



Government of Botswana



European Union

## **PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME BOTSWANA**

**A Government of Botswana initiative supported by the European Union and the  
Centre for the Development of Enterprise**

### **Report WED Networking Event**

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## 1. Introduction

In March 2013, around 30 citizen-owned women entrepreneurs in Botswana were selected for the Women Entrepreneurship Development (WED) programme. The WED programme is a partnership between various stakeholders, including Fondation CHANEL, the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) and Business Botswana, which took over the mandate of CDE in 2016, Women In Business Association (WIBA).

During the three-year WED programme, the women entrepreneurs received technical assistance and capacity building support to scale up their businesses, in particular in areas of management, administration and financial planning

With the WED programme coming to a close later this year, it was decided by the various stakeholders to organise an event where the WED entrepreneurs could benefit from discussing their challenges and learning from each other, as well as meeting potential mentors and funders to scale up their businesses.

In order to create a platform where the WED entrepreneurs could interact in a meaningful way through frank and open discussions, the programme included a debating and coaching session. The topics in the speaker session were carefully chosen to encourage active discussion in the sessions that followed.

During the speaker session, the huge strides made in Botswana to promote women empowerment and gender equality were highlighted. The benefits of networking as an effective tool in business was emphasized, as well as the important role that mentorship can play for SME's in finding support and receiving guidance. The speaker session also included testimonies from two WED entrepreneurs about the WED programme and an outline of the important role that the Women In Business Association (WIBA) plays in mobilising women to share experiences and support each other.

Keynote speakers included the Attorney General of the Republic of Botswana and co-founder of Gender links Dr Athaliah Molokomme, Executive Director of Fondation CHANEL Miren Bengoa, Her Excellency the Ambassador of France Anne de la Blache and former CDE Head of regional Office for Southern Africa, Sid Boubekur.

The purpose of the Debating Sessions that followed the speaker session was to provide a platform to discuss challenges women in business face and to explore possible solutions through active dialogue between the women entrepreneurs and experienced women across Botswana's economic and political spectrum.

The Coaching Sessions were aimed at offering the WED entrepreneurs a forum to discuss challenges and opportunities in smaller more personalised sessions with experienced women in business and leadership positions. During the coaching sessions, a number of key challenges and recommendations were formulated and thereafter presented to the audience.

## 2. Objective

The objective of the Women Entrepreneurial Development Networking event on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 was to offer an effective platform for the circa 32 women entrepreneurs participating in the Women Entrepreneurial Development (WED) programme for sharing experiences, meeting potential mentors and funders among experienced women in business and leadership positions in and outside Botswana.

## 3. Preparation Phase

In preparation of the WED Networking event, the consultant prepared a concept note for Business Botswana, identified topics and key speakers for the WED Networking event. Following approval of the concept, the coordinator prepared a preliminary programme in co-ordination with Business Botswana, former CDE Head of Regional Office for Southern Africa, Sid Boubekur and Fondation CHANEL. In addition, the coordinator secured a venue, the catering and all other logistics for facilitating the event. Further, the consultant developed a brand logo for the WED group as well as branded materials aimed at creating a common identity for the WED entrepreneurs.

Following confirmation of the programme and speakers by Business Botswana, the consultant sent out formal invitations, speaker profiles, guidelines for the debating and coaching sessions and other relevant information and met individually with the speakers. Four preparatory get-togethers were organised by the coordinator for the participants; two preparation sessions for the WED entrepreneurs and two preparation sessions for the speakers / mentors. In addition, all WED entrepreneurs received regular updates via email and sms.

During the first meeting for the WED entrepreneurs on March 1, held at BITC in Gaborone, the consultant provided a brief presentation to circa 20 WED entrepreneurs that attended, BNPC and Business Botswana. Most of the comments made by the WED entrepreneurs were aimed directly at the WED programme. In summary, there was positive feedback about the workshops provided by the WED programme focussing on financial planning and admin. The biggest challenges that some of the entrepreneurs said they faced was access to finance and international markets.

It was proposed that a follow up meeting would be held with Business Botswana to discuss in further detail some of the aspects of the WED programme. The meeting was organised by Business Botswana on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

The consultant organised a second information meeting for the WED entrepreneurs on the Networking event on May 17<sup>th</sup>. Only a handful of WED entrepreneurs attended. Those present received information about the coaching and debating sessions and provided positive feedback for the event.

The speakers were invited to two preparation gatherings to explain the objective of the event and desired outcomes. These took place on February 26 and May 20.

Further, the consultant met with Fondation CHANEL in Paris on March 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss preparations for the WED Networking event. During the meeting, the preliminary programme was discussed as well as the initial feedback from the WED entrepreneurs following the information gathering of March 1. In addition, the need for a knowledge gathering report was discussed, to be conducted by an independent third party in order to assess the WED programme.

In order to promote young local upcoming entrepreneurs and foster the association of WED entrepreneurs, the consultant hired an aspiring Motswana filmmaker to produce a short movie around the WED women shown at the start of the event. The coordinator assigned a Botswana based designer to develop a logo and branding for the printing material at the event and assigned a local entrepreneur in Mochudi to produce specially designed handbags for all the participants.

Following from the event, the coordinator will develop an Instagram page for the WED entrepreneurs where they can share and stay connected.

It is hoped that the WED branded materials will support the association of WED women in their aspiration to play a great role in their sectors and the wider Botswana economy.

#### 4. Implementation

The WED event was attended by around 70 people from Botswana's business community, the Government's civil service and international organisations, including the European Union, the German and French embassies as well as local development agencies and parastatals.

During the event the women entrepreneurs were introduced and discussed issues affecting their businesses with experienced women in business, potential mentors and funders. The stakeholders present, including Business Botswana, BNPC and the EU Delegation, were offered valuable insights into the WED programmes achievements enabling them to assess possible follow up action.

The interaction between the WED women entrepreneurs, potential mentors and funders in the various discussions was active. In addition, during the tea & coffee, and lunch breaks there was active mingling among the WED women entrepreneurs speakers, WED stakeholders, potential mentors and funders. During the coaching sessions, the WED entrepreneurs split up in smaller groups with two mentors per group, to discuss their business challenges and draw up joint recommendations.

## 5. Speaker session

The speaker session included speeches by key stakeholders of the WED programme and WED entrepreneurs who provided valuable insights into the WED programme and the value of networking when running a business.

The Guest of Honour, Attorney General and co-founder of Genderlinks Dr Athalia Molokomme started the networking event by commending the organisers. It was these events when women must rise to the occasion and show their true colours, as the jugglers they have always been, unfazed by numerous responsibilities, demands and expectations and unite women entrepreneurs to be able to tap into the experience and networks of other women, she said.

Women entrepreneurs' efforts were part of the broader universal struggle for gender equality as a human right and were crucial to economic growth, Dr Molokomme said.

According to Dr Molokomme, women in traditional Botswana society have always had unique and innovative ways to generate income and provide for their families. One such system is the 'Motshelo' system whereby a group of women come together to contribute money, lend it out with interest and ultimately share the profit. Some commercial banks had recently even introduced Motshelo Bank Accounts in recognition of the considerable contribution that this system is making to the economy.

The Attorney General concluded by saying that women should do more to challenge their organizations or places where they do business to remove gender bias. While tackling gender bias is not the sole responsibility of women, it is also true that men are less likely to see it as a barrier to women advancement, she said. Therefore it was important for women to hold companies to account in terms of their commitment to workplace and leadership diversity.

Miren Bengoa of Fondation CHANEL, praised the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) and stakeholders involved for their excellent work on implementation of the WED programme and welcomed the progress that had been made among the women entrepreneurs present during the three-year WED programme.

Her Excellency the Ambassador to France and Special Representative to SADC, Anne de La Blache provided valuable advice about networking. Key recommendations to make the most out of networking included being well prepared and identifying precisely the objectives for networking. Having a good, updated (and honest) CV ready, asking advice, sharing and being proactive, were all important factors.

Sid Boubekour of the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE), highlighted some of the main achievements of the WED programme. During the three year programme, a network of 30 women in business had been formed, operating at different levels but all of them motivated to perform better their businesses.

Some had shown notable amelioration through an improvement in production levels, sales and revenues of their company. Based on some of the positive outcomes of the programme it was hoped that the donors present at the event would consider WED as an investment in committed women entrepreneurs and enable them to use the resources and skills achieved to play a greater role in their respective sectors.

Finally, the speaker session included the testimonies of two WED entrepreneurs.

Gaone Otsile, who is a former student in jewellery design at Oodi College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) and who benefited from a benchmarking visit to BJOP, the renowned jewellery design school in France, said her experience in France had been eye-opening and inspiring. She said BJOP and CDE had motivated her to keep going and to keep following her dream and keep the passion alive. During her training at BJOP in France, Ms Otsile said she gained and enhanced theoretical and craft-technical skills. Furthermore, she said she was now in a better position to get financial assistance to enable her to start her own jewellery business and that there was a great scope of opportunities within the jewellery industry sector in Botswana.

Ratanang Motlhbane of Dobi Foods, a food processing and packaging company, said she was thankful for the training and mentoring she had received during the WED programme in different areas of business management and in developing a Project Plan, which had resulted in CEDA providing for a sizable loan to expand the business. She said the funds would be used to acquire necessary processing and packaging machinery, as well as raw materials.

## 6. Debating sessions

The Debating sessions consisted of three discussion rounds where a moderator and two panel members debated a topic affecting the women entrepreneurs businesses. The purpose was to share experiences and jointly offer solutions to some of the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs. The debating sessions included experience women in business, women in leadership positions and WED entrepreneurs.

The first debating topic focused on how to stay in business, or in other words, what is the key to making a business stay and expand successfully? The moderator, Rutang Moses, said her experience as CEO of the Diamond Technology Park had highlighted to her the numerous opportunities and spin offs that the diamond industry's value chain offered for women entrepreneurs beyond diamond trading, cutting and polishing. She said tapping into these opportunities offered sustainable business opportunities as diamonds were her to stay. Sukholuhle Mafika, founder and Managing Director Rosewell Chauffeurs, said it was important to always remain innovative and dynamic in order to remain competitive. WED entrepreneur Kealeboga Merafhe emphasized the importance of product quality to maintain and grow the business and remain competitive.

The second Debating topic centered on what is required to take advantage of opportunities in local and /or international markets. During the session, the Moderator, Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwambe, former Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth as well as panel member Sithabile Mathe, founder of Moralo Designs, an architectural firm, said there were various international women networking groups that served as effective platforms. In addition, WIBA was mentioned as an important platform in Botswana for women to share their experiences and explore opportunities both locally and internationally. WED entrepreneur Lebang Kolagano, founder of Lebang Setso, said her benchmarking visit to Paris, facilitated through the WED programme, had taught her how important it was to benchmark with international markets which had enabled her to improve her product quality, explore different designs and target new customers.

The third Debating topic focused on the challenges facing women entrepreneurship development in Botswana. Moderator Batsho Dambe Grothe, Chairman at Botswana Insurance Holdings, called on the women entrepreneurs to be “bold”, to speak up, and be pro active. She said it was important to focus on the private sector and recommended the WED entrepreneurs not to always choose the easy way of asking support or securing contracts from Government. Panel member Lorato Edith Boakgomo-Ntakhwana, former CEO of FNB Botswana, said she had only just become an entrepreneur having left First National Bank to pursue her own ambitions and looked forward learning from the WED entrepreneurs about some of the challenges they faced. As a banker she said she had often experienced very good business ideas, but poor presentation on cash flow projections and finances. This she said was crucial for access to funding. She also said banks were not the only source of funding, but that it was important that entrepreneurs prepared a proper business plan and cash flow statement. Amanda Masire, WED entrepreneur and Founder of Greenhouse Technologies, said one of the biggest challenges was access to funding. During the Debating session it was proposed and agreed that WIBA would invite Mrs Boakgomo-Ntakhwana as a former senior banker to give a training session about access to funding.

## 7. Coaching sessions

During the coaching sessions the women entrepreneurs split up in groups of around 6 - 8 WED entrepreneurs and two experienced women in business or in leadership positions. The aim was to allow the WED entrepreneurs to discuss their business challenges within a small group and draw up joint recommendations.

The groups split up in a separate room where there was lively debate and discussion. Both the WED entrepreneurs and potential mentors and funders said the coaching sessions provided valuable insights into some of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Botswana and offered suggestions on how to address these.



## 7. Outcomes / Recommendations

Following the Debating and Coaching sessions, each group formulated a number of areas where they felt action was required to support the WED entrepreneurs and promote women entrepreneurial development as a whole in Botswana.

### Group A

- Leadership skills were an under developed area that the WED entrepreneurs in Group A felt they lacked. Capacity building was needed in this area to better manage and grow their business.
- There was very little understanding of intellectual property rights. Training was important to help entrepreneurs obtain a better understanding of its importance.
- Staff recruitment / hiring the right people was a key challenge. Often businesses resorted to hiring people based on their relationship rather than competence. As one of the Group members said: "There needs to be a system in place for how you manage your people. This is often lacking."

### Group B

- Most businesses were not equipped with policies & procedures for staff recruitment, management, safety etc. Training and capacity building was recommended for Botswana based SME's in areas hiring, policies and procedures in order to sustain their business and be competitive.
- Product knowledge was often limited when starting a business. It was important to do thorough research before starting with a product, to study the value chain and identify how you can differentiate in order to be competitive. For example, sourcing of raw materials for certain products turned out to be a bigger challenge than anticipated.
- It was important to make sure as an entrepreneur that you were set up to provide the right product that offered a solution and identify a niche
- More benchmarking needed to be done to improve product quality and credibility
- There had to be more emphasis on quality standards: "Do not compromise your quality, no matter what," said one Group member.

#### Group C

- Social conventions were hampering women from being more pro-active. Women had to become more outspoken and stand up for their needs.
- There was a deeply perception that women in business were not serious and often perceived as merely carrying out a hobby. Often they were not taken seriously. This perception had to be changed through a mind set shift.
- Amongst women there was often a lack of confidence and a desire to want to please everyone. As one Group member said: "Most of us are too comfortable with waiting for to be asked instead of asking."

#### Group D

- There was an urgency to improve the local environment where currently the private sector was close to non-existent.
- For the private sector to flourish it was important to reduce the reliance of Government as the largest 'customer' of goods and services.
- To achieve this, more collaboration between entrepreneurs was important through platforms such as WIBA.
- One Group member emphasized the importance of a business plan. Or as one mentor said: "You need a roadmap, to formulate your strategic goal and to set your priorities."

## 8. Conclusions

A central theme during the speaker session was the importance of networking as a means to share challenges, experiences and work together. Networking through personal contacts and social networks and sharing among entrepreneurs were key factors for the success of a business.

During the debating and coaching sessions, a number of challenges were raised that women entrepreneurs face in Botswana. This included lack of structure and procedures in the business for product quality, staffing, safety etc. Other obstacles included entrenched social norms that prevented women entrepreneurs in Botswana to be more pro-active.

A recurring theme among the WED entrepreneurs was the challenge to access to finance and international markets. The over reliance on Government support and procurement was also considered an impediment. Another important challenge that the WED entrepreneurs said they faced, which was a 'credibility gap', where quality standards and proper procedures were often lacking.

It was noted that banks were not the only source for funding, but that it was important when approaching banks, development agencies or potential investors, to have a proper business plan and cash flow projection in place before seeking funding.

A number of the WED entrepreneurs said they had come a long way in improving their business practices with the training and support provided by the WED programme. Both the WED entrepreneurs and potential mentors and funders expressed a desire to continue their association beyond the current WED programme.

## 9. Annexes

- Invitation
- Overview
- Programme
- Speaker Profile
- List of WED entrepreneurs
- WED Information package
- WED handbags
- WED Movie
- WED Networking event images
- Photos of the Networking Event
- Instagram