

Bamburi revs up training of women truckers in logistics

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Cement maker Bamburi Cement has launched a programme to upscale the number of women in the logistics industry.

Dubbed 'Women on Wheels', the initiative seeks to train and employ at least 100 female truck drivers every year to get more women behind the wheels to offer safe, efficient and timely logistics.

The female-centred training and recruitment programme is geared toward encouraging more women to take up truck driving as a career.

Through the programme, the women will undergo rigorous technical truck operation and defensive driving training.

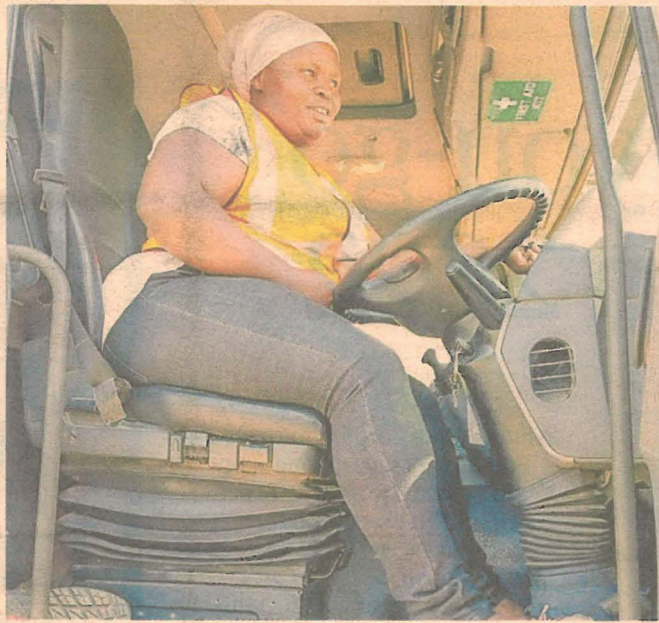
Consequently, they will be equipped with skills to operate heavy trucks, including simulator exercises that expose them to different driving techniques, road safety and soft skills.

Kenyan women make up only 10 percent of the public transport workforce with 85 percent in the matatu industry in Nairobi Metropolitan area, according to a 2020 survey by Flone Initiative.

Speaking at the launch of the programme, Bamburi Cement country head of health, safety and environment Jane Wangari said the initiative would ensure job placement for the women with Bamburi and its logistics partners.

"We are set to recruit at least 100 women annually into the programme, and grow going forward," she said.

The initiative brings together key players in the transport industry including Isuzu East Africa, Kenya Transporters Association (KTA) and four other



Mary Wangari, a long-distant truck driver at Oilfield Movers Limited. --FILE

organisations such as Pioneer Road Safety Consultants Ltd, Diamond Defensive Driving Academy (DDDA) and North Star Alliance.

Isuzu will be tasked with training the recruits while KTA will act as a link to women truck drivers.

Pioneer will offer two certified training to be examined by the government to enable the drivers acquire licences, DDDA will offer safety training while Bamburi and other partner transporters will absorb the trained drivers.

North Star Alliance will provide safe and secure rest areas for drivers ensuring that when in danger, they can be easily located and assisted.

Isuzu East Africa managing director Rita Kavashe said the programme would include experienced women drivers ready for employment, licence holders with no truck driving experience as well as freshers who have not yet acquired a driving licence.

"As Isuzu EA, we strongly believe in building relationships and partnerships for the long term because that has enabled us to grow and build Isuzu to become the market leader," said Ms Kavashe.

Bamburi Cement managing director Seddiq Hassani said they are determined to increase the proportion of women in every aspect of its operations by continuing to find more opportunities and partnerships to further entrench and influence equity among our customers, suppliers and communities across markets it serves.

"Women on Wheels, therefore, fits into our company's diversity, equity and inclusion agenda as part of our commitment to promoting gender equality and inclusion in our workplace and the community," said Mr Hassani.

DDDA's Lydia Mwaniki said women have so much to offer to the logistics industry with several studies showing that female drivers are not only less

likely than men to be involved in a crash, they also tend to be easier to train and have superior customer service and paperwork skills.

A 2020 study by World Bank and the Ministry of Transport showed that barriers such as dominant culture of masculinity and gender stereotypes, discrimination, unequal treatment at work, sexual harassment, exposure to violence while on the road and a lack of work-life balance, and 'the care trap' create a working environment that fails to attract and retain women in the transport careers.

KTA chief operating officer Mercy Ireri said the trucking industry is rife with hurdles, which make the transport sector unattractive for women to work in.

She challenged fleet managers, owners, as well as players in the logistics value chain to embrace diversity and adapt their hiring and training to reflect the growing presence of women in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Ms Wangari said challenges most female truck drivers experience go deeper than bias and include safety concerns including poor vehicle maintenance, dangerous or poorly lit loading docks and pushing workers to drive for long hours.

The lengthy hours away from family for days or weeks at a time discourages many women from joining the field as long-haul drivers, she said.

"We plan to address these concerns by ensuring that the drivers move in convoys and encouraging the transporters to allocate them shorter and safer routes.

"So our priorities are to ensure their wellbeing and to find ways of minimising these obstacles," said Ms Wangari.



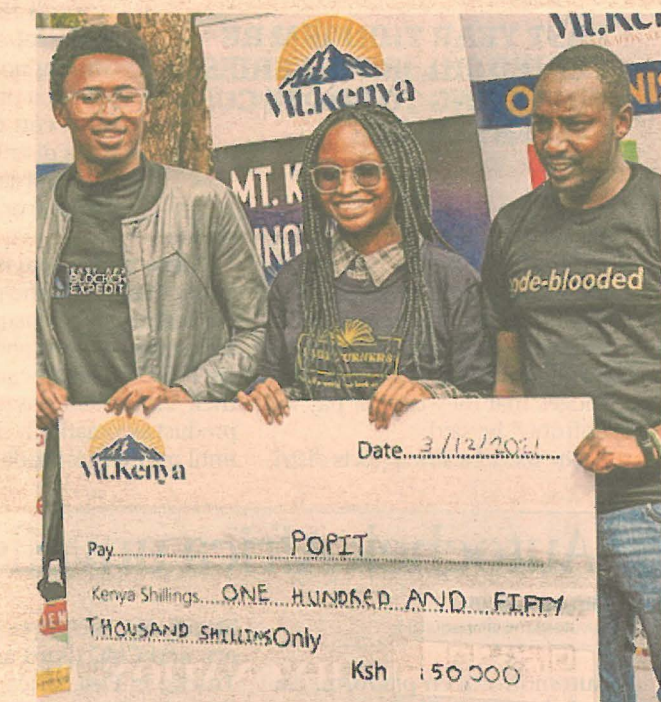
CORPORATE SCENE



Ecobank Kenya managing director and regional executive CESA Cheick Travaly with his Toyota Kenya counterpart Arvinder Reel (right) during the signing of an agreement between the lender and the auto-maker for 90 percent financing of new Suzuki cars. --POOL



DT Dobie and Pembe Flour Mills donate Christmas gifts to St Paul Children Centre at Embulbul Village in Ngong. DT Dobie's customer relations manager Halima Said (left) and heavy commercial vehicles sales administrator Jane Karinge (second right) delivered the gifts. --POOL



Dedan Kimathi University students Eric Mwenda (left) and Dorothy Orina with Savio Wambugu (right) of Mt Kenya hub when the two technology students received Sh150,000 during the recent Mt Kenya Innovation Week. --CAROLINE WAMBUI

Kenyan IT students to participate in Huawei contest

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Kenya is among the countries Huawei Technologies has selected for training in partnership with universities in Africa.

The programme dubbed 'Connection, Glory, Future' targets students in 70 countries pursuing information and communication technologies.

The initiative aims to advance the digital transformation of local industries.

Young Kenyans drawn

from the University of Nairobi, among others, are part of 15,000 students in 130 teams from 500 top universities and colleges participating in the programme.

They are tasked with designing and building innovative solutions on Huawei platforms, including the cloud to address issues such as environmental protection and bridge societal gaps with digital skills.

The firm targets to train 700,000 professionals by next year. It will evaluate the stu-

dents' ICT knowledge, practical skills and innovation acumen. The initiative is also a platform for talent placement with 350 students having secured jobs over the last five years.

WINNING STREAK

Billed as the largest of its kind in Africa, Kenyan students will be looking to maintain the winning streak set in 2020 by the Mazingira Team that presented a solution called Wildfire PrediTec designed and built on Huawei Internet of Things and

Artificial Intelligence platforms to detect, analyse, predict and prevent wildfires. They tied with teams from Uganda and Mauritius for the joint first prize while Nigeria won the grand prize. The sub-Saharan Africa finals are set for February while the global finals will take place in May.

Over the past five years, the competition has attracted over 80,000 ICT students, with 21 teams entering the global finals, incentivising contestants to excel in this field.