

First Africa Kaizen Award is held at Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019

As if by coincidence the inaugural Africa Kaizen Award 2019 took place in Tunis, Tunisia just a week after the CAF Champions League had kicked off in Egypt. However, the Africa Kaizen Award 2019 was not a footballing masterpiece but rather a productivity competition that sought to recognise companies on the continent that had displayed significant productivity improvement through the implementation of the Kaizen concept.

The Africa Kaizen Award 2019 formed part of the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019. Speaking at the opening of the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019 on 24 June, Tunisia's Minister of Industry and SMEs His Excellency Mr Slim Feriani said "Improving African companies' capabilities is part of competitiveness and economic growth". H.E Feriani said "90% of Tunisia's exports are within the manufacturing sector".



Tunisia's Minister of Industry and SMEs His Excellency Mr Slim Feriani, delivers the Opening Remarks at the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019

The Minister emphasised the importance of a highly industrialised African continent and lamented the slow pace of industrialisation within the continent. H.E Feriani concluded his opening remarks by inviting delegates at the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019 to visit companies within Tunis to see how Tunisia has implemented Kaizen. The Minister urged his African counterparts to share experiences during the company visits.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki told delegates through a recorded message that "the Kaizen philosophy has a key role to play in contributing to Africa's development".



His Excellency Mr Slim Feriani, fields questions from members of the media during the opening of the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019

The fourth edition of the “Africa Kaizen Annual Conference” was organised by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in conjunction with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

The conference is held annually as part of the Africa Kaizen Initiative, and the fourth edition of the conference was witnessed by 200 participants from 17 countries that gathered at the serene Ramada Hotel Conference Centre in Tunis, Tunisia.

During the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in 2016, focus was placed on the Kaizen philosophy. Kaizen was identified during the conference as a promising method that stood to raise the quality, productivity, and competitiveness of African companies. The philosophy was pinpointed as a unique pillar of Japan’s cooperation with its global counterparts. The Kaizen philosophy is world renowned and known to be the bedrock of successes attained by Japanese companies such as Toyota Motor Corporation.

One of the key themes that came out of the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) was “the potential contribution of Kaizen in Africa’s development”. The theme was acknowledged African Union member states as an important approach in

advancing enhanced performance in the development efforts of Africa. As a resultant of the commitment to embrace Kaizen is a fundamental tool in enabling economic growth, AUDA-NEPAD and JICA embarked on a collaboration that culminated in the “Africa Kaizen Initiative” in 2017.

The initiative was premised on the need to contribute to the realization of Agenda 2063, which strives for transformed, inclusive and sustainable economies on the continent. The practical realisation of the initiative saw JICA implement JICA’s Kaizen projects in African countries namely Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zambia.

The project implementation included the secondment of Japanese experts at African companies. The experts would contribute to the productivity and quality of the companies through the dissemination of Kaizen philosophies within these companies. As the African project continued and success of the implementation of Kaizen in various companies saw an improvement of performance in the companies, some countries were impressed with the outcomes.

Countries such as Africa’s fastest growing economy, Ethiopia and Zambia established Kaizen Institutes in their respective countries with the Ethiopia Kaizen Institute (EKI) and Kaizen Institute of Zambia (KIZ) respectively. It was in the backdrop of the success of Kaizen within various countries that implemented Kaizen that the idea of Africa Kaizen Award was mooted and thus became part of the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019 in Tunis, Tunisia.

Following the Opening Address by Tunisia’s Minister of Industry and SMEs His Excellency Mr Slim Feriani, and the Welcoming Remarks by the Ambassador of Japan to Tunisia, His Excellency Mr Shinsuke Shimizu, the tone was set for proceedings for the three- day conference through the delivery of a keynote address.

Titled “Enhancing firm capabilities in Africa and the role of Kaizen”, the keynote address was delivered by Vice President, National Graduate of Policy Studies (GRIPS) Japan, Professor Tetsushi Sonobe. Prof. Sonobe had the crowd in resounding laughter when he started his PowerPoint presentation by saying “PowerPoint is used by those who have no point or power”.

However, Prof. Sonobe was quick to get to the business of the day and highlighted that “Africa is poised to be the largest economy”. Prof. Sonobe said a common trend within companies is that “Youth employment is higher amongst educated than unskilled workers and Kaizen stands to help improve managers to communicate better with workers”.



Vice President, National Graduate of Policy Studies (GRIPS) Japan, Professor Tetsushi Sonobe delivered the keynote address at the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019

Prof. Sonobe outlined how Kaizen helped Singapore improve its competitiveness in the early days of Singapore's economic growth. This is quite remarkable considering that Singapore is now rated the most competitive economy by the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) 2019.

The WCY ranking is an annual report on the competitiveness of selected countries and is recognised internationally as the leading executive opinion survey of competitiveness between nations. The report rates the ability of 63 industrialised and emerging economies to create and maintain an environment that sustains the competitiveness of enterprises.

Following the keynote address, The Africa Kaizen Annual Conference 2019 got underway in earnest and members of the 200-strong delegation that came from over 17 countries were divided into breakout sessions to deliberate on five key issues of:

- Improving the workplace culture through Kaizen
- Consideration of Kaizen Key Performance Indicator
- Enabling environment for enterprises
- Utilizing digital technology for Kaizen dissemination and implementation
- Expanding Kaizen to other sectors

The discussions were robust and progressive and saw delegates concur that “Africa does not need handouts, it needs investment”. To enable investment, it was fundamental to boost the promotion of industrialisation in Africa. The presentation from the session groups will be part of the deliberation at the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) to be held in August this year.



Programme Officer for Industry at the Japan International Cooperation Ghana Office, Ms. Nana Adwoa Owusu-Achaw (left) seen here with a colleague at the opening of the Africa Kaizen Conference in Tunis, Tunisia

On the second day of the conference delegates visit various companies in Tunis. During the visit delegates shared experiences with local companies and were taken through a tour of the various companies. One of the companies was the textile manufacturing industry TF PROD situated on the outskirts of Tunis.

Prior to arrival at the company delegates from various African countries, Japan and Argentina amongst others were awed with the artistic architectural buildings throughout Tunis. Upon arrival at TF PROD, delegates were taken on throughout tour within the premises by a technical assistant who was responsible for the implementation of Kaizen. TF PROD is a textile that produces women clothing and has over 300 employees. The company has a turnover of over 12 million Dinars. During the information sharing visit, TF Prod indicated that it took a year to implement Kaizen within the company. The primary objective

of the implementation of Kaizen was to improve its turnover. During the implementation period of Kaizen at the company, the key problems that were identified included:

- Production processes were not well adapted
- Poor layout within the factory
- Method of inventory control not well defined within the workplace

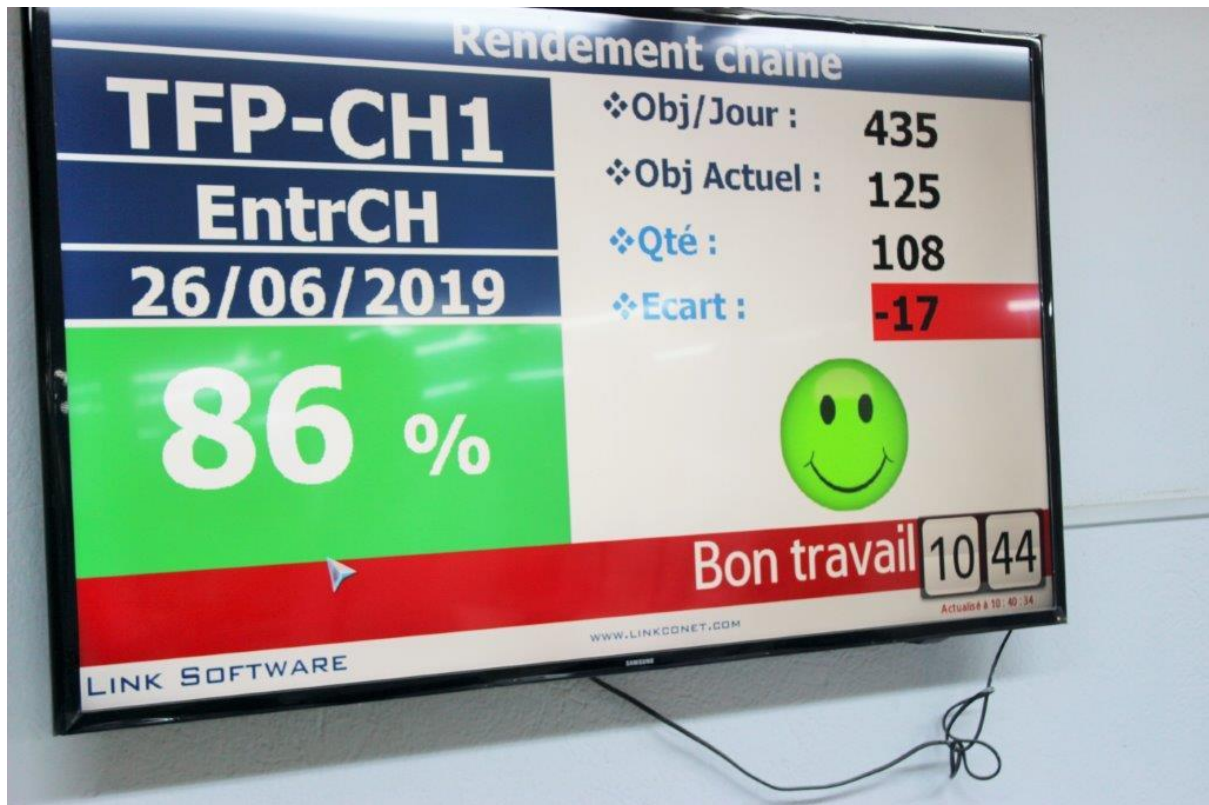
The implementation of Kaizen at TF PROD saw a surge in productivity and some of the positive outcomes were:

- The monitoring of stock improved
- TF PROD stopped over purchasing raw material due to better inventory controls
- The line of production was more organized



Designated work spaces were marked at TF PROD as party of Kaizen Implementation thereby improving productivity

According to TF PROD, Kaizen enabled the company to even undertake “a study of yield per employee”. TF PROD’s 5S score moved from 30% to 70% in just under a year. 5S is a workplace organization method for organizing spaces so work can be performed efficiently, effectively, and safely. This system focuses on putting everything where it belongs and keeping the workplace clean, which makes it easier for people to do their jobs without wasting time or risking injury. 5S uses a list of five Japanese words: seiri, seiton, seisō, seiketsu, and shitsuke. These have been translated as "Sort", "Set in order", "Shine", "Standardize" and "Sustain".



A display board at TF PROF monitoring production process as it happens

TF PROD's visit was a potpourri of information sharing and some gains from the issues include soft issues such as the company saying that "that the one who come with a problem without a solution is the problem".



Kaizen helped improve productivity at TF PROD

On the last day of the Africa Kaizen Conference 2019, the inaugural Africa Kaizen Award 2019 took place and companies from various countries in Africa battled each other in a bid to be bestowed with the first Africa Kaizen Award.

The rationale behind the Africa Kaizen Award 2019 was to enhance capabilities and competitiveness of African companies by promoting the concept of Kaizen through mutual learning process of know-how and practical experiences of Kaizen activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as sharing information on Africa Kaizen Initiative. The Kaizen concept is a Japanese management philosophy that enables the implementation of best workplace practices to yield higher productivity levels.

Out of 16 companies that were nominated to compete in Tunis, winners were selected in various categories. Winners in the prestigious event held at the picturesque Ramada Hotel located on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea in Tunis, Tunisia were as follows:

- Most Outstanding Award:
 - A to Z Textile Mills Ltd. from **Tanzania**,
 - MAA Garment and Textiles PLC from **Ethiopia**

- Excellent Award
 - Lumen Special Cables from **South Africa**
 - SOMEF TUNISIE from **Tunisia**
 - Water Well Drilling Enterprise from **Ethiopia**

- Exemplary Award
 - Kanyama First Level Hospital from **Zambia**

The Department Manager of Supplier and Enterprise Development at Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC), Nkhumbuzi Ben-Mazwi, said the South African development centre is elated at the performance of Lumen Special Cables.

AIDC in conjunction with JICA have been supporting Lumen Special Cables with productivity improvement expertise. Ben Mazwi says Lumen Special Cables showed significant improvement in its manufacturing processes and production through its Kaizen improvement pilot.



Winners at the Inaugural Africa Kaizen Award 2019 Ceremony

The winners of the Most Outstanding Company category, A to Z Textile Mills Ltd. from **Tanzania** and MAA Garment and Textiles PLC from **Ethiopia** have been invited to participate in the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) whereby they will visit Japanese enterprises to experience the implementation of Kaizen in Japan.

Brief Overview of the Kaizen Concept

Through simple practices continuously and consistently repeated, Kaizen can improve quality and productivity, reduce time and cost, and create comfortable and safe working environments. Kaizen can be implemented in not only manufacturing, but also businesses management and individuals' homes and lives.

Kaizen is not limited to simple management techniques, but it is essentially the process where everyone in an organization maintains an attitude to consistently pursue advanced levels of quality and productivity (Improvement of job quality). The Kaizen management approach is based on good understanding between managers and workers, emphasizing the importance of valuing both workers and the working space.

Kaizen encourages internal communication, thus improving cohesion and ultimately productivity. Corporate cohesion can create a dynamic economy which creates and grows jobs, reduces inequality and alleviates poverty, and builds a society where people can trust each other and hold a common sense of belonging.