**About Lift Saxum**

Lift Saxum was established to transform the enterprise development landscape and the lives of youth and women in Nigeria.

Mission: to transform the lives of youth and women in Nigeria by promoting entrepreneurship through training, technical assistance, and support for start-ups.

Vision: To be recognized as the standard of excellence in entrepreneurship development landscape in Nigeria based on its track record of success and impact.

The population of Nigeria is projected to reach 170 million in 2013 by the National Population Commission. An estimated 43% of the population is below the age of 15, while 24% of Nigerians are unemployed.

Enterprise development is recognized globally as the most effective strategy for creating sustainable employment and wealth. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) could play a catalytic role in the economic transformation of Nigeria and have a multiplier effect on employment in particular.

**Lift Saxum Programmes**

In order to fulfill the mission and objectives outlined above, Lift Saxum delivers three core programmes:

·         Start Your Own Business (SYOB): A two-month course, focused on youth between the ages of 18 and 35, delivered three times a week. This course includes comprehensive entrepreneurship and practical training programme that will cover the critical skills, tools and knowledge required to establish a business.

·         Enterprising Women: A two-month course focused on women who have obtained at least a secondary school education and are functionally literate. This course is delivered twice a week and provides the women with comprehensive and practical entrepreneurship training and support that will enable them to create marketable business plans to start and grow their companies. It will culminate in a business plan competition and participants will be encouraged to submit their business plans for national and international business plan competitions such as YouWin Women and Cartier respectively.

·         Lift Biz: This consists of short courses (2-5 days), focused on critical topics that aspiring and emerging entrepreneurs require to grow their businesses.

Lift Saxum also organises short courses taught in Igbo language in rural communities in the South East. These courses, offered in collaboration with community associations is offered for free to micro entrepreneurs at the rural level, to engage them and build their skills.

By 2017, Lift Saxum would have transformed the lives of at least 2,200 youth and women through its spectrum of services. By 2023, the organization would have enhanced the lives of at least 20,000 women and youth, thereby creating at least 100,000 new jobs in the South East.

**2016/2017 Enterprising Women Project By African Union Fund For Women And**

**Lift Saxum Ltd/Gte**

The Enterprising Women Training Project concluded in July 2017 is a Lift Saxum/African Union project. Enterprising Women programme, one of Lift Saxum’s flagship programmes is designed to develop and train potential/existing female entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas in business conceptualization, analysis, planning, management, strategy, organization, legal requirements and growth. It also deals with gender specific issues affecting the woman in her environment and as an entrepreneur. Lift Saxum’s Rural Outreach Programme combines entrepreneurial training with practical solutions targeting the needs of the community.

Women make up 49% of Nigerian population estimated at 170 million. 43% of the population is below the age of 15, while 24% of Nigerians are unemployed. About six million young women and men enter the labour market each year but only 10% are able to secure employment in the formal sector, and just one third of these are women. Given that Nigeria’s population is made up of over 83 million women and girls it is crucial that they be actively integrated in the scheme of things. Due cognizance must be given to the fact that economic independence and financial inclusion are essential dimensions for empowering the woman. Enhancing the access of women and girls to control over resources will increase investment in human capital which in turn will improve children’s health, nutrition, education and future growth. Women compose the majority of informal sector workers, and small and micro business enterprises have overtaken subsistence farming and formal employment as the main of income.

However, due to lack of requisite skills, poor entrepreneurial training and access to finance, many of these businesses remain marginal, and often die off. Thus, the cycle of poverty remains vicious. Studies have shown the unhealthy nexus between poverty among women and the many gender related ills in society. Enterprise development is recognized globally as the most effective strategy for creating sustainable development and wealth. This project was designed to address the gaps in skills knowledge and business development skills that Nigerian women and girls lack, and which is needed to establish sustainable business enterprises, creating wealth and reducing poverty.

**Lift Saxum/African Union Project**

The training programme was designed to train 100 women in two rural locations in improved farming methods, production of household cleaning agents, business skills, life skills etc while 60 women and girls were trained in an urban location in tailoring, ICT/Digital Literacy, business skills, etc.

**Urban Training Programme**

Following the selection of the most eligible candidates for the training, the urban training took off on 27th February, 2017 with sixty (60) women of age range 18 – 50 years. The training exercise took place in a centrally located and easily accessible hall in town. For the 2 training, the women were put in two different groups of thirty (30) per group. The same group arrangement was maintained for both the tailoring and ICT. Each group trains for 2 days of 5hour training: giving 10 hours/week of training. The last two months of training included Life skills and Business skills training range from work-life balance, stress management, gender issues, Quality and Process management, Book keeping, Customer Care, Business Ethics, etc. A professional seamstress was engaged for the tailoring sessions while a professional ICT trainer was engaged for the ICT training. The training ended on the 29th of June, 2017. Lift Saxum held an ‘Exit’ ceremony on the 30th June, 2017 to celebrate successful completion of the training exercise. The women were provided with adequate training materials. The instructors were on hand to ensure a one-on-one training for the trainees. The trainees were at ease with the instructors. They asked questions and sought to be guided through the training. They were provided with all that were needed for the training, as provided for in the budget.

At the end of the training, the trainers were happy with the degree of skills they had acquired within the four months. They were able to develop their business plans, creating a niche for themselves in the industry. The women formed a social network group, which gradually developed into self-help groups and several partnerships. Seven of the women plan to venture into making kiddies wears on a commercial scale. Most of them are too financially constrained to start a business at once. They therefore plan to work with a professional tailor and gradually save to buy a sewing machine and a cutting table. They will start in their homes. 4 of them have already found employment in existing tailoring shops as tailor-assistants. They are also happy that they can use ICT and social media to ‘show case’ and sell their products.

The women formed a Whatsapp group. Through this group, they exchange information and look out for one another. Some of them are planning to go into partnership. With the knowledge they acquired from the ICT training, they have opened email accounts, facebook and instagram accounts. They have learnt to give their work and businesses more visibility through the use these media and even advertise online. These are means to further grow and sustain their enterprises

**Rural Enterprise Development Programme**

97 women were successfully trained in the rural outreach programme. 49 women were trained in Owo, and 48 women were trained in Eke. All of them are smallholder farmers. They were excited to learn modern methods and use improved varieties, especially as they are more resistant to diseases, pests and climatic changes. The farm-trainer is a national certified facilitator on modern farming technique. He is also a farmer.

After the training on farming for greater profit, each of the communities chose the crops they preferred to farm taking into consideration the soil type and market demand. He had taught them the advantages of off-season crop farming and how to take advantage of networks and linkages to industries. The training afforded them the opportunity to earn more through their activities. He also taught them disease and pest control methods. The women were selected from different sections of the communities and constituted in groups.

They were trained to pull resources together in order to start the soap-making business. However, apart from the improved varieties used on the demonstration farm, they were also provided with some seeds and cuttings of cassava sticks for their individual farms. The demonstration farm will also serve as the propagation centre, so that all will get more from it for the next planting season. The women were committed to the training and eager to learn. Some of them who are literate wrote down the names of the items and the processes of production. The life skills and business training sessions helped them to re-assess their processes. They were grateful for the sessions on gender issues and stress management. The session on life-work balance and Business skills training afforded them tips to re-organise their business. As a good number of them are illiterate, alternative methods were used to teach them stock taking and business accounting methods. It was made clear to them from the onset that they trained as trainers for the other women in their communities. The women leaders were therefore careful to choose women who could facilitate and step down learning for the others.

The training was of immense benefit to the women.