

Tanzania: Women Entrepreneurs Appeal for Financial Support

By Issa Yussuf

ZANZIBAR, August 04, 2014 (TDN) — SALMA Othman Mohammed is a determined entrepreneur, running a small factory at Meli-Nne area, in the west district. She says many women are now interested in entrepreneurship but are let down by their husbands.

"Some men are not good; they either allow their wives to do business on condition that he takes possession of the proceeds. Others say women should not work. This is not fair," says Salma a mother of five children.

She adds: "Religion allows us (women) to work, but the problem now is some men who have no vision and cannot support us.

I appeal to women not to give up, educate your husband so that he can understand and allow you to work."

Salma talked about the plight of women entrepreneurs at the Eid el Fitr trade exhibition organized in Zanzibar town by the Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TAN-TRADE). This is the second exhibition introduced on the islands last year during Eid.

The entrepreneur said the exhibition being held at Maisara grounds was a development in the micro enterprise sector currently accepted as a key to sustainable economic growth for individuals and the country. Salma Mohammed mentioned lack of credits; reliable market, raw materials and poor quality of goods as the stumbling block.

She said her two-year old small factory producing varieties of products including soap, herbal tea, sexual enhancement herb, baobab oil, and others, has been run by family members only.

"But I have the ability to employ youth from outside the family should I manage to expand the factory," she said.

Ms Mohammed says that many youth are idle and get involved in drugs because of lack of employment, yet if entrepreneurs were empowered, they could help reduce the burden of unemployment in the country. "I think the government and development partners have not done enough to support entrepreneurs.

It is a solution to unemployment," said Ms Halima Omar, a young entrepreneur struggling to get funds to develop her business idea. It is believed that micro enterprises add value to a country's economy by creating jobs, enhancing income, strengthening purchasing power, lowering costs and adding business convenience.

Experts say that MSMEs constitute over 90 per cent of total enterprises in most of the economies and are credited with generating the highest rates of employment growth and account for a major share of industrial production and exports. But women and other small business owners say their development is hampered by procedural, location and financial constraints.

In his speech at the opening of the TANTRADE, the Minister for Trade, Industries, and Marketing Mr Nassor Ahmed Mazrui said the government was committed to developing MSMEs. "This second exhibition in Zanzibar is an opportunity for our local entrepreneurs.

Let us share ideas and knowledge on how to improve our products to compete in the market with products from abroad," said Mazrui. He said local products might be good but still cannot challenge the products from abroad, and that entrepreneurs need to work hard to improve the goods and also increase production for export.

Most of the exhibitors are members of the Zanzibar National Chamber of Commerce and Industries and Agriculture (ZNCCIA), and the minister appealed to the chamber to help bring changes among the entrepreneurs in the islands.

Mazrui encouraged members of the business community to support each in developing business, as he warned that the government would not spare any body who imports the prohibited secondhand clothes. "We are serious; we do not need any more secondhand goods particularly the underwear, mattresses.

Studies have proves that they pose health risks to the people. I ask members of the business community in Zanzibar not to import them. Our neighbours Kenya and Uganda have taken similar steps," Mazrui said. The minister said his ministry is working to enforce law No 4/2013, that bans the importation of secondhand goods into the Islands.

He said that his office will ensure that the law is enforced to curb the importation of such materials into the Islands. The minister was reacting to a concerns raised by some lawmakers and section of the people against influx of secondhand goods which include clothes and electronics, but he said the ban of electronics would follow later.

Mr Abdulla Abbas, president ZNCCIA, asked Zanzibaris particularly members of the business community to value and promote the trade fairs and exhibition because it is an opportunity for them to learn from others through sharing experiences.

Ms Anna Bulondo, acting Director General of TAN TRADE said at the five-day exhibition which commenced last Sunday would help traders in the islands advertise their products, as she invited government institution also to take part in the event.

Bulondo thanked ZNCCIA, the Ministry, and participants for taking part in organizing the event, as she encouraged more people in the business. She said that TAN TRADE is for the second time, organizing 'arts, culture, and freedom of Africa' exhibition in Dar es Salaam in May next year.

Ms Sabetha Mwambenja, chairperson, TAN TRADE board said her institution aims to promote business both on the mainland and the Isles through organizing exhibitions.

She said plans were underway to develop a permanent trade fair centre in Zanzibar which may

attract local and international traders.

She said entrepreneurship is now an important factor for the economic growth of any country, and that Tanzania as one of those developing countries support entrepreneurship, especially women's entrepreneurship. **(Source: Tanzania Daily News)**