MORE THAN SH1.6B EXTENDED TO SUPPORT FEMALE BUSINESS OWNERS

BY LAURA NAGABA

MTN Uganda has launched the second phase of its Advancing Women Entrepreneurs (AWE 2.0) programme in partnership with dfcu Bank, to help women-owned businesses transition into corporate-ready and scalable enterprises.

The programme, launched last week at the MTN Uganda headquarters in Kampala, is designed to empower women entrepreneurs through digital innovation, financial inclusion, mentorship and supply-chain integration.

Operating under the theme *She Means Business – Creating a Footprint of Women Entrepreneurial Businesses in Tech*, the initiative is being implemented by other partners, including American Tower Corporation Uganda, Zoho Corporation, Innovation Village, Private Sector Foundation Uganda and NSSF Hi Innovators.

Speaking during the launch recently, MTN Uganda chief executive officer Sylvia Mulinge said the programme reflects the company's commitment to building an inclusive business ecosystem that creates opportunities and drives economic transformation.

"We want to help women build enterprises that are not only sustainable, but also contribute to Uganda's future economy," Mulinge said.

She added that through AWE, women entrepreneurs will gain skills in business structuring, operational management and corporate readiness, enabling them to compete effectively in today's fast-changing economy.

The initiative aligns with MTN's Ambition 2030 strategy, which focuses on creating shared value and empowering communities through inclusive business growth.

Margaret Karume, the executive director and chief credit officer of dfcu Bank, reaffirmed the bank's long-standing commitment to advancing women entrepreneurship as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth.

"At dfcu Bank, we strongly believe that when women grow their businesses, economies grow. More importantly, societies become more resilient, households become more stable and opportunities multiply for future generations," she said.



MTN Uganda chief Mulinge (second-right) with other officials during the launch of AWE 2.0 at the MTN head office in Kampala recently

DFCU, MTN LAUNCH INCUBATOR FOR WOMEN-LED ENTERPRISES

DIGITALLY-FIT BUSINESSES

The senior manager of supply management and AWE team leader, Sharon Nyaika, said the second cohort will focus on addressing common challenges affecting women-led businesses, particularly around digital adoption, operational efficiency and corporate preparedness.

"We are focusing on the key target problems that businesses tend to have," Nyaika said.

The programme combines mentorship, procurement readiness training, financial literacy, digital systems support, investor preparedness and networking opportunities to help women-led SMEs grow sustainably.

Karume said the resilience and determination of women entrepreneurs operating across sectors such as agribusiness, logistics, manufacturing, technology, retail and professional services is evident.

"What many women entrepreneurs often lack is not ambition, but access to markets, structured business knowledge, networks, financing, and confidence-building ecosystems that enable businesses to scale sustainably," she added.

Eligibility for the programme includes businesses that are at least 50% woman-owned, operational for more than one year, tax compliant and generating an annual turnover above sh60m.

Over the course of 2026, AWE 2.0 will include accelerator trainings, mentorship sessions, investor pitch opportunities, demo days and supplier development engagements aimed at strengthening women-owned enterprises for long-term sustainability and growth.

MTN Uganda says the programme is part of its broader commitment to advancing digital and economic inclusion while supporting Uganda's socio-economic transformation agenda.



ELIGIBILITY

Businesses must be at least 50% woman-owned, operational for more than one year, tax compliant and generating an annual turnover above sh60m.

IN NUMBERS

15% SUPPLIER BASE
MTN Uganda revealed that

110 FIRST PHASE SUCCESS

CamScanner