

- **on June 28th and 29th, 2024, the second edition of EmergeHer-Business and Leadership International Conference will be back to Kigali.**

Last year in June, EmergeHer-Business and Leadership International Conference was held in Kigali to promote business development and community engagement.

The two-day seminar and conference hosted a panel of distinguished speakers hailing from Rwanda, USA, Niger, Namibia, and Liberia who shared valuable presentations of insights and ideas filled with wisdom, experience and knowledge to over 75 participants mostly women and the Youth.

This initiative is in line with shaping the future of businesses and leadership in Africa since it targets women and the Youth from different countries. It provides a dynamic platform for African women to come together, collaborate, and strategize on shared values and concerns related to business.



The highlight of last years' event was to share ideas from people with solid experience, the Youth received feedback on how to be better entrepreneurs with encouragement and competitive prizes to three finalists to enable them advance their business careers.

Jeannette Umutoniwase one of last years' winners, is the founder and Managing Director of Inzira Dearmz Network, a social enterprise in fashion industry that design and produce dresses for expectant and breastfeeding mothers.

"I decided to join EmergeHer Conference last year to learn more and share my passion of entrepreneurship to fellow young people," she shares.



*Jeannette Umutoniwase (middle) was one of the winners of last year's business pitch competition where she was awarded a cash prize award.*

"The Conference gave me a network of opportunities and skills with back-up cash prize from my business pitch, I used the money to buy a new sewing machine to increase production." Umutoniwase proudly reveals that her business is growing because she launched her collection last year and also exhibited in the USA which

has grown her customer base.

She calls upon the Youth to look for opportunities, be innovative, seek support, start small, have confidence and patient. There are always challenges which sometimes can be turned into opportunities, through creating little things or ideas, attending different conferences to learn and network. There is a brighter world out of the self-confinement.



## **One on One with Christine Titih, Founder & Executive Director of EmergeHer**

*Rwanda Dispatch Magazine caught up with Christine Titih, the founder and Executive Director of EmergeHer Business and Leadership Conference on her recent trip to Kigali. Titih took bold steps to bring the conference to Africa which is now going into its second year, this is what she had to say;*



*Christine Titih, the founder and Executive Director of EmergeHer Business and Leadership Conference making a presentation during the conference*

### **Qn: Briefly tell us about yourself and how this project you started**

**Christine Titih (CT):** I am a business minded person, originally from Cameroon but now in the US where I have lived for 14 years and own a business.

When Covid-19 pandemic struck the world, lots of businesses were shutdown and this left so many people divested. Many African women approached me asking how to start or grow a business and that's when an idea struck me, why not create a platform to bring women together, connect and network. This was meant to learn from each other because what affects one black business woman affects all and that's how we came up with the EmergeHer entity, so the birth of networking events and panel discussions, expos and business seminars among ourselves.

In the beginning I wasn't thinking beyond the US or bringing the conference to Africa, but a friend who had visited Kigali, told me amazing developments about the

country, inspiring business opportunities and that's why we started work beyond the US.

I partnered with young entrepreneurs and came out with a 2-day networking conference in June 2023; we got some good guest speakers from different business backgrounds and over 75 participants mainly the Youth.

The highlight was to share ideas, practical experience and business pitching competition, where eight (8) young people presented their projects and three won cash prizes. This was a good step to encourage young entrepreneurs, for example one of the winners in the fashion industry was able to buy a sewing machine to scale up her production.



**Qn: How do you select participants, any age consideration to apply or pitch?**

**CT:** There is really no age consideration, all required is a small business or idea of what you have started working on, there is a form to fill regarding your business or idea, what you intend to use the money, and then do a presentation. About 50 youth applied but the jury selected only eight based on active and innovative ideas.

**Qn: Why bring the conference to Rwanda, are all participant from the country?**

**CT:** So many people have asked me why Rwanda, to me it's because of where the country has come from and been able to push businesses even small ones to another level. There is no 'roadblock' so you go plant where the soil is ready or fertile for entrepreneurs, investors and partners because there are a lot of opportunities to venture into.



Our previous conference was attended by Rwandans, Kenyans, Liberians and other nationalities but mostly students from universities in Kigali. Our speakers with different business backgrounds were from the US, Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and panelists from Rwanda.

**Qn: Are you welcoming partners for the up-coming Conference in June**

## **2024?**

**CT:** Definitely yes, we are looking forward to partner with other business oriented minds and institutions for the June 2024 event because it is important they bring in their different resources, not only money but also knowledge to teach and inspire our young women and men.

### **Qn: How do you fund this initiative?**

**CT:** The project is self-funded, through sacrifice which comes out of passion. Last year we tried getting sponsorship, unfortunately we did not get them as we wanted. We received over 200 applications but were only able to accommodate 80 participants because of limited resources.



### **Qn: Do you follow-up on participants and winners after the conference?**

**CT:** Yes, after the event we build a network. We have WhatsApp group and connect with people who attended and winners, with regular communication we monitor how they are progressing with their business ideas, where they need help or resources to advance. Ultimately this is about building a network which will be a bridge for entrepreneurs in Rwanda and elsewhere for exchange of knowledge as well as to build partnerships.

### **Qn: Are you considering to increase the Cash prize?**

**CT:** Certainly, we are going to do so. We started with a small cash prize of \$500 but as we grow the business pitch competition is a very important part of this initiative.

We are hoping to have more people, companies and organizations involved in EmergeHer Business and Leadership International Conference this year. This is why I am here to connect and build partnerships with different institutions.



**EmergeHer- Kigali 2024.**

**June 28th and 29th, 2024.**

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