Brenda Omba Kayumba Lacey
Chief Executive Officer, Katcey Construction Limited
ZAMBIA

“We improve environmental sustainability by using green construction methods, and we provide small finishing touches to construction projects that make a big difference to our customers”.
Katcey Construction Limited is a rapidly growing trading supplies and construction company. It provides a complete design and building service to the private and public sectors in Zambia for the construction of houses, schools, clinics and other commercial buildings. It further supplies guidance on building design, acquiring cost quotes and sourcing good-quality green construction materials from Zambia, South Africa and China. Buildings are constructed to pre-agreed high quality standards within agreed deadlines. Customers are involved in all stages of the building process to ensure that the final product meets their requirements and gives them a building that is efficient, fit-for-purpose, economic, attractive and long-lasting.

Katcey is one of the few Zambian construction companies to focus on green construction, using local materials wherever possible and compacted-soil or kiln-fired clay bricks wherever appropriate. This not only gives customers better-value buildings, minimizing the expensive use of cement (which usually must be transported long distances) but also brings benefits to local communities through the increased use of local labour as well as the development of skills in green building.

Brenda believes that the small finishing touches to projects make a big difference to customers. On a number of contracts, Brenda landscaped the areas around the buildings, planting grass, plants and flowers, even though such finishing touches were not included in the project costs. Customers appreciate this “woman’s touch”, which has resulted in good recommendations. Brenda states “The Empretec workshops enabled me to focus my business on green construction and have helped me to find a niche in the market sheltered from my competition and providing contacts that have been helpful and lasting.” The skills that Brenda retained most since the workshops are to be responsible and reliable. She ensures that she is always available, returns all phone calls, records commitments and either honours them or explains any delays to customers.

The biggest challenge Brenda faces in business growth is delayed payment by Government departments. An example was delayed stage payments by the Ministry of Health for a house construction project in Kabwe. To resolve this situation, Brenda took a strong line: she negotiated revised contract completion dates and documented the reasons for delays, to make sure no penalties could be charged.

The market situation has been very favourable over the last five years. Zambia’s GDP has grown over 6% annually since 2010, and the construction industry has been booming. In the past three years, the company’s sales revenue has increased from K 150,000 to K 1,250,000 and permanent employees have increased from 3 to 15. However, the last six months have become difficult, with the rapid deterioration of the kwacha against the major international currencies, low world copper prices, Government funding deficits resulting in delayed payments to contractors, political uncertainty, and electricity and water supply problems caused by low rainfall affecting the hydropower stations. This difficult environment may continue in the short to medium term although the long-term development prospects for the construction industry in Zambia remain strong.

**Katcey Construction Limited**

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Tweets from the Award Panel Experts

The WBA panel is composed of distinguished international experts working to promote entrepreneurship across different sectors and countries. We are proud to welcome our new panel members for 2016 and thank all of them for their passion and commitment. Here are some of the words of encouragement from selected panel members:

Mr. Rob Edwards, Senior Partner, Solutions in Publishing, says:
“I really enjoyed the further stories of the entrepeneurs and hope to meet some of them soon!”

Beatrice Gakaba, African Women Entrepreneurship Group, says:
“Most organizations involved in promoting women’s economic empowerment are not creating the enabling environment for women to grow their businesses. There is a crying need for market formalization, finance facilitation, financial alignment and trade finance. I am sure we will be working together on some of these issues, especially women trading with women!!!”

Belisa de las Casas, Director, Latin America WEConnect International, says:
“It was a humbling experience to learn about your projects in detail. The truth is that every finalist is amazing. The world needs more women like that! And we need more organizations like UNCTAD supporting them!”

Bisila Bokoko, Global Ambassador Liceu Barcelona, says:
“We embrace the 21st century woman, fearless, ready to live her dreams; we are all entrepeneurs, builders of bright futures, we all are every woman.”