Lina Khalifeh, 2014 WBA Winner

SheFighter – JORDAN
Bringing SheFighter to the World

I am a martial artist and women’s empowerment campaigner, founder of SheFighter in 2010 to teach Jordanian women self-defence and to combat domestic abuse in the country. I was inspired to do so after one of my friends was badly attacked by her father and brother. Seeing her beaten up, I wanted to teach her and other women how to be strong and how to defend themselves from such acts.

Since being founded, SheFighter has trained over 14,000 girls and women between the ages of 4 and 75, including foreign domestic helpers and Syrian refugee women living in Jordan. The impact such training has had on the lives of many girls and women is immense. SheFighter is not just a business, it is a cause that I have embraced.

Sexual harassment, which happens worldwide, is also a problem in Jordan – especially on public transport and in some neighbourhoods of Amman. Violence against women is a widespread problem in Jordan, where, until April 2016, the country’s penal code allowed a rapist to avoid prosecution by marrying his victim. People who commit “honour killings” of female relatives regularly have their murder sentences commuted or reduced. My aim is to empower women, to make them confident and able to defend themselves. The main thing I have noticed in the transformation that occurs in girls and women after enrolling at SheFighter is the increase in their self-confidence.

Winning “The EMPRETEC Women in Business Award also gave me a great confidence boost to grow my business and motivated me to continue the road to expanding the “SheFighter” brand internationally. In 2015, I registered the brand at the World Intellectual Property Right Organization in Geneva and I elaborated a plan to franchise the self-defence studio. Furthermore, I was able to become a recognized spokesperson for a cause close to my heart – the empowerment of women and zero tolerance for violence against women. I have been promoted as a leader of social change in important international events:

I travelled with Empretec to Berlin, Germany, where I attended the launch of the Inclusive Business Action Network. This network connects businesses with multilateral institutions, existing initiatives, networks, investors and other stakeholders; it promotes dialogue and mutual learning and facilitates access to knowledge, partners and support structures on the ground. It is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.
I attended the “International Women in Business Forum” in Qatar in 2014, where I spoke about my journey with SheFighter and the role of Empretec in growing my business. In Qatar, I also had the chance to build connections to open a SheFighter studio.

I was invited as a speaker to the Expert Meeting on Social Entrepreneurship in Geneva in 2015, with the cooperation of Empretec. I had the opportunity to meet great leaders and other start-up founders from Empretec around the world, with whom I have become close friends.

Last May 2015, after participating in an entrepreneurship competition in Jordan, I was invited to the United States, to the White House, as one of three young entrepreneurs furthering business and development in the Middle East. President Obama highlighted my work and the SheFighter project in his closing speech. I felt really happy, I could not even sleep at night after that. They wanted to highlight women’s empowerment, and apparently I am one of the few people in the field working in women’s self-defence and engaging in social change in the Middle East. “We want to empower leaders of social change like Lina Khalifeh of Jordan”, United States President Barack Obama said in his speech, giving SheFighter great exposure and me a huge personal reward.

In November 2015, I had the honour of speaking about the importance of women’s self-defence at One Young World in Bangkok to 1200 great Leaders and Entrepreneurs from around the world. I am glad I inspired all of them and represented Jordanian women and Palestinians in a very powerful way. We also had fun on stage before the Speech. I was blessed to have my voice reach all the young entrepreneurs out there!

To sum up, in the past two years, we have been growing rapidly in Jordan, where we have trained about 50 trainers and we are expanding to train teenagers and youth in schools. We started our expansion abroad, and I have joined many international networks with which I can work. I am still working hard to expand SheFighter into a system or programme that can be replicated to reach many more girls and women around the world.

But my greatest achievement and testimonials always come from my students, who yell “She angry, SheFighter!” at the end of each training session.

We at SheFighter appreciate all the support that Empretec has given us since 2014 and recommend their training to all entrepreneurs, because it is one of the best trainings I have ever done in my business and career life.

Thank you Empretec and good luck to the next Winner!!
Inspirational speech by Lupita Nyong’o

“For Women Entrepreneurs”