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WenA Newsletter

Celebrating Impact



The Aisha Ibrahim Babangida (AIB) Founders' Gala commemorated a momentous milestone for the Women Enterprise Alliance (WenA). The evening beautifully showcased WenA's 5-year journey of empowering SMEs while blending culture, recognition, and a strategic roadmap for the future.

Speaking at the event, Her Excellency, Aisha Babangida said the organization's impact is evident in the success stories of countless women who have transformed their businesses and communities through the support they received.

↓ In this newsletter you will find:

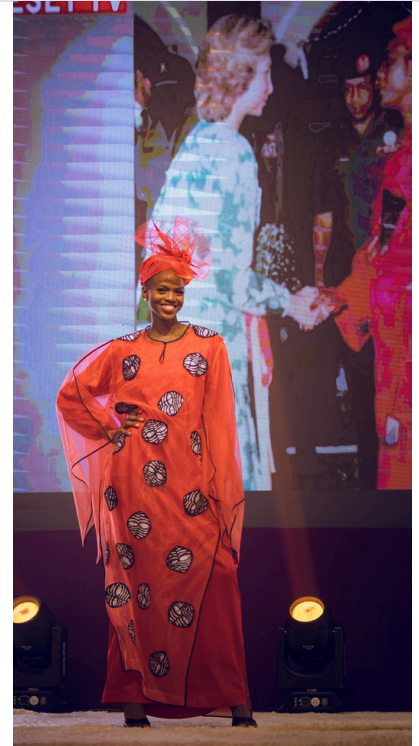
All about the Aisha Ibrahim Babangida (AIB) Founders' Award Gala.

A Night to Remember

The AIB Founders' Award Gala

“Celebrating impact means acknowledging the seeds of change sown by those who dare to dream and act.” This sentiment perfectly encapsulated the essence of the Aisha Ibrahim Babangida Founders’ Award Gala, a night dedicated to honoring the transformative strides made by women in the SME sector.

Women play a crucial role in driving innovation, fostering economic growth, and championing excellence in industries ranging from exports to fashion. The gala recognized not only their resilience but also their ability to shape communities through creativity and determination. Whether through the entrepreneurial ventures that uplift local economies, groundbreaking innovations, or the artistry showcased on the runway, the event stood as a powerful testament to the immense contributions of women in building a more inclusive and sustainable economic future. By celebrating these achievements, the gala reinforced the vital importance of empowering women to continue breaking barriers and redefining success across all sectors.



From the moment guests graced the red carpet, welcomed by cultural dancers and a live DJ, it was clear that this was more than just a gala—it was a celebration of impact, collaboration, and visionary leadership. The event was one of sophistication and inspiration, highlighting WenA's transformative achievements and future aspirations.

The gala was a testament to the power of collective action and innovation in SME development. Featuring a heartfelt documentary recounting WenA's success stories, the launch of the We Mean Business (WMB) Coalition, the night brought together key stakeholders, industry leaders, and visionary changemakers. Attendees were treated to powerful speeches, cultural performances, and well-deserved recognitions that underscored the event's theme of progress and empowerment. As the night concluded with a celebratory toast, it left no doubt that WenA's next chapter will be as impactful as its first, building on a foundation of resilience, unity, and a relentless drive to empower women-led enterprises.



Event Highlights



Red Carpet Extravaganza

The evening began with a spectacular red carpet reception, with cultural dancers, a live DJ, and interactive interviews. Social media buzzed with updates as attendees experienced an atmosphere of vibrancy and elegance.

Opening Ceremony

The Master of Ceremonies kicked off the night with a warm welcome, followed by the WenA Song performed by Mr. Lani Gbogboade, and the WenA Team embodying unity and purpose.



Documentary Showcase

The WenA documentary, presented by H.E. Hajiya Aisha Ibrahim Babangida, took the audience on a journey through WenA's transformative milestones over the past five years. Personal stories from Mrs. Oluwatoyin Matthew and Ms. Florence Onwumere added depth to WenA's vision for the future.



Keynote Speech

The inspiring Ms. Bamidele Owoola, MD/CEO of Welcome2Africa Intl., delivered a powerful keynote emphasizing collaboration in SME development.



Recognition of Excellence

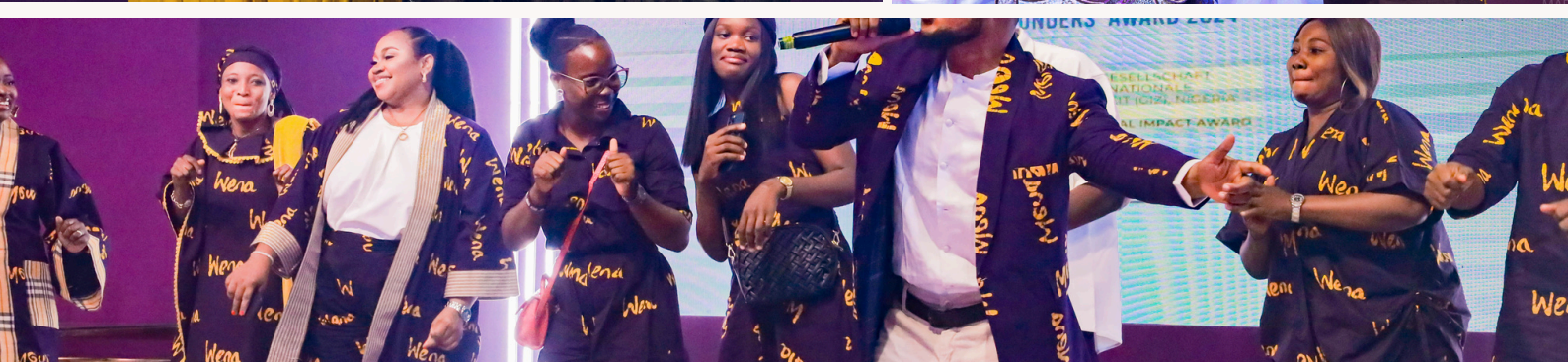
THE NIGHT HONORED OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS:

- **Impact Awards:** Celebrating innovative SMEs and exemplary stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder Awards:** Recognizing key partners like Moniepoint INC, Kaduna Business School, Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Welcome to Africa, and the International Trade Facilitation Association (ITFA).
- **Fashion Excellence:** The MIB Fashion Award and runway show paid tribute to H.E. Dr. Mrs. Maryam Babangida's elegance and creativity.
- **Staff Appreciation:** WenA staff received letters and rewards for their dedication and excellence.



Goodwill messages from Hajiya Rukaya Bashir Tofa, Sir Chidi Onwumere, and Hajiya Aisha Abubakar amplified the collective vision of empowering women-led SMEs.





A Goodwill Message

FROM HAJIYA AISHA ABUBAKAR



I am delighted to have been invited to give a Goodwill message at the fifth anniversary of the of the Women Enterprise Alliance (WenA) at the Aisha Ibrahim Founders Award Gala to celebrate WenA's fifth anniversary with the theme "Celebrating Impact" being held on 22nd November 2024.

This gala recognizes and honors the achievements of outstanding female business founders in Nigeria.

We note that over the last five years, WenA has successfully empowered over 5, 000 women entrepreneurs with mentorship, business development services, access to funding and market access to scale their businesses and achieve sustainable growth in line with the sustainable development goals.

I must say that the quote by Helen Keller "Alone we can do so little together we can do so much" for me this embodies what we are here to celebrate today! I particularly like the fact that we have figures and stories of this journey because it validates what the founder set out to do. I must appreciate the inclusion of mental health and issues around climate change because very rarely do we find ourselves thinking about how these impact our businesses and that the world has changed and neglecting these issues now can break our businesses.

I am excited by the gala night because when one does well, one deserves a pat on the back. Furthermore as women we need to draw encouragement, acknowledgment, and fulfillment when we are indeed celebrated for the work that we do. Whether this is in business or at home.

I remember when we lost our dear mother, HE Maryam Babangida, we heard of whispers on corridors as to who would take over the Better life for Rural women program. Naturally, this kind of thing goes to the firstborn girl child, however, my dear sister HE Aisha Ibrahim Babangida took her time to evaluate the environment to create a niche for herself, to impact women in business in modern times. I do not think this is unrelated to what her mother started.

Sometimes you have to start in the present to be able to impact on the past, and I think this is what she did by starting WenA, so that she could understand and create an enabling environment for the present day woman to succeed as sustain her business. Creating an enabling environment will make it easier for her to support the women under the Better life for Rural Women. It is Only when the path is smooth and clear that these women can be inspired and encouraged to grow their own businesses and become brands not just locally but internationally.

Because I have also been involved in similar circumstances, and probably because we have the same name, I am questioned a lot by people who want to determine who Aisha Babangida and if she is for real? Can we rely on her programs? Is she doing it because she has an ulterior motive! I am proud to say she's my sister, and even if she has political ambitions, she is doing what she needs to do because she is able to do so. She has the resources and she can open doors where many women cannot and what's more she is not doing this for herself. She is doing this to give back!

So congratulations my dear sister and I wish you many many many more years of organic growth! We are proud to be associated with you and WenA.

Before I leave the podium, I must thank you for foresight to create a special category “. The Maryam Ibrahim Babangida (MIB) Fashion Award. The fashion industry as we know is mostly dominated by women. What is special though is that it is our local fabrics that are being used to create designs that are being sold in the big brand shops all over the world. We have never had a First Lady who was so effortlessly a brand starter than our dear Mother. She wore clothes with elegance we still do not witness today! The confidence and carriage she wore clothes will always be a conversation starter. I am particularly grateful to her because she really made the likes of us embrace our color and know that truly black is beautiful! May Allah grant you AlJannah Firdaus.

So Your Excellency, my sister Aisha we continue to pray for you and we are proud of you as you stand firm in your desire to make it easier for women to run businesses. Today we celebrate you and remain inspired for what you are doing to improve the business environment for women. We know you do this as a burning need with sincerity of purpose and we will continue to support you in any way we can.

Thank you all for listening and God bless

Legacy in Style:

A Tribute to H.E. Dr. Mrs. Maryam Babangida

The Fashion Runway was a breathtaking highlight of the evening, paying tribute to the timeless elegance and style of H.E. Dr. Mrs. Maryam Babangida. Curated by the talented Hajiya Soraya Adji of Younass Collections, the showcase featured stunning recreations of some of Mrs. Babangida's most iconic outfits. Each piece was a masterful blend of tradition and modernity, reflecting her legacy as a symbol of grace, cultural pride, and empowerment. From intricate embroidery to flowing silhouettes, the designs celebrated her enduring influence on Nigerian fashion and female leadership. The runway captivated the audience, drawing applause and admiration as models brought the late First Lady's elegance back to life, reminding all present of the power of style as a medium of expression and legacy.





Appreciation

The Women Enterprise Alliance (WenA) extends its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the Aisha Ibrahim Babangida Founders' Award Gala. From the distinguished guests and stakeholders to our dedicated partners and staff, your unwavering support and commitment made this event a remarkable celebration of progress and empowerment.

Special thanks to Her Excellency Aisha Ibrahim Babangida for her visionary leadership, and to the speakers, performers, and awardees who brought the night to life with their inspiring contributions. We are also deeply grateful to The Chimera Event Company for their impeccable planning and execution, ensuring every detail reflected the elegance and significance of the occasion. Your collective efforts remind us of the power of collaboration, and we look forward to achieving even greater milestones together.



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