



In this issue

- December issue special focus: 2020 E-WBA Winners
- In other news
 - The United Nations General Assembly adopts Resolution on Entrepreneurship for sustainable development
 - Empretec Live Sessions (webinars) with empretecos and empretecas continue
 - Regional Meeting of Latin American Empretec Centers
 - The role of Entrepreneurship in post COVID 19 recovery: Resilient entrepreneurship and MSMEs resurgence
 - UNCTAD's workshop on accounting for MSMEs

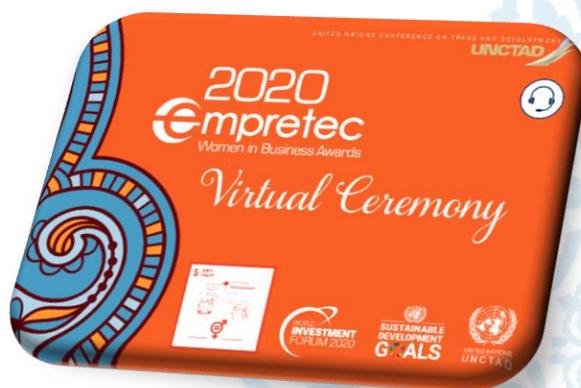
EMPRETEC Women in Business Awards 2020

UNCTAD's bi-annual "Women in Business Awards" took place virtually from Geneva, Switzerland, on 10 December 2020. The virtual ceremony, a satellite event of UNCTAD's World Investment Forum, was held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year's theme was "Resilience" - women entrepreneurs' response to the current COVID-19 crisis. As the global economic recession unfolds, vulnerabilities of women entrepreneurs and their enterprises raise concern on the progress made so far in quantity and quality of women-owned businesses particularly among MSMEs that operate in the Services sectors. Pre-pandemic inequalities in business have been exacerbated during the health crisis with women entrepreneurs suffering more due to increased care burdens during lockdowns.

UNCTAD created the Empretec Women in Business Awards (E-WBA) in 2008 as an acknowledgment of the great achievements of women entrepreneurs trained by its flagship Empretec programme. The award, granted every two years, has made a real impact on the lives of past recipients. It has advanced their success in business and boosted their motivation to continue growing their enterprises, improve their access to further training and widened their networks.

This year more than 30 nominations were received from Empretec Centers in 13 countries. The finalists were selected by an international panel of distinguished experts in business and entrepreneurship. All finalists have put their expertise and passion in their businesses in a variety of sectors. They have overcome obstacles to establish and grow successful companies, creating jobs and enhancing their communities, spearheading cultural change, and serving as role models. This year's Empretec Women in Business Awards were expected to inspire women innovators and entrepreneurs in the COVID 19 environment to start resilient ventures that aim for positive social and environmental impact with green, inclusive, circular, and sustainable business models.



The 2020 finalists (in alphabetical order, by country):

- ARGENTINA (Paula Itati de la Vega Sánchez): Bioita « utensilios de caña », manufacturing of ecological products [Bioita "utensilios de Caña" - Home | Facebook](#)
- BRAZIL (Agda Oliver): Meu Mecânico, Mechanical services for vehicles www.meumecanicoweb.com.br
- COLOMBIA (Sandra Milena Sánchez Valenzuela): Agencia Internacional SHARK, Digital business and marketing services www.sharkagencia.com
- ECUADOR (Ana María Villavicencio Flores): Finca Agroturística Don Antonio, Agrotourism and gastronomy <https://youtu.be/3GtcUzSbqNI>
- INDIA (Kayan Motashaw): LivRite Foods, Manufacture of honey “Beelicious” www.beelicious.in
- JORDAN (Afnan Kamel Ali): Eureka Tech Academy, Education for students under 18 years old on technology, innovation, programming, and engineering www.eurekatechacademy.com
- MALAYSIA (Sandra Anne Ghouse): 3E Training and Education Sdn Bhd – Soft skills and corporate training company www.3etrainedu.asia
- ROMANIA (Nicoleta Hritcu): SC Retro Food SRL and SC Cuptorul Moldovencei SRL, Manufacturing and sale of bread, cakes, and fresh pastry www.cuptorulmoldovencei.ro
- TANZANIA (Hadija Jabiri Pheri): GBRI Business Solutions Company Limited, Growing, packaging, and exporting vegetables and fruits www.eatfresh.co.tz
- UGANDA (Julia Nyamahunge Omalla): Delight Uganda Ltd, Processing, packaging and distributing popular fruit drink “Cheers” www.delightug.com



Paula Itati de la Vega Sánchez (Argentina), President of Bioita—manufacturer of ecological products holds her Empretec certificate.

The event was sponsored by ONE CREATION Cooperative, Lavazza Group, Inclusive Business Action Network Programme at GIZ—German Corporation for International Cooperation, and IMD Business School. The ceremony stream was watched by more than 3,000 viewers on various social media platforms including Kudo, UN Web TV, and Youtube. More than 10,000 persons were reached through Facebook and 5,000 through Twitter.

To watch the entire ceremony please click one of the following links:

<https://www.facebook.com/UNCTAD/videos/2843018325965132/>

<https://youtu.be/fRjDFqdJ36I>

<http://webtv.un.org/search/empretec-women-in-business-awards-2020/6215484295001/?term=&lan=English&cat=Meetings%2FEvents&sort=date&page=7>

MEET THE FINALISTS!

The short videos of the ten finalists can be seen here: <https://unctad.org/es/node/29813>

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

First Special Prize: Entrepreneurship in Circular Economy

“... the prototype that marks a new path of BIOITA, a fork that reflects the silhouette of a woman who is being crowned, because she is at the top, she is the queen of her life because she is—AN EMPOWERED WOMAN! ”

Paula Itati de la Vega Sánchez

Bioita manufactures reusable, biodegradable, ecological cutlery and straws to replace disposable plastics. The utensils last approximately 6 months and their disposal favor the ecosystem by contributing organic matter to the nature.

The company's raw material – sugar cane – grows as a weed on the banks of the canals and perimeter of the fields in Argentina. Year after year it generates large fires during dry season in winter. This led Paula to develop the use of sugar cane for her disposable cutlery and straws, removing it from the fields and reducing the risk of fire. The company also utilizes fabric scraps to make bags for their cutlery kits. The packaging is made of recycled paper and the bags are made from cornstarch. The cutlery is sterilized in an autoclave of 8 litres,

300 units and dried in nets in the sun. In the future, Bioita plans to incorporate solar energy by using solar stoves and thus saving electric power.

The company sells their products through social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as by email or phone.

Paula attended Communities with Value Empretec workshop in 2018, in San Juan. The workshop helped her grow personally and to envisage herself becoming a successful entrepreneur. The training also helped her improve Bioita's product quality, enhance customer service, and expand her network of professional contacts. The Empretec training empowered Paula to become an enterprising woman.

Second Special Prize: Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Agriculture

"Finca Agroturística Don Antonio is more than a restaurant, it is a place where you can relax, learn and have a unique experience with its exquisite cuisine, learn by doing, harvest the products of the garden and feed the animals."

Ana María Villavicencio Flores

Located one-hour drive east of the city of Cuenca, Finca Agroturística Don Antonio offers tourists a unique experience in the countryside, where they can be involved in typical farming activities, such as feeding animals, sowing and harvesting horticultural products, horseback riding, and taste homemade food while learning about the culinary traditions of the area. While the majority of its customers are local, the farm and its restaurant are starting to attract international tourists, especially from North America and Europe.

Ana María is the owner and Chef of Finca Agroturística Don Antonio, which employs four full-time people and 10 more on a part-time or as-needed basis. She works with and supports a network of local suppliers of products that cannot be produced at the farm, including a group of toquilleras, who manufacture straw hats, bags and various items.

"At the farm we follow an agro-ecological approach, free of chemicals. All our products are therefore preservative-free and do not contain any artificial colour. Finca Agroturística Don Antonio is committed to promoting sustainable agriculture."

"What differentiates our business from others is the culinary innovation, the quality of our food and products, and the family atmosphere we offer our clients", says Ana María.

Ana María attended the Empretec workshop in 2018, as a prize for winning the Emprende Turismo 2018 award, promoted by the Ministry of Tourism of Ecuador. Thanks to Empretec programme, she was able to get a clearer vision of how to grow her business. Moreover, the incubation process was of great help to make the right start with the farm, optimizing resources, setting goals for the future and working to achieve her objectives.

"When you set a goal and put all your effort into it, you can achieve a lot of things. This is what I share with my staff, suppliers and the people I support in my community. I give them advice on how to improve and, above all, encourage them not to stop if they want to achieve their goals. You have to work hard and overcome each and every obstacle, one by one, until you achieve your goals", stresses Ana María.

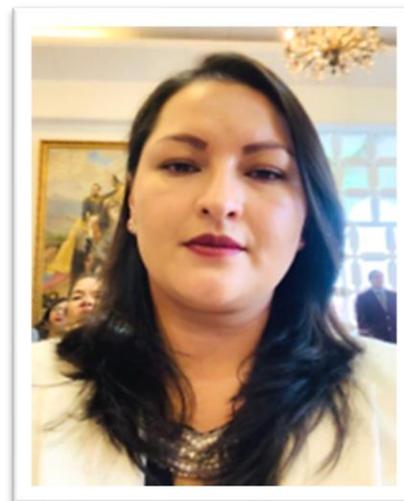
Among the objectives she set for the near future, Ana María intends to upgrade her processing plant for homemade products, and sell them to international markets, mostly European Union. This will provide people in her community with additional job opportunities and might inspire others to follow in her footsteps and become entrepreneurs themselves. For this reason, she regularly teaches girls at a local school how to make dairy products, so that one day they could eventually start their own business.

Third Special Prize: Women Entrepreneurs Empowering Women through Inclusive Business

"Business is like a wheelbarrow, it stands still until it is pushed."

Julian Nyamahunge Omalla

Julian is the founder and chief executive director of Delight Uganda Limited, incorporated in 1996, and owner of four lines of business including Delight Cheers Factory, Delight Fruit Farm Nwoya, Delight Farm Institute, and Delight Forest Nwoya. The company is processing and packing Cheers, one of Uganda's favourite soft drinks. Julian has a loyal customer base of 5 million Ugandans. Collaborating with commercial farmers in Nwoya district in Northern Uganda, she has built a network of over 5,000 fruit out-growers who have received various agribusiness vocational trainings targeting the production of mangoes, citrus fruits, guava, eucalyptus and fruit tree seedlings. Her



Ana María Villavicencio Flores, Owner and Chef, Finca Agroturística Don Antonio, San Vicente, El Pan, Azuay, Ecuador

company today stands strong with 188 staff (55% women) and 141 youth contract workers overseeing production over 680 hectares of productive land.

Julian received her Empretec training 20 years ago, as she was expanding her business. She was not satisfied with “just” being a successful entrepreneur but also wanted to make an impact on her community. Following the business growth plan facilitated by competencies training adopted during her Empretec class, she started to transfer skills to economically empower low-income households. She recalls that Empretec Training improved her self-confidence and facilitated other competencies such as goal setting and networking, information sharing as well as demand for efficiency.

Julian is an inspiring and empowering leader who has mobilized and engaged people from different walks of life, especially vulnerable women who struggle to contribute financially to their households. She ensured that each woman would have at least one acre of fruit orchard intercropped with short-term seasonal crops for income and sustainability. The Nwoya Fruit Growers Cooperation has 5,000 members of which 3,750 are women out-growing fruits for Delight Uganda and benefiting directly and indirectly more than 100,000 women. Thus far, Julian has facilitated skills training for almost 20,000 women. The “Till and Feed the Nation Women Group” is growing cereals and oil seeds which they market to the World Food Programme. In the private sector, she bridges the formal and informal sector through her engagements in various foundations and associations. In 2019, she was awarded “The East Africa’s Women Leader” award by the World Women Leadership Congress in Tanzania.

Julian believes that her Empretec Training improved her resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic which had a strong negative impact on her production line. As the lockdown coincided with the ripening stage in orchards, fruits from her 500 acres had to go to waste with only 10 tons of mangoes being allowed to enter storage and 40 tons of mangoes transported to Kampala. The growth in sales and employees were also negatively impacted since early 2020 despite strong performance during 2017-2020 period. Nevertheless, Julian found an opportunity to improve the company’s farm management practices for better productivity and to prepare for the post-lockdown period. She still managed to distribute fruit seedlings, coffee seedlings and cassava stems to the community.



Julian Nyamahunge Omalla
CEO, Delight Uganda Limited

2020 WBA 1st Prize: Empretec Best Women Entrepreneur Award

I still can remember that paper I wrote back in 2006... that I want to have research center for kids to help them to be innovators, inventors... in 2015, I opened this sheet, and I found in reality that Eureka Tech Academy has already started in 2014. ... That moment when we feel that our dreams turn into reality, we can feel a deep warmth in our hearts... I'll never ever forget that moment...

Afnan Kamel Ali

Eureka Tech Academy is an educational institution specialized in teaching technology, innovation, and engineering to kids under 22 years of age. Eureka prepares students step-by-step to become engineers, innovators and programmers, in order to prepare a new generation of tech-producers and tech-entrepreneurs for MENA region, developing a new “Silicon Valley”.

Eureka’s unique approach is a comprehensive multi-level teaching programme which consists of 10 levels in technology. The curriculum is approved by the Jordanian Ministry of Education. During COVID-19 crisis, Eureka transferred its classes online which has allowed it to expand to three cities in Jordan: Amman, Aqaba and Zarqa, as well as reach more students all over the MENA region.

Eureka’s competitive advantage lies in developing IP copyrights for its high-tech curriculum programme for 6-16 years old. The curriculum is a comprehensive multi-level programme consisting of: Electrical engineering, Electronics, Robotics, Control Systems, IOT, Renewable Energy, Games Development, Programming, Tech-Entrepreneurship, R&D, Commercialization for technology and Business planning. It partners with electronics suppliers, studios for video production, content creators and universities.

Eureka started to develop its online academy to teach all kids in MENA region the hi-tech education. It is the first online academy for kids in Arabic.



Afnan Kamel Ali, Founder of Eureka Tech Academy and recipient of WBA 2020, 1st Prize: Empretec Best Women

In the past three years, Eureka has increased the number of its employees from 12 to 27, including both full-time and part-time staff.

Afnan took the Empretec courses on Training of Trainers and Accounting for Non-Accountants with the Jordanian Business Development Centre (BDC). She felt that Empretec was one of the most important courses received as it helped her develop personal and entrepreneurial competencies. In particular, Empretec training on risk management helped her to start taking business decisions more quickly according to the maxim: "think once but not twice!" The Empretec programme also strengthened Afnan's self-image and gave her confidence as a young woman to start and scale up her business.

Looking to the future, Afnan is working on developing the online platform to be the first online tech academy for kids in MENA region in order to offer equal and affordable knowledge for all kids including the refugee kids. Eureka's ambition is to become a "Khan" academy of the MENA region for kids with animation, music and super fun learning methods.

To see a video on Eureka Tech Academy, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNNtpDwJmKI>

IN OTHER NEWS:

The United Nations General Assembly adopts Resolution on Entrepreneurship for sustainable development

The resolution recognized the important contribution that entrepreneurship makes to sustainable development by creating jobs, driving inclusive economic growth and innovation, improving social conditions and addressing economic, social and environmental challenges in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and emphasized that the role of entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, and micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in social and economic development is more critical than ever in the post-COVID-19 recovery and beyond.

The resolution highlighted the role of UNCTAD and Empretec in helping countries strengthen their entrepreneurship policies and stressed the need to continue to consider the contribution of entrepreneurship to sustainable development in the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, the resolution encouraged: "...all relevant actors to increase efforts to systemically integrate entrepreneurship within the formal and informal education systems, including through, inter alia, skills development, career guidance to support entrepreneurship and behavioural approach programmes such as the Empretec programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development ..."

For more information please visit: <https://undocs.org/A/C.2/75/L.28/Rev.1>

Empretec Live Sessions (webinars) with empretecocos and empretecas continue

During October-December 2020, UNCTAD conducted a series of 10 Empretec Live Webinars in cooperation with national Empretec centers in Angola, Argentina, Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. About 400 MSMEs owners and other stakeholders participated in the events.

Interactive debates, moderated by experienced Empretec facilitators, featured the participation of successful local entrepreneurs and empretecocos/empretecas who told their stories and shared how they managed to run and even expand their businesses through the unpredictable and uncertain times of the global pandemic. The webinars also helped raise awareness of the Empretec programme, boost the spirit and motivation of entrepreneurs facing many challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions, and inspired new business ideas to facilitate resurgence.

Regional Meeting of Latin American Empretec Centers

On December 11, 2020, more than 60 directors, coordinators and instructors of the UNCTAD Empretec Programme, from ten Latin American countries, participated in the first online Regional Meeting. The event was organized by the Argentina Empretec Center in coordination with UNCTAD. It aimed at sharing new experiences of assistance to entrepreneurs through the Empretec LATAM Centers, as well as debating and reflecting on the new challenges in the entrepreneurship promotion that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Empretec centers in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The role of Entrepreneurship in post COVID 19 resurgence: Resilient entrepreneurship and MSMEs resurgence

From September through December 2020, UNCTAD and UNITAR continued their cooperation in jointly organizing four webinars on the role of entrepreneurship and MSMEs in post COVID-19 resurgence. The objective of these webinars was to discuss and better understand the impact of the crisis on entrepreneurship, and what is needed to enhance the role of entrepreneurship and MSMEs in resilient, green and inclusive recovery.

The first webinar took place on 18 September 2020 and addressed urgent priorities for start-up and MSMEs recovery. Entrepreneurs, policy makers, academics and practitioners shared their views and experiences on the challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs face in the current global crisis. Almost 180 people participated in the online discussion.

The second webinar took place on 15 October 2020 and focused on digital and innovative solutions for entrepreneurship and MSMEs resurgence. During the lively debate, entrepreneurs, policy makers, academics and practitioners shared their views and experiences on the crucial importance and use of digital and innovative solutions for MSMEs' resurgence in the post COVID-19 recovery.

The third webinar took place on 19 November 2020. The discussion allowed the audience to better understand the relevance of resilience for entrepreneurship and MSMEs resurgence in post COVID-19. The presentations helped the audience identify different forms of resilience and how it can be integrated into business models of MSMEs.

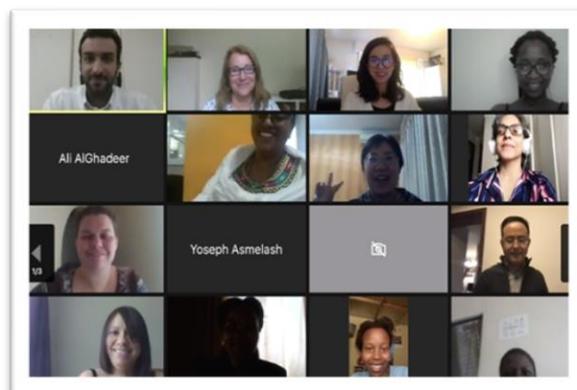
The fourth and last webinar for 2020 focused on how to facilitate inclusiveness of entrepreneurship and MSME in post-COVID 19 recovery. The online event took place on 17 December 2020 and discussed inclusive business models and shared good practices in this area. The panelists included representatives from the academia, private sector as well as entrepreneurs.

Overall, 630 participants attended the four webinars of which more than 500 participants will receive a certificate of participation.

Empretec centers attend UNCTAD's workshop on accounting for MSMEs

A Pilot Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on accounting for Micro-, Small- and Medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) took place virtually on 17 December 2020. The workshop was attended by close to 100 experts in accounting and finance from more than 40 organizations in 12 countries, including five Empretec centers from Ethiopia, Guyana, Gambia, Panama, and Saudi Arabia.

The workshop was based on the Accounting Training Manual developed by UNCTAD. The manual aims to improve financial literacy of MSMEs owners and facilitate their access to finance, including to financial assistance in the post COVID-19 resurgence. The participants discussed how to use the training manual and master the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver such training to other entrepreneurs and small companies. Further workshops will be delivered in French and Spanish during 2021 as part of the project on Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 of the MSME sector.



*Happy New Year 2021!
from all of us at the
UNCTAD Empretec Team!*

CONTACT

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