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African Dermal Science, makers of Uso Skincare**

Good afternoon to all and thank you for this opportunity to share with you my thoughts and suggestions on Financial access for Women owned businesses, particularly on the African Continent.

Firstly, I strongly believe that investing in women owned businesses can create immense opportunities for much needed growth, social impact and improving gender parity in business...and the potential is pronounced on our continent, Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of woman entrepreneurship participation across the globe. So what is hindering all the many female owned businesses from growing into Global or at least Pan African Giants?

Access to finance is the single biggest challenge for women owned businesses and I will briefly share with you 3 key areas of improvement for the Investor Community. This is based on my experience as an owner of a Skincare Business, African Dermal Science, which operates across the SADAC Region.

1. There is a misalignment between the type of industries most Investors are currently focusing on vs the type of industries most women operated businesses operate in. Most Funders are currently focusing on investing in industries that are historically male dominated such as Tech, Infrastructure development, Energy etc. However, most women-owned companies operate in businesses focusing on Personal care, Food Production , Social Services, Fashion and these are non-prioritised in Funding Considerations. These are sectors that include everyday goods that we consume but are dominated by foreign brands and we as Africans are net importers. I would like to urge the Investment community to level the field by being more Industry agnostic and rather adopting a value based investment approach.

2. Availability of data to enable women owned businesses to make a case for funding for their business is another area that can be improved. All Funders, large and small, require data to show viability and growth prospects and this is an area we are lacking in across the continent. As a collective we should consider data collection as a priority

3. Lastly, in most cases of funding, the issue of collateral always plays a role in hindering securing financing for women owned businesses. Requesting collateral or security in the form of Property, land or equipment from businesses that have been mostly owner funded and mostly geared towards the good of the community is counterproductive. This usually results in most women businesses not accessing finance and therefore their businesses never reaching their full potential.

These 3 points of Investor alignment to industries women owned businesses operate in, the importance of data and the issue of collateral all highlight the need for new Financing models for women owned businesses.

Thank you