

## ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURS IN AFRICA

The US State Department has taken an active interest in supporting women entrepreneurs in Africa.

### **African Women's Entrepreneurship Program**



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (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.

## **PURPOSE**

Globally, women make up 50 percent of the global population, 40 percent of the global workforce, yet only own about 1 percent of the world's wealth. Given the opportunity, women invest the majority of their income into their families and communities, but unfortunately most women experience unnecessary barriers that limit their ability to fully participate in the economy.

In Africa, women are the backbone of communities and the continent's greatest potential to unlocking economic growth as they provide the majority of labor with the least amount of resources. Reductions in the gender gap in education, health, political participation, and economic inclusion will result in an increase in the continent's economic competitiveness.

Through the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP), the U.S. Department of State seeks to dismantle the obstacles to business opportunities and economic participation that African women face. Launched in July 2010, the initiative 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. The AWEP initiative further advances the Secretary's Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality through economic and civic participation in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, AWEP directly supports two of the four pillars in the Presidential Policy Directive on U.S. strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa by (1) spurring economic growth and trade through incorporating women into the economic sector and (2) promoting opportunity and development throughout the continent for women and youth.

## **ALUMNA HIGHLIGHT**

Comfort Adjahoe



Country: Ghana

Sector: Agri-business/MGMT/Consulting/Promoting Women and Business

Product/Service: Shea Butter

Comfort Aku Adjahoe is the Managing Director of Ele Agbe, a shea butter production and export company in Ghana. Her company produces a variety of body creams, lotions, and soaps from Shea Butter and exports the products to the U.S. Ms. Adjahoe has run Ele Agbe for ten years and has participated in several AGOA trade shows in the U.S. She has organized rural women into cooperatives to enable them to produce and supply products

to her company. Although she started on her own in 1995, Ms. Adjahoe now employs 5,000 small-holder farmers in northern Ghana and 300 employees in Accra.