

Visa announces grant to help African women fund managers grow their businesses

Visa has today announced a grant towards the African Women Impact Fund (Awif), a collaboration between Standard Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Uneca).



Source: Supplied.

The grant will be utilised to fund the working capital needs of women fund managers across south, east, and west Africa and will target 55 women who responded to Awif's call to action and have been part of their programme since 2020.

Visa's grant to the Awif is an extension of the She's Next programme, a global advocacy initiative for women-owned businesses that have been expanded within sub-Saharan Africa to further champion and strengthen African women business owners as they build, sustain, and advance their businesses.

Addressing challenges faced by women in the financial sector

Women fund managers in Africa continue to face numerous challenges in building sustainable businesses. Research shows slow-moving progress in the visibility and inclusion of women fund managers due to systematic barriers and investor bias.

With African women accounting for just 7.6% of private equity, and women-led businesses receiving only 7% of private equity and venture capital in emerging markets, this highlights the opportunities that exist to reduce the current gender gaps. This is further reflected in the less than 1.3% of the \$69.1tn global financial assets that are managed by women and people of colour.

"The aim of She's Next is to help women-owned businesses thrive and our ambition with this grant is to enable access in a space where women-owned firms are under-represented.

Through this programme we aim to ensure that women are not only recipients but become decision-makers where institutional funding for businesses is concerned," said Aida Diarra, senior vice president and head of sub-Saharan Africa at Visa.

Accelerating funding to drive impact

Visa's funding will be directed towards activities that will assist the business owners with improving their technical skillsets, becoming investible to larger institutional investors, and with running profitable businesses that will, in turn, invest in others including small and medium businesses.

"The funding will ensure that these business owners are able to focus on growing their enterprises without the burden of managing short-term debt and other operational costs related to building a successful business," added Diarra.

The areas of development

The grant to Awif will address three areas:

- Portfolio management capability: portfolio structuring, risk management and administration,
- Investment research capability: identifying investment opportunities, due diligence, mandate alignment, and continuous investment and operations monitoring and,
- Operational support: operational and back-office support, human resourcing, systems implementation and vendor management.

"We are elated to have Visa partner with Standard Bank and we are grateful for their meaningful contribution to the African Women Impact Fund. Standard Bank sees gender equity not only as a fundamental human right but also as a business imperative.

"The group believes that the economic empowerment of women is essential to raising Africa's economic output and creating sustainable jobs, especially within the small enterprises that drive growth on the continent," concludes Lindeka Dzedze head of global markets and strategic partnerships at Standard Bank group.

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