

# Barriers and Challenges experienced by Migrant African women Entrepreneurs (MAWEs) in North Queensland.



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# Background

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- Study focus- Migrant African Women/my experience
- Entrepreneurship
- Barriers & Challenges
- African women Entrepreneurs in this study are described as both Australian citizens and residents born in Africa, or with recent ancestors from there (Hugo, 2009).



# Why MAWEs migrate to Australia

- MAWEs come to Australia as skilled migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, through family reunion, or as secondary migrants from other countries

(Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2016).



- Migrant women & children are among the most vulnerable members of society (UN, 2015).

Source: Jacob Lawrence and the great migration



# What MAWEs bring to Australia

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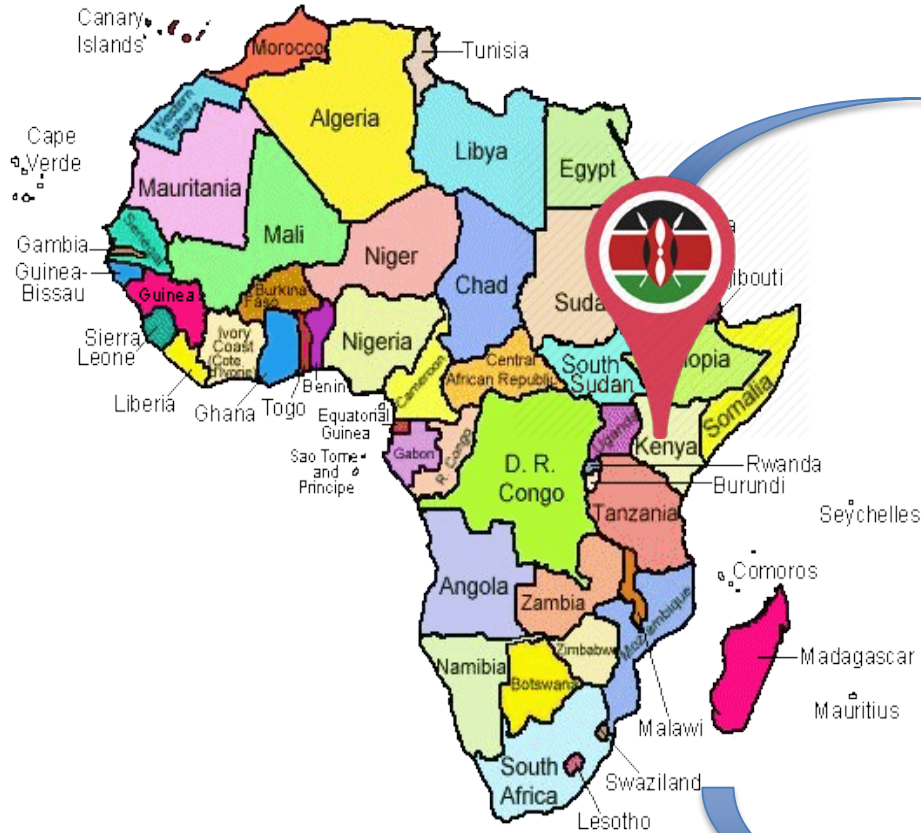
- They bring with them potentially valuable **cultural, social and economic** ties to the region

(Negin & Denning, 2008).



# Study area

## Africa



## Australia





# Diversity of **MAWE** businesses in NQ

**Laundry & dry cleaning services**

**Food catering**

**Manufacturing-Sewing, printing, etc.**

**Retail-Grocery, beauty salons, etc.**

**Business services- Bookkeeping, etc**

**Children's Transportation Service, Uber**

**Nanny Placement**

**Tutoring**

**Home daycare**

**Cleaning-residential & commercial**

**House/baby Sitting**

**Health care-GP, Paediatrician**

**Language Translation**

**Renting a room-Airbnb**

**Interior decorating**

**Online store- ebay, etc**

**Personal Chef**

**Foster care**

**NDIs providers**

**Farming & gardening**

# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ.





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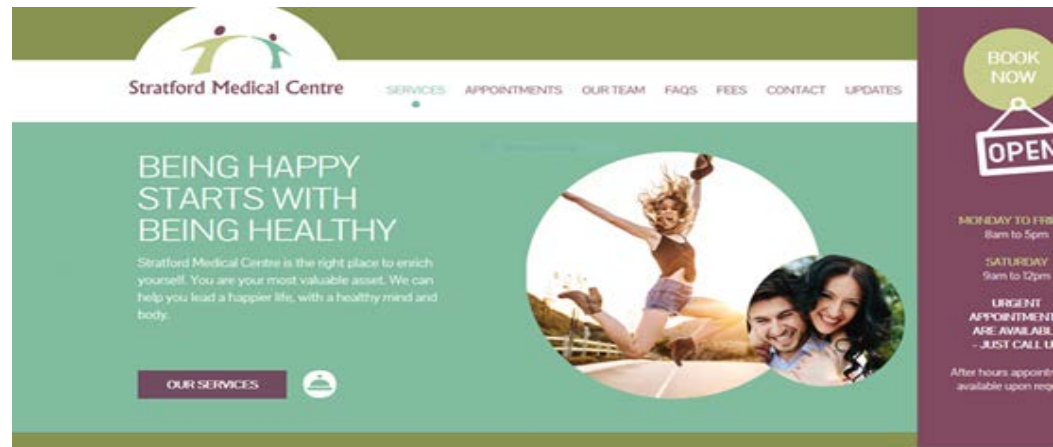
Founder:  
Judith Rusoke-  
Dierich



# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ



<https://www.google.com.au/sea>



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# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ



# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ





# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ





# Examples of businesses owned by MAWES in NQ



# MAWE owner of business in NQ



Legal Eagle

# MAWE businesses in NQ



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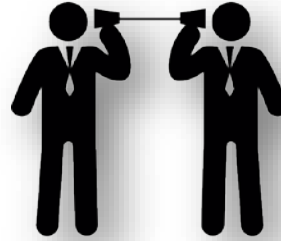
The image shows a business card for 'Taste of Africa Plus' with a zebra print background. It features a logo with a map of Africa, three small photos of food (meatballs, salad, and samosas), and the names of the staff members. Contact information is provided at the bottom.



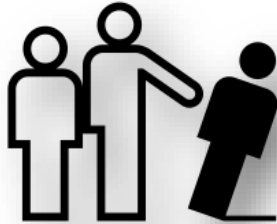
# Barriers & Challenges to operating & sustaining a business, identified by participants



- Lack of financial literacy
- Financial difficulties starting a business



- Language/communication barrier
- Different accent can impede communication



- Racial discrimination and bias



- High transport costs
- Limited market
- Difficulty obtaining licenses



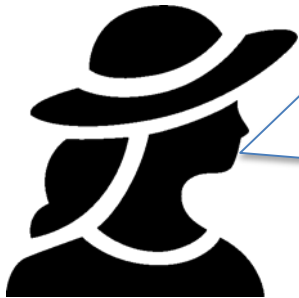
- Inadequate advertising
- Lack of information on Australian culture/business/environment



- Lack of understanding of business legal requirements
- Inadequate support from Australian governments



# Samples of Data collected from MAWE Interviews (May 2017-18):



**MAWE A**

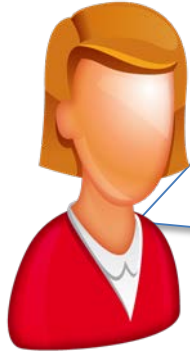
“The culture here does not encourage entrepreneurship, especially on a small scale. Everything has been left to the big companies, big corporations, big shopping malls, and the entrepreneurial spirit is just killed. People are happy to shop at big stores. The government is encouraging small businesses, and that is why it is giving tax breaks, but if the customers are not buying from you, the tax break is of no use, and there is no way you are going to survive. In my assessment, the entrepreneurial spirit is not nurtured by the locals.”

“I have experienced rejection or some form of racial discrimination and racial bias. Some customers in my business, because of my colour, know that I am not an Australian. They do not want to buy from me, but they want my products, so they will get someone else to come and buy it for them from me. My products are unique, and I am the only one who sells them, so when I see their child wearing something I sold to another mother, I then come to know the truth.”



**MAWE B**

# Sample MAWE interview comments (May 2017-18):



**MAWE C**

“I have experienced racism. I imported special dried fruits and snacks favorite [here], and I could not sell. The shop owners would taste and say okay, we will try next time. Everybody who tasted the same said they were on top of the range. But the fact that somebody could see that they are being sold by a migrant woman, thought that they were of inferior quality, that they could not even trust. Some of them were asking to be shown importation documents, which I supplied to them, but they were not confident enough to put the products in their shops. I engaged a white person to help in the marketing, 80% of the shops started stocking and selling my products, and from then on, they are making orders continuously.”

“An African woman lacks an opportunity of being respected in the business community. We are not given the opportunity in the mind stream sector. I feel that I am offered less opportunity than my Caucasian service providers. They can enter through the door, and they are welcome. For me who offers the same service as them, and enters the same place, I am asked, if I am looking for a job. A lot of doors were closed when I decided to run my own business.”



**MAWE D**

## MAWE interviewees Cont'd



**MAWE E**

“I lack understanding of Australian business regulations. I am still struggling to meet the government regulations. The government officers come to my shop for inspection and say my packaging is not to Australian standards. They issue you with a warning, and off they go, and they do not take time to tell me how to do it better. How am I meant to do it, to make sure it meets Australian standards? I am treated as if I am an offender, and out to break the law and they need to put me in line. Actually, it is because I do not know what I need to put on a package to make it right. I have no idea. I did not know that my measuring scale has to go through a different company, which does something to it to make it Australian standard. I am smacked with a warning straight up.”

“When they see me working in a law firm, they are surprised how I qualified as a lawyer to the point that I am now practicing, and more surprised to know that I own the Law firm. They ask how I travelled to come to that point. That is the reaction I get from some of my Australian clients. They will first want to kind of doubt my competence and capability. After I have helped solve their issues, they realise that I am good at it. Some of them will start asking, ‘did you do your law degree in Australia?’”



**MAWE F**

## Last selected interview



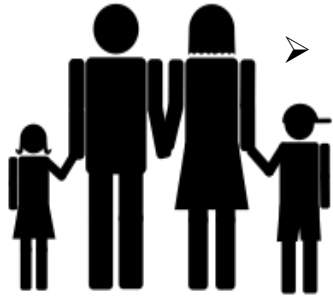
“The fashion industry is cutthroat. People are a bit nasty and it is usually the designer and the management of the fashion shows that have their favourites. They want their favourites to shine, and so they will suppress you. When I won the award, they put another designer’s photograph on the Instagram and Facebook page. They never put my photo there.”

**MAWE G**



# Benefits that successful entrepreneurship may bring to the community

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- Providing for their families & establishing them as valuable members of society.



- New business enterprise creates mutual support among fellow MAWEs & encourages positive interaction with the wider host community.



- Bring in new ideas that reflect cultural, social, & economic experience.



- Self sufficiency reduces reliance on social welfare & fosters a sense of independence.



# Specific possible positive outcomes

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## **MAWES can meet skill shortages:**

- allow businesses access to new ideas, skills, & technology
- improve productivity and enhance Australia's competitiveness in international markets
- help other migrants to integrate and become economically self-sufficient
- MAWES have a double advantage when looking for business opportunities, exploring products, services and concepts that can be exported to their original country and imported to the host country.
- have connections with at least two countries, two cultures, two languages, and two markets, and can take advantage of the connections
- employ and train other new arrivals.

# Conclusion:

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- My study findings feature a selection of interview transcripts that reflect various barriers, but the pictorial evidence of diverse business enterprises in NQ encourage other aspiring entrepreneurs
- My study also raises the question of how stakeholders can help MAWEs to reach full potential, and contribute to the broader community. This would nurture an environment in which the whole community thrives and is sustainable.
- My contribution will:
  - generate insights on migrant women's lived experience
  - Contribute to the growth of small business and the economy in North Queensland
  - Provide empirical data that may inform policymakers.

# Wise words

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*“If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation).” African proverb (Kwegyir-Aggrey, 1875-1927).*



Prof. Wangari Maathai

