

PRESS RELEASE

INITIATIVE TO EQUIP 50,000 SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS WITH DIGITAL SKILLS KICKS OFF IN KARIOBANGI

Nairobi, Wednesday 9th June 2021... An initiative to equip over 50,000 owners of Micro Small Enterprises (MSEs) with the relevant digital skills by the end of this year has kicked off in Nairobi, targeting to be expanded to multiple counties across the country.

The digital skilling initiative dubbed *Future Ni Digital* is part of the digital program that was launched earlier this year with the key private sector players and government. These partners include the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development (MoITED), the Micro and Small Enterprise Authority (MSEA), Stanbic Kenya Foundation, Microsoft Kenya and the African Center for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT).

Speaking at the Kariobangi Center of Excellence during the start of the training, **the Chief Administrative Secretary at the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development, Mr. Lawrence Karanja** applauded the partners for supporting the government in its efforts to promote digital technologies and ICT as a way of creating employment opportunities and improving on public service delivery. The program expects to place 2,000 youth into employment by the end of 2021.

Speaking during the event, the **CEO of MSEA, Mr. Henry Rithaa** said, “Our mission is to create an environment that makes our MSE sector globally competitive, and we are honoured to partner with such noble stakeholders who are appreciative and aligned to meeting this National goal. Continuous skill improvement is key for survival in today’s dynamic market environment, that is why we have come together to address the knowledge and skill gaps in digital literacy that will benefit 50,000 MSEs. This partnership is timely and oriented to the Authority’s strategic direction of focusing key service delivery functions on digitization and innovation to better serve the MSE sector.”

The *Future Ni Digital* initiative will offer online digital entrepreneurial skills to assist these MSEs to expand and grow their businesses in the ever-changing digital market. As part of this, 192 trainers have already undergone the requisite training in a bid to kick off the mass training of the entrepreneurs. Stanbic Kenya Foundation and Microsoft Kenya have also deployed an online learning platform to enable learners to access content and further develop their skills.

The trainers are drawn from the Micro and Small Enterprise Authority (MSEA), the Kenya Industrial Business Training, Uasin Gishu and Nakuru counties as well as County Industrial Development Officers from around the country. In total, over 1,000 trainers from different government agencies will be trained to become instructors who will then engage with the various MSE’s and upskill them on how to leverage on online and digital platforms to grow their businesses.

The Stanbic Kenya Foundation donated ten laptop computers to the MSEA Training Center at Kariobangi and are set to donate a total of 400 computers to the other training centers across the country.

Speaking on behalf of the bank, **Stanbic Bank Kenya CE, Charles Mudiwa** noted, “As a bank, we seek to elevate businesses and individuals and empower them to achieve their dreams. Many enterprises in the country are still struggling to recover from the effects of the global pandemic, and we have seen that having digital skills is key to survival. Building the capacity of Kenyan citizens by providing access to resources and knowledge is in line with our objectives as part of our non-financial support.”

Microsoft Country Manager for Kenya, Kendi Ntwiga said the organization’s involvement in the initiative stems from its mission to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. “Microsoft has operated in Africa for close to 30 years. In that time, we’ve built strong partnerships across the continent, helped bridge gaps in infrastructure, connectivity, capability, and we are working to assist the continent to digitally transform while creating sustained societal impact,” Kendi said. “It also represents our

desire to support the Kenyan talent create innovative solutions for local and global impact while also addressing the existing gap in some of the required digital skills for the new age.”

ACWICT, the implementing partners of the digital program, developed the curriculum for the trainings and are currently rolling out the training sessions with the MSEA members.

Speaking on behalf of the implementing partners, **ACWICT Executive Director, Constantine Obuya** said, “the goal of this program is to accelerate skilling and employment prospects for 50,000 underserved, out of school youth in Kenya to ensure an inclusive economic recovery post COVID-19 pandemic. The project responds to the challenge of high youth unemployment in Kenya, which has further been compounded by the outbreak of the pandemic. The impact we hope to achieve is a skilled, resilient, and thriving youth effectively optimizing digital opportunities for improved livelihoods”.

MSE’s contribution significantly to economic growth of the country, yet a number of them are still struggling to survive. The digital skilling program aims to address this gap by providing individuals with access to and knowledge of innovate tools for their sustainable development and equal opportunities.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Stanbic Bank Kenya

Stanbic Bank Kenya is a member of the Standard Bank Group, Africa’s largest bank by assets.

Standard Bank Group’s largest shareholder is Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), the world’s largest bank, with a 20.1% shareholding. Standard Bank Group has direct, on-the-ground representation in 20 African countries.

Stanbic Bank Kenya provides the full spectrum of financial services. Its Corporate and Investment Banking division serves a wide range of requirements for banking, finance, trading, investment, risk management, and advisory services. Corporate and Investment Banking delivers this comprehensive range of products and services relating to investment banking; global markets; and global transactional products and services.

Stanbic Bank’s corporate and investment banking expertise is focused on industry sectors that are most relevant to emerging markets. It has strong offerings in oil, gas, and renewables; power and infrastructure, and agriculture.

With regard to personal and business banking, Stanbic Bank Kenya offers banking and other financial services to individuals and small-to-medium enterprises. This unit serves the increasing need among Africa’s small business and individual customers for banking products that can meet their shifting expectations and growing wealth.

Stanbic Bank also offers wealth services and product offerings, including insurance, investment, fiduciary, bespoke banking, and multi-generational wealth preservation solutions to high net worth individuals, retail, business, commercial, and corporate clients across the Bank’s footprint.

About The Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (MSEA)

The Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (MSEA) is a state corporation under the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development mandated to promote, develop and regulate micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Kenya. MSEA is implementing key Government programmes aimed at mainstreaming the contribution of MSEs towards the activation of Vision 2030 and the Big 4 Agenda.

About Microsoft

Microsoft (Nasdaq “MSFT” @microsoft) enables digital transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. Its mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

About The African Center for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT)

Established in 2001, The African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT) is a Kenya-based ICT for Development (ICT4D) Organization, with a regional reach whose mission is to promote women and youth access to and knowledge of ICTs as tools for sustainable development. Our vision is a world where all people, women, and men have equal opportunities to access and use information/knowledge for their social, economic, and political advancement. We focus on high potential but disadvantaged women and youth including marginalized, vulnerable, and underserved women from urban informal settlements and rural communities, providing solutions that improve their access to employment, education, health, and leadership opportunities for better livelihoods.