female workers, from different walks of life- a Libyan refugee, a Eurasian intern, and 2 seniors that are still in ground and up-to-date with the market, an international brand strategist, a finance manager, and Sandra herself, who grew from rank and file. 3E Training & Education Sdn Bhd does not just train – it drives results. It empowers people and companies, transforming them to produce desired results.

Sandra has participated in Empretec 2015, Empretec LLE, Train of trainer (TOT) 2019 and family business management training in 2018. It enabled her to build a sustainable business model and to acquire entrepreneurship competencies and expanded an existing business to reach out to newer markets. She recalls, *"I learned systematic planning and monitoring. I broke down all my short, medium and long term goals into specific long term action plans and scheduled timeline and action dates together with all my team members into the yearly calendar so that everyone was clear on the company's plans and scheduled fixed routine weekly meetings to review progress of activities and to take necessary corrective action immediately as well as maintain and review our accounts monthly, comparing actual*

to budget, and making alternative plans quickly in order to achieve the budget."

As the head of the company, she runs a business and has set a role model to her employees. At the same time, she is a single mother with two children. She lives a balanced life between her career, her family and her community and social work, where she assists refugees and the poor and marginalised with their needs. She believes in delegating to her team with the view of developing them so that they grow and achieve more in their work and lives. She is also involved in NAWEM (National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia) which runs various developmental & networking programs for women that allows them even more opportunities by linking them to government agencies to expand and grow their business.

Her short-term goal is to expand 3E Training & Education's business by 300% this year and her medium-term goal is to expand regionally and globally by 2025. She aims for her business to be the leading empowerment developmental centre in Asia. She would like to set up an educational institution, where she can offer accredited developmental programmes for all women from all walks of life within the next 10 years.



www.3etrainedu.asia

Nicoleta Hritcu

Founder, SC Retro-Food SRL

ROMANIA



“I take calculated risks thanks to Empretec. During the pandemic, we opened two new shops and a laboratory introducing new product lines and hired more staff.”



Nicoleta is the founder of SC Retro-Food SRL in Iasi. She created two well-known brands *Cuptorul Moldovenecei* and *Glazurai* at local and national level. Her competitive advantage derives from the traditional recipes that were lost once but are recovered and found in her stores. Following traditional recipes and using only natural ingredients, Nicoleta creates high-quality sweets which are produced responsibly by a diverse team. As a mother of three, Nicoleta is committed to high-quality products that she would comfortably serve to her children. Her vision is to enter every household in Romania and abroad.

When Nicoleta started her venture in 2013, her strategy was to follow a business-to-business model and supply the market through resellers. After six months of operations, she realized she had to cut down on quality to work with resellers. She then switched to a business-to-consumer model and opened her own bakery shop. By now, she owns seven shops and three laboratories in the most populated neighbourhoods of Iasi, employing more than 70 people over 90% of whom are women and 40% from rural areas. She ensures that women from vulnerable backgrounds are hired formally including those particularly from rural areas. Nicoleta invests in her team through multiple trainings each year and supports where possible their childcare and transportation needs.

Nicoleta participated in the Empretec training in 2016 when she was about to experience a burnout. Empretec helped her reset and find sustainable solutions. From an enterprise that had 14 employees in 2015, she reached 67 in 2019. She continued to work on her competencies following the training. Thanks to Empretec, she was able to delegate responsibility to professionals which allowed her to focus on her growth strategy. She was also grateful to her fellow Empretecos with whom she is still in contact and in fact partnered with some in business. Her former trainer Ms. Camelia Dragan is her mentor and role model to-date.

Nicoleta actively supports the community in Iasi with social and civic projects. She ensures that her ingredients are from local providers who uphold high-quality and responsible production. No disposable plastic packaging is found in her restaurants. Nicoleta is an inspirational leader with an extremely positive approach thanks to the joy of working with a passionate team. She convinced them that they are working towards becoming the market leaders which is not a distant goal.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a significant blow to Nicoleta, decreasing her sales by 20% in March and April 2020. She quickly revised her budget and investment plan and took calculated risks. In fact, she opened two new shops and a laboratory. Focusing heavily on digital sales, she managed to catch up on the sales of the previous year and created additional jobs during the recession. Her new laboratory introduced three new lines of products thereby widening her market. During this formative period, she found herself consistently exercising her personal entrepreneurial skills including systematic planning and monitoring, opportunity-seeking and initiative, persistence, fulfilling commitments, demand for efficiency and quality and taking calculated risks.

Nicoleta is close to achieving her medium-term goal of becoming the market leader in Iasi. She aims to utilize digital technologies to their fullest potential in management, production, and sales to cut down on inefficiencies. She is expecting to enter the event catering market and to diversify further her product portfolio.



Strada Belvedere 2,
700555, Iasi, Romania

cuptorulmoldovencei.ro
glazurai.ro →



Hadija Jabiri Pheri

Founder and Managing Director, GBRI Business Solutions Company Limited

TANZANIA



“Empretec training enabled me to start a business that has impacted thousands of people in Tanzania.”



Hadija revised the business model of her company GBRI Business Solutions Company Limited in 2013 following her Empretec training. GBRI has since emerged as a horticultural company that specializes in growing, processing and exporting vegetables and fruits to target markets in Europe. Based on an outgrowers model in production, GBRI responded to the growing import demand from European countries for fresh fruits and vegetables with strong health benefits including snow peas, French beans and avocados which are packaged and exported under the EatFresh brand.

For Hadija, the Empretec training was a turning point. Before Empretec, GBRI was manufacturing cleaning products to retailers and wholesalers. During the training, Hadija had an opportunity to practice several entrepreneurial competencies including seeking opportunities, taking initiative, and seeking information. In one of the exercises, Hadija opted for selling vegetables and fruits and won one of the internal competitions. Her success during the training turned into a passion and she started farming vegetables and fruits for the local markets. She managed to expand the target market from local to European markets including United Kingdom, Netherlands and Ireland and engaged smallholder farmers who were trained to meet export standard.

Having entered the agriculture sector, Hadija was immediately faced with a major financing obstacle whereby accessing loans became increasingly difficult, especially with climate change. She switched to an inclusive business model to mobilize resources by including smallholder farmers in the supply chain. She also raised additional funds to invest in cold chain infrastructure to capture higher value added. Located in the southern highlands of Tanzania where limited opportunities exist for employment, Hadija contributed to over 2,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities with over 60% of beneficiaries being women.

GBRI has also created a sustainable high-end market for good quality products for more than 400 smallholder farmers who received Good Agricultural Practices programme alongside agronomic support. Consequently, smallholder farmers average income per year doubled from \$646 to \$1292. Hadija has stood by her outgrowers during the pandemic as well. From March-July 2020, GBRI was unable to export its product with major disruptions on cash flows and operations. Thanks to Empretec, she persevered and with calculated risks decided not to shut down the business but changed GBRI strategy with alternative

markets and diversified products. GBRI today employs 31 permanent employees and recruits 150 casual workers every week with 80% of management roles occupied by women.

In her next five-year plan, Hadija aims to increase production volume by over four times to meet the growing import demand on the fresh health foods. She expects to create direct employment opportunities for 2,000 smallholder farmers and to build capacity with input and extension support. Hadija closely monitors the way technology has penetrated horticultural farming and wishes to leverage newer technologies to capture higher value-added.



eatfresh.co.tz



Julian Nyamahunge Omalla

Founder, Delight Uganda Limited

UGANDA



"Business is like a wheelbarrow, it stands still until when it is pushed."



Julian is the founder and chief executive director of Delight Uganda Limited. Processing and packing *Cheers*, one of Uganda's favourite drinks, Julian has a loyal customer base of 5 million Ugandans. Collaborating with commercial farmers in Nwoya district in Northern Uganda, she has built a network of over 5,000 fruit out-growers who received agribusiness advisory services through vocational trainings targeting the production of mangoes, citrus fruits, guava, eucalyptus and fruit tree seedlings. Julian's inclusive business model covers all nodes of the value chain starting with seedling production to finally marketing end products. Her company today stands strong with 188 staff (55% women) and 141 youth contract workers overseeing production over 680 hectares of productive land.

Julian received the Empretec training, as she was trying to expand her business. She wanted to have an impact on her community, as well. Following Empretec, she started transferring skills to empower low-income households and facilitated the accreditation of her out-growers with standardized trainings. Julian has facilitated skills training for almost 20,000 women. Until 2011, *Cheers* was produced based on imported concentrates partly due to the challenge of sourcing high-quality and locally grown fresh fruits. In 2011, she realized her dream by acquiring 1,700 acres of land where she established a nursery seed bed to propagate clean fruit planting materials and organized an orchard with 5,000 fruit out-growers all of whom were supplied with high-quality fruit seedlings. She recalls that Empretec improved her self-confidence and other competencies such as goal setting, information sharing and demand for efficiency.

Julian is an inspiring and empowering leader who has mobilized and engaged people from diverse backgrounds, especially vulnerable women who struggled to contribute financially to their households. She ensured that each woman would have at least one acre of fruit orchard intercropped with short-term seasonal crops for income and sustainability. The Nwoya Fruit Growers Cooperation has 5,000 members of which 3,750 are women out-growing fruits for Delight Uganda and benefiting directly and indirectly over 100,000 women.

While her company owns 1,200 acres of land, the community owns 6,000 acres of land. She transferred requisite skills to the community through the Delight Farm Institute. The community has been creating new and decent jobs offering livelihoods to many. For instance, up to US\$ 1,850 could be earned

seasonally from an acre of land. With better fruits and oil seeds came improved nutrition in the community. This was followed by infrastructure development ensuring access to markets by the community.

Julian believes that Empretec improved her resilience during the pandemic which had a strong negative impact on her output. As the lockdown coincided with the ripening stage in orchards, fruits from 500 acres had to go to waste with only 10 tonnes of mangoes being allowed to enter storage and 40 tonnes of mangoes transported to Kampala. Nevertheless, Julian found an opportunity to improve farm management practices for better productivity to prepare for the post-lockdown period. She still managed to distribute fruit seedlings, coffee seedlings and cassava stems to the community.

Julian's long-term plans include meeting a growing market demand in dried fruit segment particularly for mangoes. She also aims to guarantee unlimited access to the institute for further skill development and guidance to others in replicating her inclusive model to have more community-level impact. She aims to increase direct out-growers to 80,000 farmers and indirect beneficiaries to 432,000 women in the next three years for sustainable fruit supply for local, regional, and international markets.



delightug.com





*The Award
Panel*



The Executive Board



Ms. Bisila Bokoko

CEO, Bisila Bokoko Embassy Services International



Mr. Fabio Sofia

Managing Director, Asteria Investment Managers; President, Sustainable Finance Geneva



Ms. Vanina Farber

Professor, social innovation, IMD Business School

Members



Mr. Mario Cerutti

Chief Institutional Relations and Sustainability Officer, Lavazza



Ms. Anna Falth

Senior Programme Manager and Head of the WEPs Secretariat, UN Women



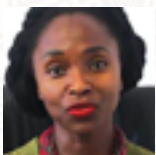
Mr. Michele Coletti

Associate Professor of Innovation, Grenoble Ecole de Management



Mr. Olivier Ferrari

Co-founder, ONE CREATION Cooperative; Chief Executive Officer, CONINCO Explorers in finance



Ms. Korkor Cudjoe

Advisor, Women Economic and Social Advancement (WESA), Graça Machel Trust



Mr. Matt Freeman

Senior Director, Business and Partnership Development, One Acre Fund



Ms. Buke Cuhadar

Vice President, Global Entrepreneurship Network



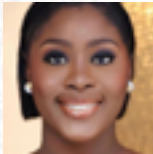
Mr. Christian Jahn

Executive Director, Inclusive Business Action Network



Ms. Andrea Lizarzaburu

Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean, WEConnect International



Ms. Ibukun Odurinde

Entrepreneurship Programmes Manager, The Tony Elumelu Foundation



Mr. Emerson Paim

Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Kubinga



Ms. Adrienne L. Palmer


Past Global Director, Entrepreneur's Organization



Ms. Ndiaye Tacko

Gender Team Leader, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division, FAO





*Other selected initiatives
of the United Nations
System on Women's
Entrepreneurship*

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED): ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship Development programme (ILO-WED) works on enhancing economic opportunities for women by carrying out affirmative actions in support of women starting, formalizing and growing their enterprises. ILO-WED aims to create an enabling environment for WED that generates quality jobs, to build institutional capacity in WED to develop tools and support services for women entrepreneurs. One of its core tools is the "Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET) Ahead training programme which trained more than two million women entrepreneurs since 2004.

<http://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/womens-entrepreneurship-development-wed/lang--en/index.htm>

International Trade Centre (ITC)

Women and Trade Programme: The aim of ITC's Women and Trade Programme is to bring greater economic benefit to women through increased participation in export trade. Through SheTrades Initiative, ITC increases women's participation in trade, raising the value of the international business and diversifying their markets. In 2018, the initiative connected 1 million women to markets, two years ahead of its 2020 goal, and set a new target to connect 3 million by 2021. ITC also helps strengthen the financial and managerial capacity of women entrepreneurs and match them with impact investors to create economic growth and jobs for women. For instance, SheTrades Invest has provided \$10 million worth of financing to women entrepreneurs in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia.

<https://www.intracen.org/itc/women-and-trade/>

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Migrant Women for Development in Africa Programme: IOM has been supporting women entrepreneurs in all developing regions. The WMIDA programme supports West African women migrants residing in Italy to use their remittances for establishing SMEs in origin countries. In 2019, IOM published a practical guide to aide migrant entrepreneurs start up their businesses with modules on finance, marketing and developing business plans. With its partners, IOM has facilitated seed capital to women-owned businesses in several countries including Belize and Kosovo.

<https://www.iom.int/engaging-migrant-women-development-africa>

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

eTrade for Women Initiative: UNCTAD aims to advance the empowerment of women through ICTs. The Initiative allows female digital entrepreneurs to make their voices heard in high-level political decision-making processes and to empower the next generation of female entrepreneurs in developing countries.

https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/STI_and ICTs/ICT4D-eTrade-for-Women.aspx

ICT and Women's Entrepreneurship: UNCTAD promotes more effective application of ICT for enterprise development, including women's entrepreneurship, in developing countries. It is committed to combatting the "gender digital divide" wherein women entrepreneurs – due

to lack of literacy, skills, access, resources and other factors – are excluded from the opportunities and benefits offered by ICT. UNCTAD has prepared a practical guide aimed at helping policymakers and development practitioners to formulate more effective policies on ICT and women's entrepreneurship.

http://unctad.org/en/Pages/DTL/STI_and_ICTs/ICT4D-Women.aspx

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

African Women Leadership Fund: In partnership with UN Women, African Women Leaders Network and the African Union Commission, ECA created a platform to support the growth of women-owned and women-managed companies across Africa targeting both innovative start-ups and micro enterprises. This impact investment fund empowers African women fund managers by raising investment and technical assistance capital. Through its online platform, the Fund identifies, mentors and invests in African women entrepreneurs.

<https://www.uneca.org/awlf>

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

With aregional focus on Southeast Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, ECE has undertaken activities to create a strong private sector where women and men are on equal stage. In 2018, ECE partnered with Mashav in organizing an international course on “Supporting Women entrepreneurs through the Use of Information and Communication Technologies and Networking”.

www.unece.org

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship Programme:

Launched in six target countries in 2019, the programme aims to promote women's entrepreneurship through women's access and use of financial services as well as digital solutions and ICT. ESCAP also launched its first ever impact investment initiative to increase the number of gender lens investing initiatives in the region, allowing for women-run SMEs to better access capital. ESCAP has also partnered with the Small Enterprise Assistance Fund (SEAF) to unlock US\$ 150 million in equity capital for women SMEs.

<https://www.unescap.org/projects/cwe>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

U40 Empowered: Women entrepreneurs powering the digital creative industries: In 2018, UNESCO with the support of Sabrina Ho Initiative launched the U40 Empowered initiative to support civil society organizations that promote young women entrepreneurs operating in digital creative industries. Specifically, the initiative provides support in accessing funding, infrastructure, equipment and co-production opportunities for women entrepreneurs under 40.

https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/call_empowered_en.pdf

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy: UNEP has been active in unlocking opportunities for women entrepreneurship in sustainable energy in partnership with UN Women. In partnership with Renewal Energy Solutions for Africa and other partners, UNEP conducted a micro-grid training in Nairobi. The objective was to support women energy entrepreneurs bringing energy to their rural communities and local enterprises with positive impact on health and education services, environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

<https://www.unenvironment.org/fr/node/10395>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Women's Economic Empowerment: Through various partnership, UNDP is supporting women's entrepreneurship through training in production skills and techniques, business management and functional literacy. For instance, UNDP is partner of the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator together with Mary Kay, UN Women, ILO, ITC and others to inspire, educate and empower women entrepreneurs across the world with no qualifying barriers to participate in the accelerator.

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/people/gender-equality/women-s-economic-empowerment.html>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The Women's Business Network for UNHCR was launched in South Africa in 2018 in partnership between the Women's Business Network and the UNHCR convening women business leaders to empower women and girls who were forced to flee their countries. The Network focuses particularly on refugee girls as they are much less likely to enrol in secondary school as refugee boys.

www.unhcr.org

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Through various projects, UNIDO supports women entrepreneurs in several developing regions. For instance, UNIDO offers a platform for sharing knowledge and expertise, forging partnerships, and developing tools for capacity building. Having created an inter-regional network of stakeholders from all sectors, UNIDO has raised awareness on the advancement of women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

<http://www.unido.org/gender.html>

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

Frontier Technologies for Sustainable Development: Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship through Artificial Intelligence in Afghanistan and Iraq is a pilot programme implemented by UNITAR with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency training 32 women entrepreneurs from various sectors. The content was prepared following the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program of Stanford University with an overall objective to empower women entrepreneurs in their innovative journeys with social and environmental impact.

unitar.org

UN Women

Women's Economic Empowerment and Skills Development: In more than 40 countries, UN Women supports women in reshaping conditions at both ends of the economic spectrum – from boosting women's participation in economic policymaking to supporting efforts to provide women and their communities with practical skills needed for securing sustainable livelihoods. In 2016, UN Women launched a Global Coalition of Young Women Entrepreneurs to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship by young women. Furthermore, UN women provides vocational training to young vulnerable women and improves their digital literacy. UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union have also recently joined forces to support sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth in G7 countries. We Empower is promoting economic empowerment of women at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries.

www.unwomen.org.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

Targeting women entrepreneurship from indigenous communities, WIPO introduced a training and mentoring program that builds capacity for effective use of intellectual property rights to give competitive edge to projects that rely on traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

www.wipo.org

