



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Commerce & Industry Small Business Administration (SBA) Ends Two Day Conference on Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises in Monrovia

The Ministry of Commerce & Industry, through its Bureau for Small Business Administration has successfully ended a two day conference on MSMEs in Monrovia. The National SBA-MSME Conference which has become a key intervention to addressing some of the amny challenges faced by Liberian owned MSMEs was held from November 17-18, 2015 under the theme “**From Vision to Implementation, Buying Liberian, Building Liberia**” with special focus on *Youth Innovation for Economic Empowerment*. The keynote speaker for the November 2015 Conference was a young Liberian entrepreneur and Bronson Fellow, **Mr. Mahmud Johnson of J-Palm Liberia**.

The Conference, which was graced by Cabinet ministers, members of the Legislature and the Judiciary, Liberian owned business men and women, business executives, local and international partners, diplomatic corps, youths and cross-section of people, was officially opened by H. E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Tuesday November 17, 2015 at the Monrovia City Hall Theatre.

Since its inception in 2013, the SBA MSME Conference has focused on different topics and allowed SMEs to exploring partnerships and receiving financing to expand their operations. The conference has facilitated over \$1 million dollars in investments in SMEs with new innovations such as the Liberia Innovation Fund for Entrepreneurs and the Liberian Marketplace. Each year the Conference has had a specific focus. In 2014 for example, various topics were covered including Entrepreneurship Development, Access to Finance and Access to Markets, the theme for 2013 emphasized agriculture as a business and showcased agriculture innovations at the Trade Fair. The SBA 2015 MSME Conference was about Liberia’s young innovative entrepreneurs who are contributing to Liberia’s transformation story by being productive citizens and role models.

Like 2014, SBA 2015 MSME Conference also featured 50 SMEs that exhibited during the trade fair with four winners. The awards were categorized as followed:

SBA 2015 MSME Conference Trade Fair Award Winners



Business Name	Owner	Contact Information	Type of Award	Amount Won
Liberia National Tailors, Garment and Allied Workers Union	Tailor Union/Lasana Keifa Dawon	0886538239/0776001568 president.tailorunion@gmail.com	Best Booth	US\$5000.00
J-Palm Liberia	Mahmud Johnson	0880061978; jpalmliberia@gmail.com	Marketing Award	US\$5000.00
Jet-Del House Keeping Services	Odelia Yeato Acolatse	0886602925; jetdelservice247@gmail.com	Most Innovative	US\$5000.00
African Creative Enterprise	Aminata R. Lamin	0886527687/0777527687	Proudly Liberian	US\$5000.00

Besides the above financial winners who took the first places in all categories, there were other winners who came 2nd and 3rd including J-Palm Liberia, Tailor Union, Amazing Grace and Jet-Del House Keeping. The Conference laid special emphasis on youth capacity building, networking and business linkage, which provided forum for Liberian youth to participate in a comprehensive E-Plus/business plan competition for emerging starts up MSMEs as well as foster youth innovations, networking and knowledge sharing. It selected the First Class of E-Plus Entrepreneurs to benefit from the Liberian Innovative Fund for Entrepreneurs (LIFE-Fund) and IFC Business Edge Training. The E-Plus First Class that was selected from the Conference will go through entrepreneurship development and mentoring for six months with a two year period of mentoring/ incubation and each entrepreneur will receive up to US\$10,000 to start their businesses.

The Conference had several session discussions and some of the topics discussed included E+ Program and Access to Finance, 25% Procurement Law for Liberian-Owned MSMEs and PPCC Vendor Registration Process, The LBR Registration Process and Harmonizing MSME Definitions in Liberia, Understanding Taxes for MSMEs, WTO Implementation and Impacts on MSMEs and Expanding Markets for Liberian Grown-Cassava via 10% Cassava Composite Flour Policy, etc.

In celebration of the passing of the Intellectual Property Law and various treaties, a special concert was organized by Blue Links Promotions artists to pay tribute to Liberian legends Miatta Fahnbulleh, Tecumseh Roberts, Zack and Gebbah among others. The Concert took place on November 18th at the Monrovia City Hall Theatre from 9pm to 11:00PM. During the performances, the Wear Your Pride promoting young designers' use of the Lofa (Country) Cloth took place, organized by Hon. Munah Pennoh Youngblood where students and all Liberians participated in these events.

The Annual MSME Conference is the flagship conference of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Small Business Administration (SBA) with support from the Government of Japan. The 2015 Conference was in partnership with USAID-Fed, the International Finance Corporation, Lone Star Cell MTN, Building Markets, IBEX-Liberia, Single Sparks, Business



Start-up Center and the Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment (AEDE). Other supporters included Eco-Bank-Liberia, LBDI, the West African Venture Fund, Global Bank Liberia Limited, etc.

For more information on the conference, visit www.sbaliberia.org or visit the Small Business Administration on the Ground Floor of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Corner of Gurley and Ashmun Streets, Monrovia.

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MINISTER