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**PEACE THROUGH  
BUSINESS**

The Institute for Economic  
Empowerment of Women

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## **The Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women July Newsletter**

It was less than a month ago that our 23 students arrived from their long journey overseas to the United States for the 2010 PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program.

This year's program was by far a huge success – and it's no wonder. When you get a group of women who are driven, intelligent, passionate, and compassionate together, and then get them all working toward a common goal, the sky is truly the limit.

With the help of great sponsors, board members, government officials, mentors, speakers, and staff, we have graduated another great group of women from the program, and they have already hit the ground running after returning home to change their countries for the better.

American women touched the lives of our students through a tireless week of mentorship all across the United States. The Institute would like to thank all the mentors nationwide who took time out of their busy personal and professional schedules to bring our students into their homes, their businesses, and their families, and for creating a network of businesswomen committed to the PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS program. We appreciate everything you have done.

We think it is most rewarding to hear from our mentors about their experiences, and Bobbie Surber of Sedona, Arizona, could not have written something more beautiful about her mentee, Chantal:

*"From the moment I met her we connected and by the end of the week she is a part of my family and I know this is not the last time for us to be together."*

*Chantal's grace, trust in her faith, dedication to her family and fierce entrepreneurial spirit truly set her apart and*



Farzana Ebrahimi, 2009 graduate and contest winner, with  
Mariam Nawabi, President and CEO of AMDi Inc.



*Rahela Kaveer with her host, Kathleen Wilson, and Denise Weaver with her student, Nuriat Kaka. Both students spent their mentorship at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK.*

*remind me of why women can and do lead nations to peace and prosperity. While she may have been my mentee, I surely received as much if not more from my time with her."*

Thank you, Bobbie for that strong message and for sharing your heart and home with Chantal.

I'd also like to thank all of our 2010 mentors and hosts:

Lori Blaker, Nancy Hyde, Lisa Bracken, Mireya Jones, Linda Carlisle, Marion Marshall, Eve Clark, Mary Melon, Cathi Coan, Bea Penhall, Freda Deskin, Joan Quintana, Zenetta Drew, June Ressler, Jena Gardner, Valerie Riley, Andrea Graves, Bobbie Surber, Darcie Harris, Monica Smiley, Megan

Hazzard, Denise Weaver, Heather Herndon-Wright, Kathleen Wilson, David Henneberry, and Paula Yoder.

After returning to Dallas from mentorship, the women geared up for the last leg of the program – the International Women's Economic Summit, which was an arching success. A big thank you goes out to all of our speakers and our mistress of ceremonies, Susan Solovic, CEO of Small Business TV. For all of you who attended the Summit to learn and support the students, we are so grateful to have you behind us in helping empower women around the world.

We are so proud to have the engaged participation from our board of directors – we had a great meeting the day before the Summit, and a special thank you to the board members who could attend the Summit this year – Desma Reid-Coleman, Martha Parker, Valerie Shondel and Kathy Bennett.

As entrepreneurs, we must take responsibility to address the growing needs and issues surrounding our global economy and our fellow world citizens, and this is exactly what our 2010 Summit did by focusing on the strengths and contributions of women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and Rwanda, the obstacles they face and free-economy solutions to peace.

The two-day conference focused on issues that perpetuate and exacerbate existing obstacles entrepreneurs face in third-world economies, including literacy, public policy, democracy, job creation and honoring commitments.

By addressing these critical issues, our Afghan and Rwandan students were able to help identify the roots of many of the problems their countries' economies face. For example, nearly 70% of Afghanistan is illiterate. Education is the backbone of a thriving society, and without literacy, there simply is no ground to stand on.

On this issue, our students heard from Dr. Kevin Fegan of the Institute's partner university, Northwood, as well as Carol Rugege, Education Director from the Embassy of Rwanda, and Sakeena Yacoobi, a true legend in Afghanistan, and founder of the Afghan Institute for Learning. All of the panelists



*Susan Solovic, mistress of ceremonies for the 2010 International Women's Economic Summit, with Rwandan students Betty Uwamwezi and Marcelline Uwizeye.*



*Dr. Kevin Fegan, Carol Rugege, and Sakeena Yacoobi discuss the importance of literacy for a thriving society and economy.*

emphasized the importance of literacy and how the definition of literacy is changing along with technology.

“Now that we are living in a digital world, we have to transition into computer literacy as well,” Rugege said.

Yacoobi spoke of the importance of incorporating other values, such as ethics, into education, and how she thought Northwood University was succeeding with this.

She said they had forgotten the importance of ethics in Afghanistan.

“When you promise something, and you deliver, [customers] will come back to you,” she said. “Honesty, equality and gender issues are the biggest issues in our country right now.”

With riveting insight from the literacy panel, the women then heard from the Economic Development and Jobs panelists. Members were Monica Luechtefeld, EVP E-Commerce and Direct Marketing for Office Depot, Glynis Long of the DC Rotary Club, Mariam Nawabi, President and CEO of AMDi Inc., and John Nkuranga, former Director of Protocol for the Republic of Rwanda.

The panel spoke about the importance of networking and forming relationships and partnerships with those with similar missions in their countries. Nawabi spoke of experiences she had with gaining capital for her business, and encouraged the women to look for investors when carrying out their business plans.

At lunch, Ambassador Paula Dobriansky, Senior Vice President and Head of Government Affairs at Thomson Reuters, provided words of encouragement for the women, and spoke to guests about her fight for democracy around the world.

The second day of the summit took us on a journey of gaining insight, and brought us a great sense of accomplishment for the completion of the 2010 program. Oklahoma Judge Vicky Miles LaGrange, who played a significant role in rebuilding the Rwandan government after the genocide, spoke about “Honoring Your Commitment,” drawing from her own experiences and insight to encourage students to give back to their countries.

The summit ended on an official note, with our Afghan and Rwandan delegations presenting to their Ambassadors the obstacles they have identified for women entrepreneurs in their countries, and recommendations on how the government can help women business owners overcome these obstacles.

The Afghan delegation opened its presentation stating that Afghan women business owners make up 2 percent of all businesses in Afghanistan, ranging from handicrafts and healthcare to food



*The 2010 graduating class with Mr. Randall Stephenson, CEO and Chairman of AT&T, Rwandan Ambassador Kimonyo, and Fran McMahon, publisher of "The Hill."*



processing and construction. Obstacles include lack of business knowledge, illiteracy and cultural barriers, which limit women's rights of property ownership, access to capital and more.

The women asked Afghan Ambassador to the U.S. His Excellency Said Jawad to consider the following as potential solutions to the barriers they face: 1) that the government allocate a percentage of their contracts to women business owners, 2) to offer long-term empowerment opportunities for women and 3) to help promote awareness on gender equality.

The Rwandan delegation presented their obstacles to Ambassador Kimonyo, which included access to capital, high interest rates, weak institutions, and a small customer base. Like the Afghan women, their recommendations were strong and called for: 1) reducing interest rates, 2) facilitate the growth of small business, 3) reduce costs in doing business and 4) expand export efforts.

Needless to say, both Ambassadors were beyond impressed with the women's ability to not only identify these obstacles to but to clearly articulate solutions. The Summit concluded with Ambassador Kimonyo and Ambassador Jawad promising to deliver these presentations to their Presidents, and to carry the voice of the woman entrepreneur forward.

After the Summit, however, the day was far from over! The women still had the moment they were waiting for – graduation! After a great roundtable discussion with the Ambassadors the Pulitzer-prize winning editorial board of the Dallas Morning News (editorial to be published this weekend!), it was off to the AT&T Performing Arts Center in downtown Dallas.

The evening was simply spectacular – from the table dressings to VIP speakers lineup, including Mr. Randall Stephenson, chairman, CEO and president of AT&T, as well as both Ambassadors, and Fran McMahon, publisher and executive vice president of “The Hill” in Washington, DC. We even had a special video message from former First Lady Mrs. Laura Bush.

There are too many people to thank by name for making this evening possible, but please know from the bottom of our hearts that we are forever grateful.

We are proud of our students for logging hours in the classroom, stepping outside of their comfort zones and addressing real, global issues for women entrepreneurs around the world. As business owners, they are not only contributing to their countries' economic stability, but they are seeing that the citizens of their countries are gaining equal rights to not only business, but also liberties like education and democracy.

Now that our students have returned home to pay forward their knowledge, they are surely going to be a force to be reckoned with, and we hope that their entrepreneurial light will shine eternally.

Warmest regards,

Terry Neese



*As always, a special thank you goes out to  
our wonderful sponsors and partners!*