

WHO ARE THE YOUNG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF KISUMU COUNTY?

Emergent entrepreneurs with low digital skills: 80% of the women expressed that innovation skills and financial literacy was a pressing need that could be key in strengthening their enterprise. With limited literacy levels, there is also digital disparity and therefore, they find it hard using new innovative skills and using online platforms to create visibility and acquire clientele base for their product

"I find it hard separating money from my grocery store and my personal money, sometimes I take goods for domestic use from my stall but it's hard paying since all in all this is still my money"

Wishing to acquire soft skills: Participants affirmed that communication skills are vital in interacting with customers, but 60% of respondents had not been trained on communication skills. When asked about their soft skills gaps, 77% admitted to lacking leadership skills, 70% lacking negotiation skills and 73% on problem solving skills

Are part of support and coordination networks, but in need of more strategic partnerships and funding: 88% of the women belong to women groups, with close to 70% of these groups being registered. However only 3% of these groups are able to access formal finance e.g. through Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs). Other support they give one another includes feedback/business advice and connections to suppliers. Only 10% are able to provide financial support to fellow business owners.

Unable to access funding: MFIs are not seen as a viable option in accessing business finance. The women groups believe that they sabotage the loaning process with the numerous requirements. They also complained of high interests and tedious application process, and lack of support.

"Most of the times, you have to know someone in order to access funding, the banks also have really high interest rates but if we circulate the loans amongst us, the interest remains in the group and you can share it out."

Victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and male control: Close to 40% of women from the focus group discussions mentioned they need spousal approval in their business decision making. They also mentioned experiencing violence from their spouses because of running businesses.

"When called for some trainings, I have to seek permission from my husband first, if the training is being offered by men I can't go, and if I proceed and attend then it ends in a fight, I also have to let him know of any business I am involved in."

"It's hard supporting young women in the community especially if the support is coming from the opposite sex, we handle cases most often as the beach management unit on issues of suspicion and violence because of affiliation towards some business groups" -Beach management representative-

"It's hard taking any business loans because my husband does not agree".



Women form a bigger block in the entrepreneurship sector in Kisumu County and beyond. Most women running enterprises are also usually not literate enough to secure jobs that are attached to academic qualifications and opt instead for business as a source of livelihood. It's notable that these startups, however, are not sustainable. **6 out of 10 startups do not get past the sixth month of operation.** Having been raised in an eco-system where women took the role for providing for their families through small scale businesses and professional background in another community where women are entirely depending on enterprises to make a living, we were keen to understanding the barriers and enablers of sustainable growth of women-led, youth-led SMEs.

There is a high level of awareness of **personal skills gaps** among the women business owners, but insufficient knowledge on how to address these skills gaps.

Data suggests there is a **strong link between limited financial literacy and low access to formal finance (3%)** despite being in organized and registered groups, which is a prerequisite to accessing some forms of formal finance.

Spouses of women who run businesses hinder them from running successful businesses suggesting a need to **achieve buy-in support from spouses** as part of reducing barriers to running successful businesses.



The majority of the women are already in organized groups; the office of the Women representative should look into **providing programming in partnership with YLOs/YSOs for women in business through these groups in the areas of financial literacy, digital literacy and soft skills** needed to succeed in business.

Microfinance institutions have a ready market for financing products through the organized women groups but are negatively perceived by these women groups. **MFIs should work with these women groups to design friendly application processes and flexible financial products suitable for their needs.**

YLOs/YSOs engaged in women enterprise support, including WISE Kenya should **incorporate sensitization to spouses of women in business on the benefits of their partners running businesses** so as to get their buy-in and reduce business-based GBV

Methodology: this product is the result of a mixed methods research, conducted by WISE Kenya, that involved 189 participants from Kisumu Kenya through the following mechanisms:

- 105 Surveys
- 45 in depth interviews
- 15 key informant interviews
- 4 Group Discussions
- 20 community engagement interactions.

WISE Kenya

Wise Hub, Dunga, next to Dunga Primary School. City of Kisumu, Kenya.

+254 115-599-861 / +254 731-766-922

<https://wise-kenya.org/>



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This product was made possible with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of WISE Kenya and IREX and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.