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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BUSINESS INCUBATION ON WOMEN'S ENTERPRISES FOR UPSCALING

The Kenya Food Event and Exhibition | September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Nairobi, Women's Economic Empowerment Hub (UoN-WEE Hub)'s Women's Business Incubation (WBI) project is a three-year evaluation program on how women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of businesses and enterprises in Kenya. The project's overall objective is to assess the extent to which women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of businesses/enterprises in Kenya. Through the WBI project, The WEE Hub in partnership with partner organizations including CrownTrust and TechnoServe is incubating 320 individual women-owned enterprises and 17 women's collective/group businesses in 16 counties for replication by 2025, with the UoN WEE Hub conducting monitoring and evaluation every six months.

The WBI project aims to achieve the growth and expansion of women-owned businesses through the provision of incubation services including; access to credit, linkage to information and technology, Capacity building, market access, and Mentorship. Most importantly, informed policy and policy change are expected to be part of the high-level outcomes.

In line with the realization of the access to markets pillar of the incubation project, the UoN WEE Hub facilitated representatives of eight (8) out of the 17 women collectives under the incubation program to exhibit their collectives' products during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center between 5th and 7th of September 2023.

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ACRONYMS

BB	–	Business-to-Business
BC	–	Business-to-Customer
BG	–	Business-to-Government
KEBS	–	Kenya Bureau of Standards
KFE	–	Kenya Food Event and Exhibition
MSEA	–	Micro and Small Enterprise Authority
UoN	–	University of Nairobi
WBI	–	Women Business Incubation
WEE	–	Women’s Economic Empowerment
WEE Hub	–	Women’s Economic Empowerment Hub
TPA	–	Tourism Professionals’ Association

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The AWSC UON-WEE Hub

The University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment (UON - WEE) Hub, domiciled in the African Women Studies and Research Centre, is a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral research and evidence Hub. Its key mandate is to strengthen the generation and use of evidence to advance Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and gender equality in Kenya. The Vision of the Hub is the full realization of Women's Economic Empowerment, while its mission is to be a thought leader in producing cutting-edge, innovative, rigorous, and accessible evidence through research for impacting policy formulation, implementation, and up-scaling the full realization of women's empowerment.

The Hub's overall strategy includes evaluating what works to promote WEE, disseminating generated evidence, advocating for evidence uptake, and supporting existing institutions in the evidence ecosystem while providing technical assistance to build capacity for evidence and generation use. The UoN WEE Hub is a five-year program established through a partnership between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Nairobi. It is responsible for research, policy advocacy, documentation of best practices, formalization of women's businesses, and enterprise development. Based on its four thematic areas: Affirmative Action Funds and Entrepreneurship; Women in Formal and Informal Employment and Women's Economic Empowerment; Childcare, and Women's Work; and Women's Movement and Policy Advocacy for Women's Economic Empowerment, the Hub serves as a research and evidence Hub to strengthen the generation and use of evidence to advance women's economic empowerment and gender equality in Kenya.

1.2 The UoN-WEE Hub Women's Business Incubation (WBI) Project

The UON WEE Hub Women's Business Incubation (WBI) project is a three-year evaluation program of how women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of businesses and enterprises in Kenya. The project was launched on the 11th of March 2022 and its main purpose is to assess the extent to which women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of businesses/enterprises in Kenya.

In the implementation of its Access to Markets pillar, the program continues to provide the incubatees with the following services and linkages: i) business-to-business (BB), ii) business-to-customer (BC), iii) business-to-government (BG), local and international markets, iv) business location, and v) business innovation by linkage to various market channels and

increasing their networks by linking them to the listed markets and with other incubator participants/ incubators.

In this case, the Montgomery Group East Africa, after learning of the UoN-WEE Hub’s Incubation project, invited the UoN-WEE Hub to participate in the Kenya Food Event 2023. Consequently, in ensuring the implementation of the access to markets pillar of the incubation project, the UoN-WEE Hub facilitated representatives of eight (8) women collectives under the incubation program to exhibit their collectives’ products during the three-day event. The selected collectives were as shown in the table below:

COLLECTIVE	COUNTY	PRODUCTS EXHIBITED
Futsetsezane Women Group	Kilifi	Cassava flour
Patanisho Self-Help Group	Kilifi	Cashew nuts
Good Neighbour Self-Help	Kitui	Honey
Lunga Lunga Women Cross Border Traders Association	Kwale	Cashew nuts
Bada Plus	Kwale	Cassava flour & crisps
Small Fish Women Group	Kisumu	Omena
Ntharene Women Group	Meru	Banana crisps
Keega Self-Help Group	Tharaka Nithi	Banana crisps

2. THE KENYA FOOD EVENT AND EXHIBITION

The Kenya Food Event and Exhibition was held from the 5th to the 7th of September 2023 at the Sarit Expo Center in Nairobi. The Event was organized by the Montgomery Group East Africa, one of the UK’s oldest established exhibitions and events companies. The event was the industry event of the year for food, drink, and hospitality professionals. The event welcomed over 2,500 visitors and offered a platform for exhibition for more than 100 brands, drawn from over 15 countries, to exhibit their products. Additionally, the event allowed those in the industry to enhance their businesses through linkage to new suppliers, producers, and service providers.

2.1 Official Opening of the Kenya Food Event 2023 – Prof. Ray Mutinda

The Kenya Food Event began officially at 11:30 a.m. with the singing of the Kenya National Anthem and the East Africa Anthem. The event was officially opened by Prof. Ray Mutinda, the chairman of the Tourism Professionals’ Association (TPA), who welcomed the exhibitors and visitors to the exhibitions. He termed the event as an unique opportunity for the participants to forge new partnerships and celebrate diversity and the richness of the food industry in Kenya.

2.2 Women and Value Addition for Economic Growth; What The UoN WEE Hub is Doing – Dr. Mary Mbithi

Dr. Mary Mbithi, the Director of research at the University of Nairobi WEE Hub, made a presentation about the UoN-WEE Hub and the Incubation Project. She pointed out that the UoN-WEE Hub is a multi-disciplinary research program focused on finding out what works regarding women and women's businesses. The Hub's mission was to be a thought leader in producing cutting-edge, innovative, rigorous, and accessible evidence through research for impacting policy formulation, implementation, and upscaling for the full realization of women's empowerment.

She further explained that the UoN-WEE Hub was doing research in over 20 counties in Kenya and was working in 4 thematic areas which include:

- i. Affirmative Action Funds & entrepreneurship
- ii. Women in formal & informal employment
- iii. Care economy and women's work, including gender-responsive budgeting
- iv. Women's Movement and Self-mobilization for WEE

The UoN-WEE Hub works with various partners in implementing its projects, including:

- ✓ **Government Ministries:** Such as the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes, the Ministry for Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the National Treasury, and the Ministry of East African Community.
- ✓ **Civil Societies:** Such as CRAWN Trust – Advocacy, Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) and Uthabiti Africa – Advancing women's participation through & access to childcare, TechnoServe – incubation program, Action Aid – dissemination and advocacy and Oxfam – National budget analysis.
- ✓ **Academia:** Such as Kenyatta University WEE Hub.
- ✓ **Private Sector:** Such as banks implementing the Credit Guarantee Scheme, e.g., KCB, Cooperative, Stanbic, Credit bank, CBA, and Private sector associations, e.g., Kenya Private Sector Associations (KEPSA) and women's organizations.

The UoN WEE Hub has various projects, including the Incubation Project which came about from the question, *of if you incubate women's businesses, will they grow?* Hence WEE Hub aimed to test and monitor the same. In preparation for the implementation of the project, the UoN WEE Hub developed the incubation model which includes various services being offered to the incubated women entrepreneurs, such as access to credit, markets, technology, mentorship, and linkages. The project seeks to evaluate the extent to which women-focused incubation models contribute to the growth of businesses /enterprises in Kenya. The project is being implemented in over 20 counties in Kenya. The WEE Hub and other implementing

partners are working with 320 individual women entrepreneurs selected from 600 surveyed during the baseline survey. Most of the selected businesses are in the Micro and Small businesses category. The Hub is also working with collective businesses in 13 counties.

Currently, the UoN-WEE Hub has:

- i. Identified the needs of the women entrepreneurs;
- ii. Linked them to financiers;
- iii. Trained them on financial management;
- iv. Linked them to markets, e.g., the UoN Innovation Week 2023 and the Food Event and Exhibition;
- v. On access to markets – has linked them with KEBS;
- vi. Linked them to information and technology – especially using their smartphones and trained them to take advantage of the opportunities from the regional integration/ free trade area.

The UoN-WEE Hub has been monitoring its projects since their implementation and has observed the following results so far:

- i. That there are increased sales for women businesses e.g. Access to childcare facilities for women traders in Busia Cross Border increased their sales within one year as they had more time to focus on their businesses.
- ii. Increased profits by 10%.
- iii. Expanded markets as a result of access to larger markets. e.g., due to access to childcare facilities.
- iv. Women have Access to finances including Affirmative Action Funds (AAF) like Uwezo Funds, and Hustler Fund. Women entrepreneurs under the incubation project have also been linked with commercial banks.
- v. Access to quality and affordable childcare – has been crucial for young women and girls who cannot afford to pay for childcare in a commercial place.

3. EXHIBITION BY WOMEN COLLECTIVES

During the 3-day event, the women collectives exhibited their value-added products from Banana, Cassava, Honey, Fish, and cashew nuts among others.



Figure 1: Valarie Udalang' from the UoN-WEE Hub explaining the UoN WEE Hub and the Incubation Project to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 2: Belinda Odera from the Kisumu Small Fish Collective in Kisumu County explaining the Incubation Project to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 3: The UoN-WEE Hub booth at the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 2: Rhoda Mugambi from the Keega Self-Help Group in Tharaka Nithi County explaining the collective's value-added banana products to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 5: Zipporah Kamau from the Lunga Lunga Cross Border Women Traders from Kwale County explaining the collective's value-added cashew nuts products to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023



Figure 3: Belinda Odera from the Kisumu Small Fish Collective in Kisumu County explaining the collective's value-added fish products to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 4: Binti Hamisi Mwakusema from the Bada Plus Collective in Kwale County selling the collective's value-added cassava crisps to visitors during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 5: Valarie Udalang' from the UoN WEE Hub explaining the UoN WEE Hub and the Incubation Project to a visitor during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023



Figure 7: Rhoda Mugambi from the Keega Self-Help Group in Tharaka Nithi County explaining the Incubation Project and the collective's value-added banana products to visitors during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th.



Figure 6: Valarie Udalang' from the UoN WEE Hub explaining the UoN WEE Hub and the Incubation Project to visitors during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.

4. UON-WEE HUB MEETING WITH THE WOMEN COLLECTIVES

To discuss and assess the outcomes of the collectives' participation in the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition, the UoN-WEE Hub held a meeting with the representatives of the women collectives present at the event.



Figure 8: Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, Dr. Mary Mbithi, and Dr. Dorothy Njiraine from the UoN WEE Hub during the meeting with representatives of the women collectives during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th Sept

buyers who expressed interest in purchasing their processed products and, in some cases, interest in the raw product for processing elsewhere. In discussing processing facilities with the women collectives, Prof. Wanjiku Kabira noted the urgent need for the collectives/groups to access processing facilities to ensure they do not miss out on sales opportunities from contacts made during the exhibition. She also stressed that processing facilities must be as close as possible to the source of the raw material to ensure raw materials remain fresh before processing. Consequently, Prof. Kabira contacted the deputy CEO of MSEA to link the women



Figure 9: Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, the UoN WEE Hub Leader, addressing representatives of the women collectives during the meeting held during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.

Prof. Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, the UoN-WEE Hub leader, requested the collectives' representatives to summarize their experience during the three-day event and whether they had managed to sell any of their products, which all responded to the affirmative. Furthermore, the collectives also got contacts of potential

collectives to processing facilities in the respective counties (Kilifi, Kisumu, Kwale, Kitui, Meru, and Tharaka Nithi).

5. AWARDING OF CERTIFICATES

On the last day of the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition 2023, the UoN-WEE Hub was awarded a certificate of participation. Additionally, Dr. Mary Mbithi's presentation at the event was also recognized, and she was also awarded a certificate.

Figure 10: Dr. Mary Mbithi, the Director of Research at the UoN WEE Hub, accepting her Certificate during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th September 2023.



Figure 11: Prof. Wanjiku Kabira, Dr. Mary Mbithi, Dr. Dorothy Njiraine, Mrs. Rose Muriithi, and Emily Owiti from the UoN WEE Hub accepting WEE Hub's Participation Certificate during the Kenya Food Event and Exhibition held at the Sarit Expo Center from 5th -7th

6. CONCLUSION AND OUTCOMES

The Kenya food event and exhibition offered a rare opportunity and experience for the women's collectives to exhibit their products during the three-day event, illustrating the Hub's strong commitment to ensuring women's economic empowerment (WEE) and the growth of women entrepreneurs.

Some of the outcomes of the event include:

- i. The event offered a pivotal platform for the women collectives to access broader markets, meet national and international brands and potential clients, discover industry opportunities, and network with key market leaders.
- ii. The women's collectives got market exposure which is in line with one of the pillars of the incubation project i.e. market aggregation.

- iii. The women's collectives got an opportunity to assess products by other exhibitors similar to their products, in terms of pricing, quality, packaging, and flavoring.
- iv. The event showcased the excellent work that the UoN WEE Hub has been doing in promoting women's economic empowerment through various projects, e.g., incubation.
- v. The event showcased the Incubation project's research aspect and how data collected throughout the project will be used for policy advocacy.
- vi. The event allowed the women collectives to meet visitors with the potential of being clients/ customers as some made orders for more supplies.
- vii. The event exposed the UoN WEE Hub incubation project to potential partnerships with various individuals, companies, and institutions, who expressed interest in partnerships on the incubation project or with the individual women collectives. Some of the companies/ institutions include:
 - ❑ Bulb Network
 - ❑ Orient Asset Managers Limited
 - ❑ Shambani Pro
 - ❑ APA Insurance
 - ❑ Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Nairobi
 - ❑ Zandaux.com
 - ❑ Nation TV (NTV)