

AGRA Impact Series




ARISE Program prepares women in agribusiness for next economic disruption

October 2022

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) recently initiated the African Resilience and Investment Series for Women Executives (ARISE) Program implemented by its partner RENEW LLC with the primary objective of helping women agribusinesses manage the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid the pandemic, agribusiness under women's leadership needed technical support as part of the recovery process. In this case, the ARISE program conducted trainings and offered business planning support, investment seminars, business leadership skills, pitch coaching,

emotional support and networking. Participants were mainly drawn from the AGRA's network in sub-Saharan Africa. The participants should be running businesses for at least three years and an annual turnover of \$5,000 and above for either 2018, 2019 or 2020



Adanne Uche from Nigeria is among the project's beneficiaries, and she explains how the sessions helped her prioritize the essential aspects of her spices venture, known by the brand name 'Adys'. Before the training, one of her main challenges emerged when balancing her family life and running the day-to-day needs of the business operations. Notably, she learned about maximizing her business potential.

"This training has made me understand that I have to delegate work if I want to maximize my potential and give my business the best. I also learnt that my business has a lot of potential and that I need to do some research if I want to have an edge over my competitors", says Adanne.

As a lesson learned from the training, Adanne is embracing delegating some roles, for instance, her firm now has employees in the marketing department alongside aligning her business priorities based on short-term, mid-term, and long-term planning.

Adanne admits that the ARISE program made her expand her horizon and realize what her business could achieve in the long run. She has managed to utilize the networking opportunity from ARISE to meet peers while offering a chance to scale her business beyond Nigerian borders.

After the training, Adanne's business has sent products to the United Kingdom supplying to three supermarkets. However, her main barrier towards implementing the lessons learned remains access to finance. Worth noting, one key objective of the training was to familiarize participants with how to access finance and investments alongside strengthening the efforts to access funding for businesses.

However, Adanne is banking on investment seminars to understand which type of investors they should focus on. The workshops have

helped her understand how to attract the ideal investors.

"Investment seminars have helped me know what investors are looking for, so I analyzed my business and compared it to the global market and tried to best position myself. It is a gradual process. I got an email after presenting a pitch and I put \$50K USD, but the investors said they want to invest in businesses of more than \$1M USD. Investors look for bigger businesses, but I believe that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", she says.

Adanne highlights that to implement what she learned from the training, there is a need for continued support, considering that the pandemic is still around and there are likely more roadblocks along the way. She notes in coming years, competition will accelerate in the agribusiness space, and continued support is key to helping her stay on top.

"I am more than ready. I am set for any challenges now. I know where I want to be. I want Ady's to be a name that everybody talks about. Thanks to the training and the amazing team who were behind the scenes. All the assignments and training were great. I am charged."

Surviving the coronavirus pandemic impact also calls for resilience, and the ARISE program guided women like Adanne on how to manage this aspect. She is confident that any future challenges will be handled strategically. In the meantime, she is working towards identifying areas of improvement for her business with the hope of attracting the right investors. However, she admits that on top of the ARISE program training, women in agribusiness need to do more research about their venture as a means of remaining ahead of the curve.