

WISE WOMEN'S CLEAN ENERGY TRAINING

Beginning this year, WEA and Nigerian organization, Women's Initiative for Sustainable Environment (WISE) are partnering to design a year-long Training Project that will support 40 women leaders from 5 Nigerian states to learn skills in promoting and selling clean cookstoves. With seed grants in hand, **these women will be equipped to train another 6,000 women, which will mean 25,000-40,000 people access improved health conditions and energy options.**

This project aims to **increase women's access to safe, affordable, cooking solutions, reduce** indoor air pollution and deforestation; and **support income generation** for women leaders.



The year-long training program will equip this group of grassroots women leaders with the skills, resources, and connections to **1.) launch projects that improve their health and environmental conditions; 2.) generate income; and 3.) train other women to do the same.** Over the course of a year, participants will receive hands-on technology training, practical business skills, seed funding and follow-up support.

WEA Environmental Training Description

WEA Trainings are joint partnerships between WEA and a women-led regional organization, pooling knowledge, resources, and networks. **WEA and the regional organization work together to ensure that:**

1. Trainings are based on relevant environmental issues, customs and gender needs
2. Strong teams of grassroots women leaders with track records of successful community organizing and leadership experience are selected
3. Region-specific, appropriate technologies and relevant business practices are selected in the curriculum design
4. Trainers are local women experts with first-hand experience and culturally-relevant knowledge in the training topics

Based on 10 years of data, a typical year-long Training initiative produces the following impact:

- 15 teams of 30 women leaders trained to improve environmental conditions, launch an income-generating project, and “pay forward” their knowledge by training others
- \$1,500 of start-up capital for each participant team to launch the projects they design during the training.

- 15 teams with access to peer networks of support, additional funding opportunities, and media/visibility opportunities
- 6,000 women per year accessing training (led by participants upon returning to their communities)
- 25,000-40,000 people accessing improved environmental and health conditions

During Environmental Leadership Trainings, women leaders participate in 3 phases: Design, Training, and Implementation.

During **Design Phase** (six months), participants:

- Survey and map their community's needs/assets related to the training topic (e.g., water and sanitation). Participants' findings directly inform the curriculum content thereby ensuring training is participatory and relevant

During **Training Phase** (one-week or a series of weeks throughout course of one year), participants:

- Engage in hands-on technical training
- Learn entrepreneurship skills including business and action planning, marketing, financial literacy, and microfinance
- Draft an action plan to design and implement project and train other women

During **Implementation Phase** (6-8 months), participants:

- Win a seed grant to launch their income-generating environmental project
- Apply new skills and draw upon their support network to maximize success
- Receive on-the-ground refresher trainings, technical assistance, support in securing additional funding for successful projects, and a global platform to share stories of success.

Next Steps

WEA and WISE are currently nearing completion on the Design Phase, which includes **conducting a needs assessment** in five localities across Nigeria. Through community mobilization and sensitization efforts, we are raising awareness about the health impacts of open-fire cooking and are identifying grassroots women trainers (drawn from each of the communities) who will participate in the project. These leaders will be incorporated into the design of the upcoming training, and they will participate in a series of project planning meetings. Participants' findings will directly inform the curriculum content thereby ensuring the training is participatory and relevant. *WEA has a funding gap of \$25,000 to fund the remaining portions of the project.*

The Challenge

According to United Nations Development Programme research, **"Nigeria tops the list of countries where women suffer various ailments resulting from the use of firewood."** A World Health Organization report states that, **"Over 120,000 Nigerian women die annually from use of firewood. If a woman cooks breakfast, lunch and dinner, it is equivalent to smoking between three and 20 packets of cigarettes a day."** 72% of Nigerians depend solely on fuelwood for cooking. After malaria and HIV/AIDS, smoke is the **biggest killer** of mostly women and children. In addition to this health problem, traditional biomass stoves burn **90%** more wood than is necessary. This has cost poor families and institutions money that could be spent on education, health, and nutrition. Nigeria's fuel wood consumption is about **80 million cubic meters**, making biomass fuel the **most common** source of household energy in Nigeria.

Most people are unaware of the grave health and environmental risks associated with traditional open

fire cooking or cannot afford cleaner options. Though grassroots women can contribute significantly towards addressing energy challenges in Nigeria, many currently lack the technical training and financial capabilities to participate in discussions about safer and more affordable options, particularly as they are often excluded from decision-making opportunities in the natural resource management sector.



OUR STORY

In 2006, 30 women met to create a framework for transforming the world. From South Africa to Israel, Australia to Haiti, and many more regions, this group of visionary women leaders came together in Mexico City because of our concern for the future of our planet. There, we united with a shared dream: **to build an alliance that would put an end to the relentless violence on our earth and on our world's women.** But that wasn't all.

In the face of a world fractured by fear and disconnection, we sought to uplift the WE — to demonstrate that unity is the only lasting antidote to violence and destruction. We asked and answered several critical questions:

Why Women? Because women are hit hardest by environmental and climate crises, and many risk their lives every single day just to access basic needs — like water, food, and fuel — for their families and their communities. But when these women receive support, they are highly effective at designing and carrying out appropriate, long-lasting solutions to persistent environmental challenges they intimately know.

Why the Environment? Because resources like water, food and land are proven to be leverage points for transforming larger societal trends. Communities that have access to clean water, healthy food and protected land are more likely to see improvements in economies, human rights, education, health, democracy and peace.

Why Alliances? Because too many grassroots women leaders around the world work in isolation, without access to information, training, and alliances with other leaders and organizations. And yet women leaders positioned as hubs of community networks are poised to move resources and knowledge efficiently through those networks.

With this serving as our framework, we shared strategies on issues of health, sanitation, land issues, water rights, toxics, sustainable micro-businesses, and more. We agreed upon a set of shared values and principles, identified key strategies, established regional hubs, and mapped out our first projects.

Since its start — one circle of 30 women — WEA has given rise to thousands more circles. The actions women take in WEA's programs are simple but profound — saving indigenous seeds, planting native trees, teaching solar cooking, launching sustainable farms, providing safe water, preserving traditional knowledge, building composting toilets, and protecting land rights in some of the most resource rich but threatened regions on Earth.

Women standing in WEA circles turn right around to build more circles, generating multiple cascading benefits — safe and just conditions for women and girls, economic prosperity, protection of water, food, and energy sources, peace and stability, and cultural healing.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

More than 5,000 women have accessed WEA trainings reaching an additional 750,000 people in 18 countries with their environmental innovations. They are saving indigenous seeds, planting native trees, selling solar cookers, launching sustainable farms, providing safe water, building composting toilets, protecting land rights, and preserving traditional knowledge in some of the most threatened places on earth.

WEA's vision is that the women worldwide who are safeguarding a thriving home for all of us, are never alone, and that they have what they need — not only to survive but to thrive.

A vibrant grid of micro-networks has been built by women over years and across borders to guard and nourish our earth. Community by community, women step forward to defend forests from being stripped bare, prevent children from dying of waterborne illness, and uphold cultural fabric in the face of violence and exploitation. **WEA lights this grid of connectivity.**

Our mission is to equip women, who are the nodes of this grid, with the skills and tools they need to protect our earth and strengthen communities from the inside out. We work with local leaders who build up other leaders.

HOW WE WORK

Working in partnership with women-led groups, we identify instrumental women leaders working at the grassroots to protect their communities' natural resources, livelihoods, and health. We then invest in the long-term leadership of these women, who spread their knowledge to many others. This ensures community-driven, sustained impact.

With local leadership guiding each WEA project, **we design capacity-building trainings where women access skills and tools in appropriate technology, entrepreneurship, and advocacy.** They gain **seed funding, mentorship, and a global alliance.** With these solutions in hand, participants go on to launch their own environmental projects and teach others to do the same.

Our Values

:: *The world needs women's leadership.* Women's full participation is essential for achieving lasting ecological transformation and human rights.

:: *Women use resources wisely.* Women often manage natural and financial resources for the good of the community, and with an eye on future generations.

:: *The ripple effect is real.* Women empower their families, communities and networks with knowledge and resources that multiply.

:: *Solutions cannot be imposed.* Communities know how to manage their lands, resources and economies; our job is to listen and respond appropriately.

:: *We need a shift in power.* Social and economic justice require a redistribution of decision-making power.