

A woman with dark hair, wearing a vibrant red shawl over a white top, sits smiling on a large, intricately patterned rug. She is surrounded by several colorful, patterned pillows and a woven basket. The background features a wall with a repeating geometric pattern of black diamonds and squares. The overall scene is warm and culturally rich.

AWEA

Amhara Region Women Entrepreneurs Association

Bahir Dar Ethiopia

Establishment

- AWEA was found by 60 women entrepreneurs in Amhara region in 1999 and was legally established by 2000.

Why?

- Women suffered because of low income and stagnant business activities
- a great need for information on the entrepreneurship environment
- Society did not give recognition for women entrepreneurs in general
- Most women who were in business did not have formal training
- No start up capital
- No work space

Status on start up point

- 60 ambitious women
- Highly motivated and committed
- Zero resources
- Zero information on who is working with WEAs
- With no clear direction how we should start
- No staff, only volunteer members
- No office space

Identifying the vision

- Brain storming sessions with AWEA leaders was the 1st step
- Motivating issues raised
- It was a brand new idea, none of us had an experience in leading associations
- Setting short term and long term plans

Training for AWEA Leaders

- The 1st training by ILO (association building)
- Was an eye opener
- We were able to see necessary strategies
- What kind of services we can offer
- How we should identify our stake holders..
- How to find resources that are available....
- We were highly motivated and had a clear understanding of how we should proceed.

Lobbying, recruiting

- Recruiting potential members
 - no one was interested in our service...
 - they didn't trust us because they did know who we were
 - they refused to give out information about their business
 - Some of them thought we work for the government and not willing even to tell us their names

Cont....

- 1st trade fare strategy
 - The women trusted the people they know.....
 - 1 board member for 10 women entrepreneurs(door to door)
 - It was probably the 1st street fair in the country...
 - They never heard of a street fair before....
 - They were too shy to be out on the streets with their products
 - 60 women said they will participate just out of respect

Cont...

- Approaching stake holders
- ☞ The Government (Trade & industry), technical and professional support to organize our 1st street fair
- ☞ The police commission assigned security officers

Cont...

- 👉 USAID, financial support to cover the cost of the fair and gave a pre- trade fair training to 60 participants
- 👉 The municipality agreed to close the main street in Bahirdar for 4 days
- 👉 Some NGOs rented space from us to promote their services

Out come

- Official opening , key government officials opened our 1st fair
- Thousands of visitors
- We were on the news(TV., Radio, major news papers...)
- The women were encouraged(both members and leader of AWEA)
- confidence(AWEA leaders, members...)
- Leaders Level of commitment raised up

Cont...

- The whole town talked about AWEA
(recognition)
- **Acceptance** by the community, government, donors increased.....
- hundreds of applicants in 4 days to become members, more than 400 new members registered in 2 days
- We expanded our vision for a stronger AWEA

Members profile

Table 1: Entrepreneurs by age group

Age Group	Number of responses	%
16-25	172	28%
26-35	283	46%
36-45	112	18%
46 and older	42	7%
No Fill	6	1%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 2: marital status

Marital status	Number of responses	%
Single	178	29%
Married	318	52%
Divorced	66	11%
Widowed	49	8%
Separated	4	1%
No fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 3. number of children

Range	Number of responses	%
1-3	236	38%
4-6	152	25%
7 and above	34	6%
No Fill	193	31%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 4: highest education completed

Highest education completed	Number of responses	%
None	84	14%
Primary	138	22%
Secondary	295	48%
TVET	76	12%
Higher	19	3%
No Fill	3	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 5: major line of business

Line of business	Number of responses	%
Industry	136	22%
Agriculture	2	0%
Wholesale	1	0%
Retail	399	65%
Service	77	13%
No fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 6: years in business

Years in business	Number of responses	%
Less than 1 year	49	8%
1-5	341	55%
6-10	154	25%
Above 10 years	69	11%
No fill	2	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 7: business registration

Response	Number of responses	%
Yes	262	43%
No	353	57%
No fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 8: form of business

Form	Number of responses	%
Sole proprietorship	608	99%
Limited company	2	0%
Partnership	2	0%
Cooperative	3	0%
No Fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 10: Annual Turnover

Range	Number of responses	%
Less than Br 20,000	593	96%
Br 20,001 - 500,000	22	4%
No Fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 11: markets for products/Services

Markets	Number of responses	%
Local	607	99%
Regional	6	1%
National	1	0%
Export	1	0%
No Fill	0	0%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 13: years of membership

Range	Number of responses	%
less than 1 year	63	10%
1-3 years ago	152	25%
above 3 years	390	63%
No Fill	10	2%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 15: Entrepreneurs by future business aspiration and plan

Business aspiration and plan	Number of responses	%
Grow	442	72%
Change business type	144	23%
Satisfied with what I am doing	1	0%
Abandon business activity	23	4%
No Fill	5	1%
Total	615	100%

Members...

Table 16: sense of belongingness to WEA

Type of response	Number of responses	%
Yes	567	92%
No	26	4%
No Fill	22	4%
Total	615	100%

Current status

- More than 3000 members at regional level
- 4 branch offices
- More than 15 full time staff
- Trade fairs at least 4 times a year
- Expanded service(BDS, skill training, securing work space.....)

Cont...

- We attracted NGOs...ILO continued support on BDS programs, SIDA funded our two year budget for capacity building
- Hundreds of women received skill training on their business sector
- Found the Ethiopian women business network forum

Cont...

- Very well recognized by Government, NGOs, (we represent WEs in most important national meetings...)
- Participating in important regional events,
- Representing WEs in 5 major Government agencies as board of directors

Are we making a difference?

- **The university experience...**
- ☞ A call for bid to supply food for 10 thousand students
- ☞ A group of 40 (AWEA members won the bid)
- ☞ They formed a share company
- ☞ AWEA gave Technical support to the group
- ☞ Encouragement from university management board

Difficulties

- They had to work day and night to maintain the supplies.(i.e.17,000 bread every morning, 1000 kg of grains every week.....)
- The traders in the city got angry at them for the taking the business(it was a big issue!)
- Some women were personally threatened
- Reported to police and police arrested two

Cont...

- All of them were married
- The husbands got upset because their wives were too busy to maintain the house
- We received a phone call from husbands
- They said they were scared of losing their marriages

Cont...

- We had a meeting with 6 delegates from husbands
- They were ready to do any thing possible even to the extent of dismissing AWEA to save their marriages
- Their complaints made sense because their women were technically out of the house because they had to work day and night.

Cont...

- We gave them a briefing on AWEA's vision
- They supported our vision
- They agreed to be our partners
- The women prepared lunch
- Thanked their husbands in front of AWEA / important !!/ that was a life saver!
- That changed every thing
- The husbands were working the night time shift

Out come

- Every body was happy
- The women got 12,000 birr net each after tax
- Most of them upgraded their business
- Some started their new business ideas
- AWEA was proud!!!

conclusion

- AWEA faced and still facing challenges in many areas but we still have committed leaders & partners who are working hard.....
- There are many unseen opportunities for women
- But the women need to know that (how?...)
- Through Leadership, commitment, working to make a difference, and of course partnership (important!)

....finally

- Let the women get an opportunity to hold the edge of the robe...then they will take it from there.....
- If not,...the business world is missing out many useful women some where out there!

Cont...

- With committed partners AWEA will continue to provide leadership for those opportunity is beyond their reach

Thank you!

Thank You!

Thank you!

