Empowering African Women in Agribusiness

WIPO IP Coaching and Mentoring Program



WIPO

In cooperation with









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Introduction

As part of efforts to support intellectual property (IP) capacity-building and capitalize on Africa's comparative advantage, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), supported by the Japan Funds in Trust Global (FIT Japan) and working with the African Union Commission, African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) and Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle (African Intellectual Property Organization, or OAPI), organized the Regional Conference on Intellectual Property for Women in Agribusiness. Hosted by the Government of Rwanda in Kigali in May 2023, more than 100 women entrepreneurs from across Africa attended the conference to learn how IP could enhance the value of their products and drive business growth. At its conclusion, participants pitched their businesses to a panel of experts and resource personnel assembled by WIPO. Following a participant survey post-conference, and feedback from the panel, WIPO selected 31 women for a Coaching and Mentoring Program for Women Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in agribusiness in Africa (hereafter, the program), implemented over the period October 2023–May 2024. This article provides an overview of the program. A list of participants is provided in the annex.

The program

Overview

The program was launched during a WIPO webinar in October 2023. Five mentors were selected by WIPO to provide coaching and mentorwship support, with each mentor allocated six participants for a six-month period. Key considerations for the allocations were:

1. geographical location of participants,
2. language of participants and mentor, and
3. equitable distribution of workload among mentors.

All mentors apart from one were resource personnel during the conference. Table 1 provides details of the mentors and the geographical location of their participants.

Table 1. Mentors and distribution of participants

Mentor	Location of mentors	Location of participants
Getachew Mengisitie Alemu	United States of America	Cabo Verde Ethiopia Liberia Liberia Mozambique São Tome and Principe
Armelle Mvondo Tala Fouda	Cameroon	Burundi Cameroon/ Democratic Republic of the Congo Gabon Mali Republic of Guinea Niger
Rose Mboya	Kenya	Kenya (three) United Republic of Tanzania Uganda Zimbabwe
David Jeng	Gambia	Gambia Ghana (four) Nigeria
McLean Sibanda	South Africa	Botswana Lesotho Malawi Namibia Seychelles South Africa

Source: WIPO 2024.

Objectives and expected outcomes

The program objectives were to:

- identify the IP and business needs of selected women participants;
- support, guide and assist participants in addressing the challenges identified, and meeting their business needs;
- enhance the IP and business knowledge and skill of participants; and
- promote the use of IP and various business tools.

The expected outcomes were:

1. a change and improvement in participant businesses,
2. success stories that could be shared in and outside Africa to inspire others, and
3. concrete examples of how IP can be used effectively in business.

Interventions

Participants were asked to complete an IP gap analysis survey to establish the state of their businesses. The survey, designed by WIPO with support from the mentors, collected information from each participant, particularly their understanding and use of IP, and details of their business and challenges faced. The purpose and elements of the survey, and its significance, were explained to participants prior to it being sent out to ensure shared understanding and facilitate timely completion and submission.

Mentors analyzed and discussed with participants the completed surveys and their findings. From the surveys, they were able to:

- learn about the business activities of each participant;
- understand and further define the purpose of their business;
- define the characteristics of products that may constitute IP assets and be protected and exploited using relevant IP tools;
- identify challenges in producing and packaging products;
- determine the marketing channels and tools used to promote products, including social media platforms;
- identify customer segments and the challenges of meeting demand and expanding markets;
- appreciate the level of IP awareness, knowledge and understanding of participants (and employees); and
- determine the needs and challenges related to investment and finance.

Mentors prepared individual work plans for the participants, based on the program terms of reference, IP gap analysis findings, and discussions with the participants. These were implemented in individual and group sessions. The sessions, held at least three times per month, focused on assisting with IP awareness and protection, contractual arrangements, development of a Business Model Canvas (BMC)[1] and also a business plan using templates provided by mentors, funding, improved branding and packaging, and market engagements/ assistance. In some cases, support was provided for product development. The sessions addressed the following topics:

- Fundamentals of IP concepts.
- Identification of IP assets and elaboration of IP tools that can be used to protect the assets using IP laws relevant to the participants.
- IP business strategies.
- Contractual arrangements, including the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs), and IP provisions with regard to employees and subcontractors.

1 Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a strategic tool used for developing, assessing, and innovating business models, giving entrepreneurs and teams a clear and organized way to evaluate business viability.

- Business Model Canvas (BMC) and its application as part of developing a comprehensive business plan.
- Business plan development.
- Branding, brand management and promotion.
- Market access, including marketing strategy.
- Access to finance and investment readiness.

The mentoring sessions were mostly undertaken using Teams and Zoom platforms. In some cases (generally where there were Internet connectivity issues), WhatsApp messaging, voice notes and telephone calls were used. There were a few face-to-face engagements when participants were in the same country as the mentor. The program also comprised country visits by mentors.

WIPO, working with the mentors, designed a post-program survey for participants to assess the program's effectiveness. Of the original 31 participants, two did not go beyond the IP gap analysis stage, and two dropped out during the program. A cohort of 27 completed the program, and 26 responses (96 per cent) were received.

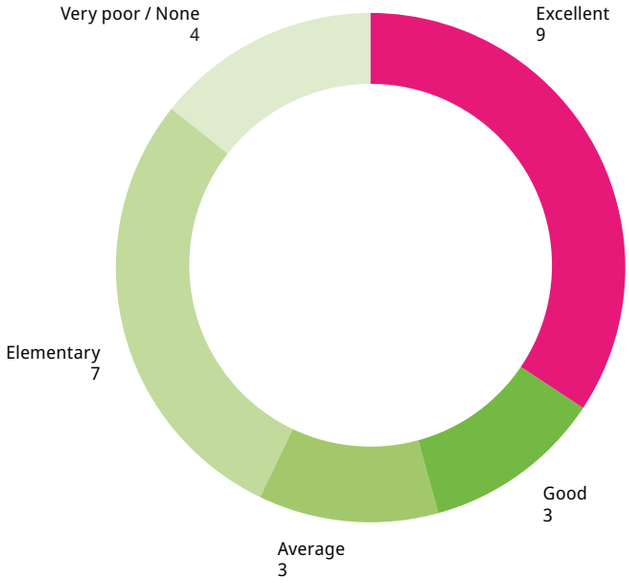
Outcomes

Participant evaluation and impact of the program

Of the 26 participants who responded to the post-program survey, 25 out of 26 found the program to be very valuable, while one participant said it was valuable.

Responding participants had a varied understanding of IP and business tools, with just over half having poor to average knowledge prior to the program (see figure 1). This greatly improved thanks to the coaching and mentorship. Participants acquired skills that included identifying IP assets, creating brands, logos and names capable of trademark protection, developing a BMC, writing business plans, marketing their businesses, networking, and creating an IP business strategy.

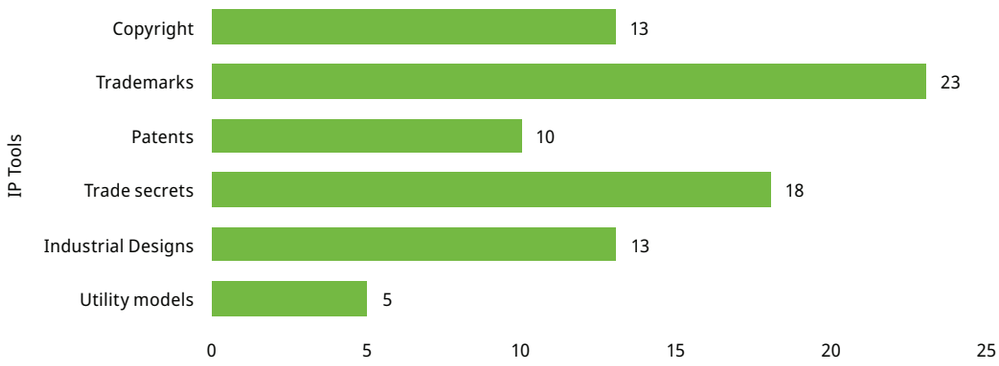
Figure 1. Participant understanding and use of IP before program



Source: WIPO 2024.

During the program, participants built their IP knowledge and identified IP relevant to their business (see figure 2).

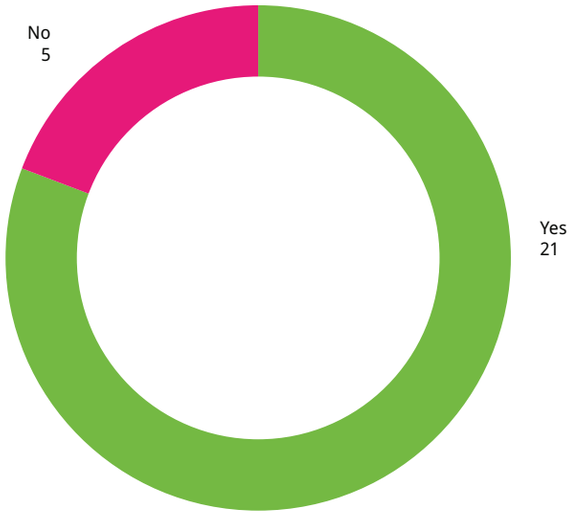
Figure 2. **IP tools identified as important by participants**



Source: WIPO 2024.

As a result of the program, new IP protection was sought, with 80 per cent of the responding participants reporting they registered new IP (see figure 3).

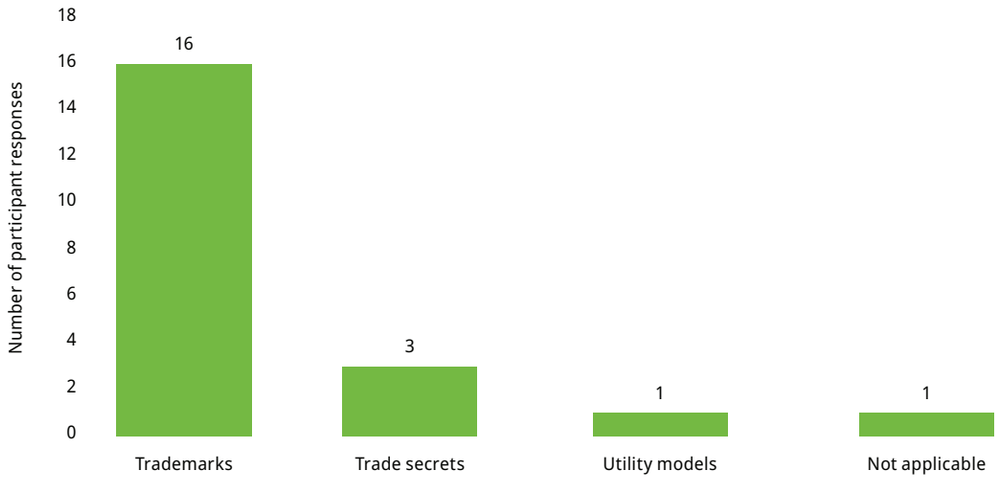
Figure 3. **Participants who applied for IP protection during program**



Source: WIPO 2024.

Trademarks emerged as the most used form of IP protection. Three participants opted for trade secrets as a means of protecting their inventions (as opposed to patents), for strategic reasons, following interaction with their mentor. Figure 4 illustrates the IP that participants used, after receiving mentor support, to improve their business. Some considered patent protection but deemed it not the most effective mechanism for their type of invention and opted for trade secret protection.

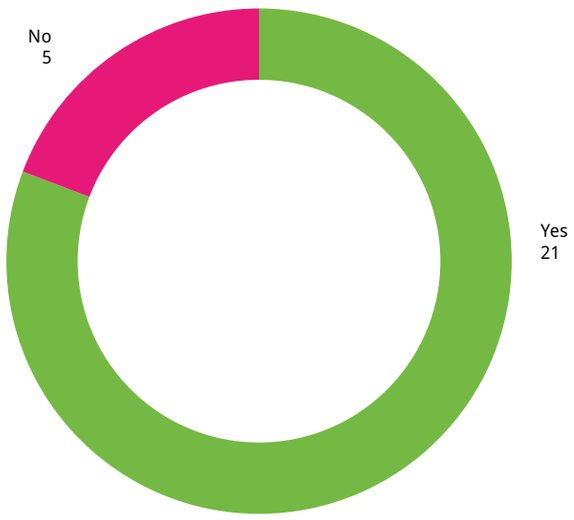
Figure 4. **IP tools for protecting IP assets, as identified by participants**



Source: WIPO 2024.

Just over 80 per cent of the responding participants reported establishing new networks and sources of finance thanks to the program and mentor assistance (see figure 5).

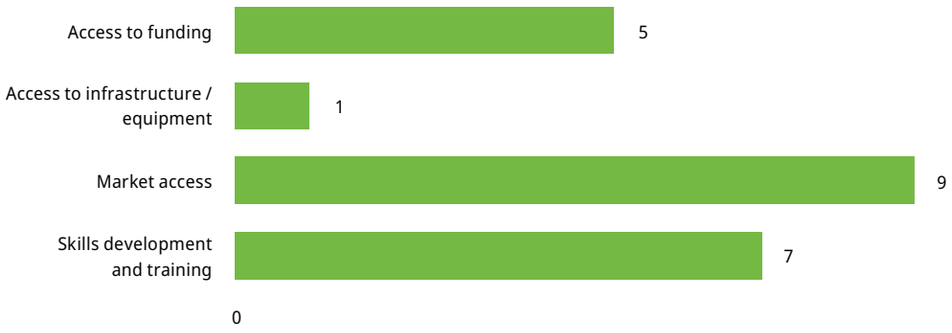
Figure 5. **Participants establishing new networks during program**



Source: WIPO 2024.

The types of networks were varied, and included access to equipment, finance and markets, and skills development/training (see figure 6). The biggest challenge identified by almost 35 per cent of the participants was access to finance.

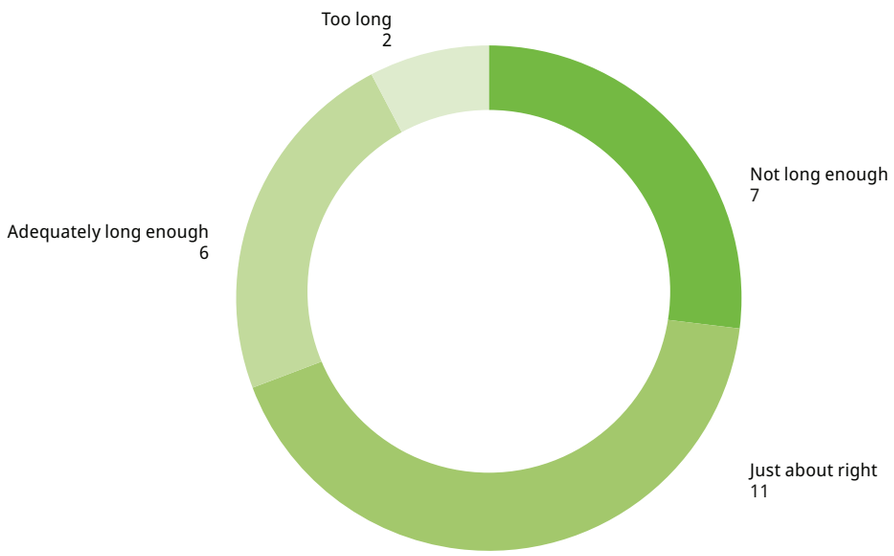
Figure 6. **Networks established by participants during program**



Source: WIPO 2024.

Although most responding participants felt the duration was adequate, at least 27 per cent recommended that future programs be at least 12 months (see figure 7). Notwithstanding, all participants recommended WIPO establish an after-care regimen consisting of a monthly check-in with mentors for six months after completion of the program.

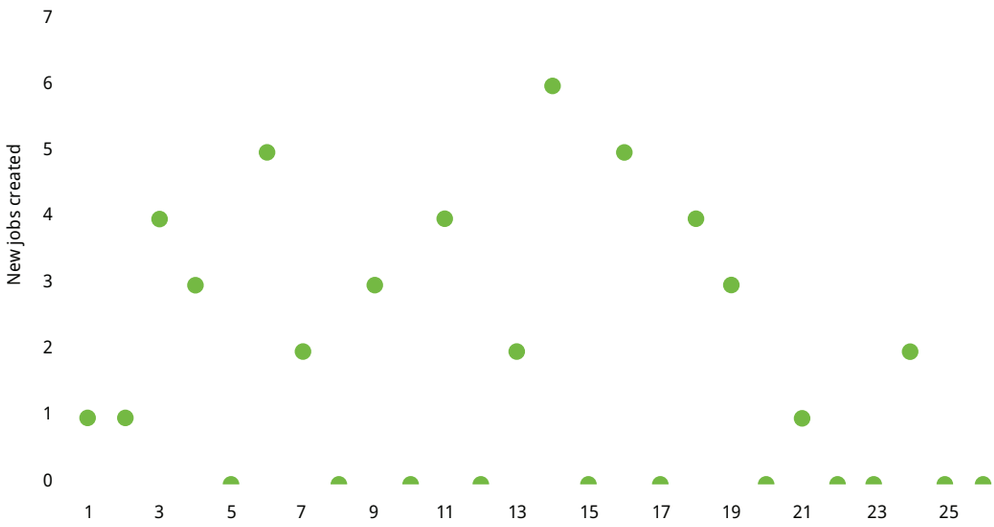
Figure 7. **Participant perceptions on program duration**



Source: WIPO 2024.

At least 69 per cent of the responding participants created new jobs in their businesses during the program (see figure 8), with a total of 54 extra positions.

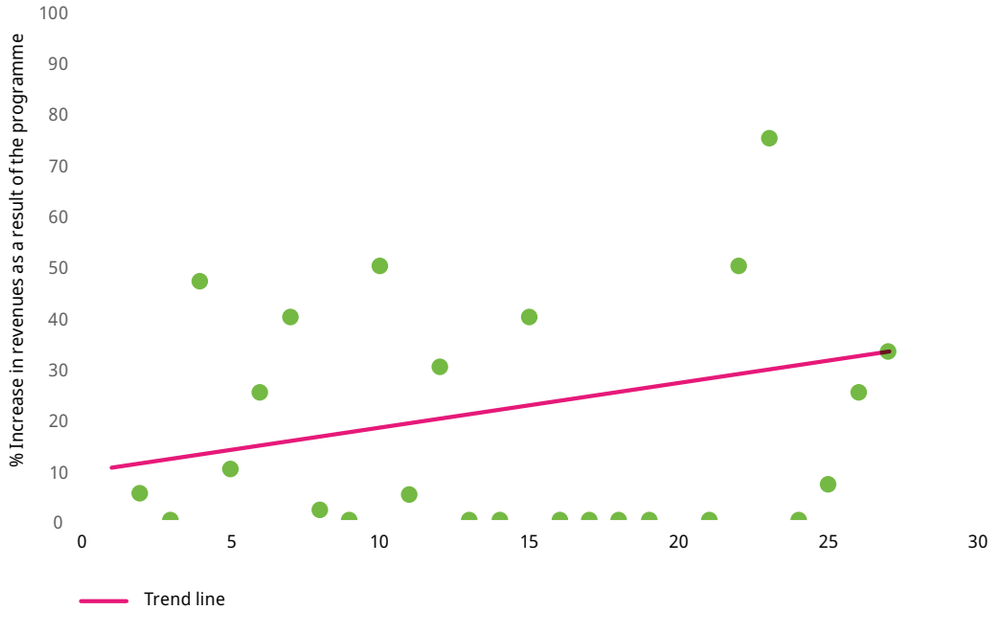
Figure 8. Jobs created by participants during program



Source: WIPO 2024.

At least 69 per cent of the responding participants reported business revenues had increased as a result of the support received during the program (see figure 9), ranging from as low as 2 per cent to up to 150 per cent.

Figure 9. Impact of the program on participant business revenues



Source: WIPO 2024.

Participant impact assessment of the program

All responding participants reported that the program and mentor had a significant impact on their personal and professional growth. Below are selected testimonials in response to the post-program survey:

"1. I now operate a registered business, which can legally supply to government entities. 2. We have now identified a new market supplying schools with fruits and vegetables (via BMC). 3. Applied for trading license, which will allow us to extend our market in the supply of vegetables. 4. Build work relationships with other WIPO mentees with the aim to trade between our respective countries."

Babui Daphne Nyepetsi

"Over the past half year, we have witnessed significant growth and transformation in the coffee space, further solidifying our position as innovators in the industry. This is what stood out for me personally – diversification of product offerings. Building upon our core coffee offerings, we have expanded our product portfolio to include a diverse range of coffee-based beverages and complementary items. This strategic diversification has not only enhanced customer satisfaction but also developed new revenue streams for our business."

Chantelle de Bryn

"I have a clear vision and coherent plans to move my business to the next level. I have developed a comprehensive BMC and business plan that have helped me improve my business as well as eased the process of access to funding. I have registered my business trademarks and copyrights. I have also developed a new business."

Angela Kaluso Nyimba

"Significant achievement, including testimonials from customers and employees that help the stakeholders see the impact of our organization's achievements and milestones in terms of rebranding and market access."

May Hikumwah

"My business started on April 5, 2023. The achievements I reached during the coaching and mentoring program are: before... I did not have any IP assets but now I have a trade business license, commercial registration certificate, and... I will have a trademark certificate soon. I understood clearly about trade secrets, brands and packaging. I tried to change to a new product package. It indicates that I have come to know how much the package attracts customers, in addition to the quality of the product. I was so reluctant about trade secrets before this program but now I keep my trade secret from everybody. I was not as serious about my business because of a fear of challenges that occurred during business, but now I have developed confidence in my business. In addition, I have developed a BMC."

Fikirte Assefa Kebede

"Mise en place de mon cahier (laboratoire au secret), amélioration de mon atelier de transformation, création de ma marque, recrutement d'une secrétaire comptable."

Marie Claire Matamba Mamfoumbi EP. Mbadinga

"I managed to set up my notebook (secret laboratory), improve my processing workshop, create my brand, and recruit an accounting secretary."

Perseverance Muzeya

"Registered my company name at AOPI, filled the trademark registration funds (only limited by finance to finish), have my business model canvas, and market strategy."
Brendaline Shieke Nkenen

"My level of understanding of intellectual property improved and now I know the importance of IP assets, thanks to the program. I also learned to negotiate a partnership. I will preserve my competitive advantage because I already improved the quality of my products, because of the new knowledge gained in terms of branding and packaging."
Marie Jolie A Mutomb Nabwik Kazal

"I learned about the importance of Intellectual Property assets to protect at the company level. We were empowered to improve the visibility of our companies on social networks (Facebook page, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.), how to create a free Google page, the design of a website and the different types of contracts relating to it. We also learned how to package our products, develop marketing strategy, and how to register our IP with OAPI."
Gloriose Muhorakeye

"I learned about proper use of IP tools."
Grace Hadiza Benjamin-Joshua

"Have learned a lot, especially on IP business strategy, particularly on the SWOT analysis. Pitching brought out things I never thought were relevant to the business, especially the reason I should pitch to the young ones. It just made me realize how necessary it can be in getting my products to the market."
Suzzane Kamola Mulindu

"I was able to make changes to employee contracts, to include IP provisions."
Rita Brobbey

"I was able to register for my trademark. I sat as a judge on the first ever Africa leather competition sponsored by LHCA [Leather and Hide Council of America]. I rebranded from Siafu Leather to Dakari. I secured my first international bulk buyer. I created a more interactive website."
Judy Maina

"La formation m'a permise de bien comprendre les actifs de propriété intellectuelle et surtout de corriger les manquements au sein de mon entreprise. J'ai également sensibilisé mon entourage sur la nécessité de protéger sa marque. Grâce à la formation j'ai été incitée à participer à promote au Cameroun dans l'objectif de voir d'autres expériences. Ce qui m'a permis d'établir des bons partenariats gagnant gagnant."
Aminatou Maitourare Abdou Saley

"I registered my trademark, improved by employees' contracts (additional IP clauses), and developed white labelling contracts."
Fatoumata Njie

"I've gained knowledge on IP, ideas on IP to be protected, Business Model Canvas."
Jessica Francisco Vas Das Neves

"We were selected as one of the top 50 women-led agribusinesses in Ghana in the 2023 Access Bank Pitch-a-ton. We also made top 10 of the Agribusiness Catalyst Program by FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations]."

Sarah Aidoo

"Was able to register our trademark under class 30 and am making provisions to register other classes relevant to our business, tapped into existing and new markets, and was able to engage our board of advisors the right way. Changed our packaging material for ice cream powder."

Rita Aku Shika Diabah

"Registered the business trademark with the right guidance and fine-tuned my Business Model Canvas."

Jennifer Kwakwa-Sarpong

"Understanding IP assets, trademarking, doing contracts with my stakeholders and nondisclosure agreements with my staff. Ways of getting funding, pitching to different audiences, intra trade market increasing our sales and economic growth. How to brand and package properly with clear labels, and doing the Business Model Canvas."

Anne Chiuri

"Introduction of new product (tea bags). Trademark registration (December 18, 2023). Revised product label (we now have trademark sign ® indicated on all new product labels). Increased customer base, from five locations to 13. The IP mentorship and coaching provided in-depth knowledge and detailed understanding of IP significance, especially for small business, which led to IP registration (trademark). Development of Business Model Canvas. Inclusion of IP clause within staff contracts."

Sandra Perkins-Lighe

"I'm astonished. The coaching and monitoring was very enlightening to my 'closed eyes' in terms of business. Through this program I managed to find the perfect logo for my company and I also went into few networking programs, which was excellent for my business, and made my mindset broader. And, thanks to my amazing coach, I am really thinking big for my company."

Lucia Marisa Chirindza

"I registered my business trademark (business name Rocanzo General Suppliers). I registered a business logo. But I paid half the cost, and I will pay the remaining cost after government magazine to finish to public announcement. After registering my IP, my business has improved. It sells because the logo Rocanzo is unique to my products. Other businesspeople cannot steal my brand. Because of this I can have permanent customers. I can access more markets worldwide by having this IP."

Rose Amandus Wazia

"This program enabled my company to the change the trademark, to manage the trade secret of the company and to make a difference in our market, to the marketing strategy and the business model canvas."

Rabiatou Arzika Mamadou

Meet the mentees: selected impact stories

Sandy Group of Companies (Liberia)



Photos: WIPO



The Sandy Group of Companies was started business in 2021 by Sandra Perkins-Lighe. It has seven employees and hires additional workers as needed. In 2023, it had a turnover of about 10,000 USD , but production volumes and demand – and consequently revenues – are expected to rise in 2025 as result of the program. The company offers a variety of products, including Zaag Natural moringa leaf powder and tea, moringa leaf and ginger root tea and ginger root powder.

Major achievements during the program included new brands and securing trademark protection. Plans are in place to register the brand in other African countries using the ARIPO Banjul Protocol on marks; develop the IP business strategy and BMC; introduce new products, including moringa and moringa and ginger tea bags; improve product packaging and labelling; expand the customer base; increase production volumes and trade revenue; and improve the visibility of the company and its products by promoting the brand Zaag Natural.

Barka Enterprise (Burundi)



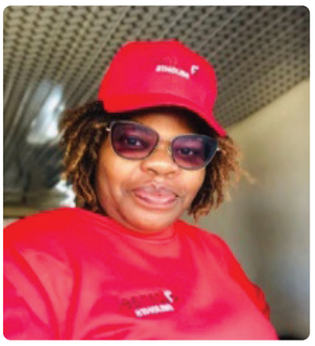
Photos: WIPO



Gloriose Muhorakeye founded Barka Enterprises in Muyinga Province, Burundi, in 2016. The northern province is characterized by the production of large quantities of pineapples and Jack fruit but there are difficulties in conserving and selling this fresh produce. This leads to huge losses, with farmers often obliged to sell at rock-bottom prices. To avoid this, the company transforms fresh fruit into fruit chips and other products, and the program has enabled Gloriose to better manage confidential information to preserve her competitive advantage. Her trademarks have been improved to make them more distinctive, and she applied for trademark protection at the Burundi IP Office. To attract consumers, Barka Enterprises has also changed its packaging to focus on environmental sustainability, moving away from plastic.

Through the program, Barka Enterprises was provided with the means to create and protect its unique material communication tools (flyers, rollups, banners). The focus now is to use IP to facilitate access to financing to acquire certification that will enable the company to sell its products internationally and register the trademarks in the OAPI region.

Alzanael Private Limited (Zimbabwe)



Photos: WIPO



Founded in 2019 by Perseverance Muzeya, Alzanael is a Zimbabwean agroprocessing company. It manufactures products, reducing post-harvest losses by dehydrating fruit (apples, bananas, plums, pineapples, strawberries, mangoes, pears, grapes, apricots), vegetables (cabbages, kale, spinach, amaranth, spider leaf) and meat (chicken, beef, lamb, goat), and further processed items such as biltong, gluten and nut-free seed bars, gluten-free flour (beetroot, pumpkin, banana, sweet potato) and ice cream, tomato and baobab powders, baobab infusion from roasted seeds, and honey. Alzanael sells to individuals, health enthusiasts and people diagnosed with cancer, hypertension and diabetes. As a result of the IP program, it has developed and registered a trademark, and improved packaging and branding, with three new product ranges introduced.

Perseverance has taken part in the African International Trade Fair in Egypt and Abu Dhabi, developing networks, including with the Women in Business Platform and Africa Women in Processing (AWIP) platform. The company successfully bid for financing from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It has increased sales as products are now being distributed in Zimbabwe and beyond and created new job opportunities. “I achieved a lot within the six months that I was in the WIPO program, compared with the last five years in business,” Perseverance said. “All this is a result of incorporating intellectual property in my business.”

Dakari (Kenya)



Photos: WIPO



Dakari is a Kenyan company that manufactures leather products. Nairobi-based, it was established by Judy Maina in 2019 as Siafu Leathers. It manufactures bags and small accessories, targeted at a middle class, high-end clientele, boutique retail stores and corporates. As a result of the program, the company has developed and registered the new trademark Dakari and rebranded from Siafu to Dakari after Judy realized, through the mentoring, that Siafu was already registered. The company has also managed to expand its networks through use of the BMC.

Judy said: “I spent a lot of money, time and energy in the last five years building a brand under the trademark Siafu, which had already been registered by someone else. This really shattered me. Many of my customers know my products by the name Siafu. I have started

rebranding my products with the new registered trademark Dakari. There is no need to make a million steps, only for you to go back and start afresh; do it right the first time, register your trademark."

Dizauregi Services Limited (Nigeria)

Nigeria-based Dizauregi Services Limited, founded by Grace Hadiza Benjamin-Joshua in 2023, is focused on agroprocessing. The program helped Grace set up a governance board and proper documentation, protecting the company and its assets. New products have been created and unique names/brands such as Tuftox, for which trademark protection is being sought in Nigeria. The company has also put in place measures to secure trade secrets for its Uregi brand products.





Photos: WIPO

Buttercup Farmhouse (South Africa)

Buttercup Farmhouse stands proudly as the world's first vegetable coffee producer, revolutionizing the industry from its base in South Africa. As a pioneer in this niche industry, the company blends innovation with tradition, offering a sustainable, healthy alternative to conventional coffee. As a result of founder Chantelle de Bruyn's participation in the program, Buttercup successfully registered a trademark, securing the brand's uniqueness and protecting its innovations. New packaging bears a trademark notification that stands out on retail shelves and preserves the quality of its vegetable coffee. This was pivotal in enhancing Buttercup's market presence. The company has implemented agreements safeguarding its production methods and clarifying employee roles, ensuring business continuity and security, and has established robust trade secret agreements with its food product developers, ensuring its processes remain confidential. New job opportunities have also been created. Chantelle said: "The coaching sessions impacted me as an individual and business. The mentor drastically opened my mind to the 'pain points' we may have as a business that have completely slowed our progress. I had no knowledge of making use of IP to leverage my business; though our vision was to expand globally, I did not see the importance of registering IP. I am currently experiencing how a brand sets a business apart from its competitors, building trust and consumer loyalty through a trademark. We had to redo a few elements on our branding and packaging to our advantage, including our registered logo on our rebranded packaging. Now we look like a reputable and trusted company to consumers at large."



Photos: WIPO



Jireh-Aidoo Ltd (Ghana)



Photos: WIPO



Founded by Sarah Aidoo, Jireh-Aidoo Ltd is an agribusiness in Ghana that farms and aggregates paddy rice from smallholder farmers to produce an indigenous brand called Kyidom Rice. As a result of the program, it became aware its brand name Dinah had already been trademarked and changed it to Kyidom, an Akan word meaning support. During the program, it purchased domain names for the company (the company website and product name) and ecommerce platform. Both websites are being developed. The company also learned the importance of IP clauses for business agreements and has amended its employee and business contracts, and all engagements with stakeholders.

In December 2023, Jireh-Aidoo was selected as one of the top 50 businesses for the Access Bank Womenpreneur Her Pitch perfect 2023 competition. In the same month, it received 5,500 Ghanaian cedi (550 United States dollars) from CAMFED Ghana to increase its inventory. It also received funding of 5,000 Ghanaian cedi (500 US dollars) from Footprint Africa for a social-benefit initiative, Empowered by Jireh-Aidoo, that trained six women and provided four of them with 80 kg bags of rice to start businesses as independent sales agents. The company employs five individuals, three of them women, and has created job opportunities for four additional women.

Kandoli Gold (Malawi)



Photos: WIPO



Kandoli Gold is a woman-owned honey business in Malawi, founded by Kaluso Nyimba.

During the program, the company registered the Kandoli Gold Honey trademark, securing brand identity and protecting its IP. According to Kaluso: “The program enabled us to identify and implement new business opportunities, including increasing production through collaboration with a youth group and expanding our product line to include honey beauty products, candles and drinks. It has provided me with the opportunity to mentor and coach youth groups in honey production, contributing to their entrepreneurial growth and skill development.” The business has also had access to finance through the World Bank Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Scaling (FiNeS) program.

Elegance Mission Investment (Namibia)



Photo: WIPO

Elegance Mission Investment was established by May Hikumwah and operates as a vertically integrated agroprocessing enterprise, encompassing divisions dedicated to farming, horticulture and processing. A prominent Namibian enterprise, it also seeks to alleviate poverty and generate employment. The farming is done in a village about 800 km from Windhoek, with a production facility in Windhoek. Activities include

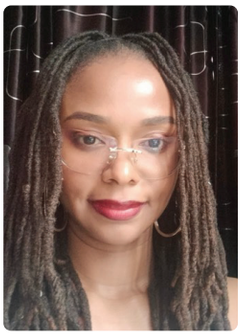
tending to livestock and crops (split 50-50). The business supplies fresh produce to retailers and lodges, and manufactures natural still water, Kalahari jam, hibiscus juice, ginger lemonade and Mahangu marula nut biscuits from indigenous crops. There is significant focus on empowering local women.
As a result of the program, the biscuits, hibiscus drink and jam have been rebranded, with three new trademarks developed. May was also able to develop a plan for the business. Her work has been recognized by the WIPO Director General and featured on national TV.



Photo: WIPO

Exotiq Lyd Organics (Kenya)

Ann Chiuri established Kenya-based Exotiq Lyd Organics to develop products for healthy living, boosting the immune system, skincare and internal health. It has developed and is commercializing various novel products using goat milk and plant botanicals. To secure supplies and anticipating market expansion, more than 100 families are being supplied with two female goats and supported with farming training, an arrangement that also provides the families with extra milk they can use and sell.





Photos: WIPO

Through the program, Exotiq has registered its brand name and logo, and secured its domain. It developed a unique process, formula and combination for skincare products, and has begun the process of applying for a patent in Kenya. Steps have been taken to secure sensitive information as a trade secret. The business has been accepted into the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute's incubation program for support with the product certifications required for expanded market access.

Nayaba Industries (Niger)

Nayaba Industries is an agroprocessing company founded in Niger in 2022 by Rabiatou Arzika Mamadou. It transforms peanuts into oil, paste and biscuits, and other derivatives of peanut oil production. It is also a trade platform for peanut oil producers, helping them transition into formal industries by providing support in product marketing and distribution. Nayaba products sell to universities, military camps, hospitals, supermarkets, retailers, restaurants and households, and its vision is to extend this market to all African countries and be foremost in the minds of African customers.





Photos: WIPO

Rabiatou's initial reticence about IP changed during the program. She said: "I was advised on several occasions about intellectual property and its importance for company competitiveness. I admit I was very reluctant because all this was not clear in my mind at this time. When I took part in the regional conference organized by WIPO in Rwanda, my perception started changing and I have been definitively convinced by my coach during the mentoring program. By

using simple and accessible language, my coach has demystified intellectual property. She showed me the mistakes made, as well as how intellectual property can contribute to the growth of Nayaba Industries. I have thus made the following changes: integrating NDA clauses in my employee contracts, reviewing my company strategy, establishing a digital strategy and using trade secrets to protect my overall company confidential information."

As a result of the program, Rabiatou recorded her company name change at OAPI, and identifies and implements new business opportunities. She has bought a domain name and is building a business website.

Agripath (Cameroon)

Founded in 2021 by Brendaline Nkenen Shieke, Agripath is a green company located in Cameroon. Dedicated to organic and sustainable production methods, it sells two main types of products, namely honey and dry vegetables, but has ambitions to supply fresh and naturally cultivated products (parsley, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, beetroots, carrots, pumpkins). Agripath serves individuals and enterprises, including pregnant women, babies, older people and the sick.

Thanks to the program, Nkenen Brendaline Shieke, has a better understanding of IP, the role it plays in business and how to avoid litigation. She applied for trade name registration during the program and selected the appropriate classes of goods and services that will be attached to her trademark. The company has also elaborated on its business plan, diversified its communication channels, and put in place procedures to secure its trade secrets. Nkenen attended the African International Trade Fair in Egypt and Abu Dhabi.





Photos: WIPO

Meet the mentors



Photo: WIPO

Getachew Mengisitie Alemu is an IP consultant who provides expertise to a wide range of countries and organizations. He has worked in more than 22 countries implementing IP projects supported by regional and international bodies such as ARIPO, the European Commission, World Bank, WIPO, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

A lawyer by training, Getachew was the first Director General of the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office and the driving force in the development of Ethiopia's IP system. He has authored or coauthored more than 27 works in the field of IP.



Photo: WIPO

McLean Sibanda is a business executive, academic and respected IP, innovation and entrepreneurship expert and thought leader. An engineer, admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa and a registered South African patent attorney, he cofounded the IP firm Sibanda & Zantwijk Attorneys.

An author of two books, Nuts & Bolts and Footprints, he lectures in entrepreneurship and innovation for the master's degree course in Intellectual Property (MIP) jointly offered by the WIPO Academy, ARIPO and Africa University.



Photo: WIPO

David Jeng is an expert in innovation and entrepreneurship, with extensive experience in training, business development, policy and access to finance. He holds degrees in marketing, finance and intellectual property, and undertaken specialized studies at Harvard Law School. As founder of Bliss Executives, he focuses on supporting small businesses in Africa.

David has trained more than 3,000 entrepreneurs and performed leadership roles, including as strategy chair for the Next Einstein Forum community and managing director of Chapman Xpress. A Mandela Washington Fellow, his achievements have been widely acknowledged, with honors including being named in 2023 as Leader of the Year by the West Africa Leadership and Empowerment Centre and most Influential Global Leader of the Year by the Pan African Youth Leadership Foundation. He was listed on the foundation's 100 Most Influential Young Africans in 2024.



Photo: WIPO

Armelle Fouda Mvondo has been an IP counsel since 2018, working from August 2018 to May 2020 for the law firm Nico Halle, where she was made assistant director of the IP department. Her interest in IP management encouraged her to work independently, and she went on to cofound Cabinet T&F, which specializes in IP. She has worked as a consultant for international organizations including WIPO, and companies such as NSIA Group, SNEDAI and Ammasco International Limited, where she was an IP mentor or counsel.

Armelle has been a visiting lecturer at the JFN Center and JFN Hightech University Institute since 2023, and an ambassador of the IP Business Academy (CEIPI) since 2024. She is also permanent consultant for VKII, an international association of Cameroonian engineers in Germany.

Coauthor of the of the monthly IP news flash service T&F IP Spotlight, she organizes an IP awareness campaign twice a year in Cameroon.



Photo: WIPO

Rose Mboya is assistant director, Industrial Linkages, Policy and Intellectual Property Centre, at the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute. An international IP expert with a wealth of knowledge and experience gathered over more than 15 years, she consults for WIPO, combining IP and entrepreneurship coaching.

She is one of the Kenyan delegates in AfCFTA Protocol negotiations on IP rights and a member of the task force on patents and utility models.

She is a member of the national technical team implementing a program to identify, digitize, protect and promote traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, commonly known as the DoDi Project, and is on the technical team to develop and implement the County Aggregation and Industrial Parks (CAIPs) project.

Conclusion

The inaugural coaching and mentoring program had a positive impact on the businesses of all the women entrepreneurs – agripreneurs – from 25 countries across Africa. All the participants acquired solid IP knowledge and awareness. They also gained valuable business skills and developed good business practices that can be applied throughout the business life cycle.

More particularly, the program empowered the women to seize opportunities, resulting in increased revenues, more jobs, expanded product ranges, improved branding and packaging, increased market access, and greater access to funding networks. A better understanding of their business, and how to integrate IP into their businesses and capitalize on IP tools, also enhanced personal confidence and the ability to articulate business matters.

This program, which was carried out on a pilot basis, affirms the viability of WIPO's new orientation under its Medium-Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2022–2026 to promote a vision of a world where innovation and creativity from anywhere is supported by IP, for the good of everyone.

Offering a fresh perspective on areas where innovation and creativity, supported by IP, can have a positive impact on people's lives, the MTSP provides a robust framework for implementing this empowering program.

Based on the impact stories, the logical conclusion would be to examine other underserved stakeholder groups across Africa who could potentially benefit from a similar training project. In a world where IP is seen as a tool for job creation, a driver of economic growth and a means to address global challenges, the possibilities are endless.

Annex

Participants in the WIPO IP coaching and mentoring program for women in agribusinesses in Africa

No.	Country	Name	Contact email	Name of enterprise	Language
1	Burundi	Gloriose Muhorakeye	Muhorakeye.g@gmail.com	Barka Enterprise	FR
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4	Gabon	Marie Claire Matamba Mamfoumbi EP. Mbadinga	agrimatgabon@yahoo.fr	Agrimat Gabon	FR
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