

Women Transforming our Industry



Meet WINLPG
Woman of the Year 2024 Awardee



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Founder and CEO - Hakem Energies

1. Looking back, what stands out to you most about that moment of recognition?

That moment of recognition was truly transformative. The award has not only validated our efforts but has also served as a powerful tool for advocating the impactful work we are doing at Hakem. It has provided us with a platform to shine a light on our achievements and the positive changes we are driving within our community. For those who may have doubted our work, this award stands as a testament to our dedication and resilience. It reinforces our commitment to excellence and inspires us to continue pushing boundaries and striving for greater impact.

2. How did winning the title impact your sense of purpose or direction — personally and professionally?

Winning the title has profoundly impacted my sense of purpose and direction, both personally and professionally. On a personal level, it serves as a vital source of motivation, especially during challenging times. Working in last-mile service delivery is demanding, and there are days when the thought of quitting crosses my mind. However, whenever I reflect on the millions of people who face the harsh realities of energy poverty every day - those who lack the voice and means to advocate for themselves - I am reminded that giving up is simply not an option.

Professionally, this recognition has strengthened my commitment to our mission and reinforced the importance of the work we do. It drives me to persevere and to continuously seek innovative solutions to empower those in need. Knowing that our efforts can make a tangible difference in the lives of others propels me forward, fueling my dedication to creating lasting change in the communities we serve.

3. What was the biggest challenge you faced in the year following the award, and how did you overcome it?

The biggest challenge I faced in the year following the award was the persistent lack of support for black women in the industry. Operating so low in the value chain, we encounter extremely thin margins, which makes it incredibly difficult to break even and sustain our operations. It often feels like an uphill battle to gain recognition and backing in a field where our contributions are not fully valued.

However, I learned that forging strategic partnerships with organisations and allies who genuinely recognise and appreciate our work could significantly alleviate this pressure. By aligning with partners whose missions and visions are in sync with ours, we have been able to enhance our impact and create opportunities for collaboration. These partnerships have not only provided the necessary support and resources but have also validated our efforts in ways that resonate across the industry.

Through these connections, I've been empowered to amplify our voice and advocate for the critical issues that affect our communities. Together, we can work towards dismantling the barriers to support for black women in this space, ensuring that our contributions are both acknowledged and celebrated

4. How has your work evolved over the past year?

Over the past year, our work has evolved significantly, marked by substantial growth and new opportunities. We have successfully increased our capacity with the introduction of more LPG boxes, which has allowed us to serve a larger number of households effectively. This expansion is a testament to our commitment to addressing the energy needs of our communities.

Moreover, we have ventured into a new province, broadening our reach and impact. This geographical expansion not only enables us to tap into new markets but also allows us to bring our solutions to areas that previously lacked access to reliable energy sources. In addition to these advancements, we are actively diversifying into commercial markets. This strategic pivot not only enhances our business model but also ensures that we can cater to a wider array of customers, thereby increasing our resilience and sustainability as an organisation.

Overall, the evolution of our work reflects our adaptability and dedication to driving positive change while responding to the needs of the communities we serve.

5. Have you launched any new initiatives, projects, or collaborations since the award?

Yes, we have launched many new initiatives and projects since receiving the award, some of which are still in the finalisation stages and cannot be disclosed at this time. However, I am excited to share that one of the significant developments has been our involvement as one of the last-mile implementers for the G20 clean cooking outcome.

This initiative not only highlights the vital work that Hakem is doing but also elevates the entire conversation around clean cooking. It underscores the importance of providing access to clean and sustainable cooking solutions for communities facing energy poverty. Being part of this global dialogue reinforces our mission and allows us to drive meaningful change in the sector.

6. In your opinion, what's the most pressing challenge women face in the LPG Industry right now?

In my opinion, one of the most pressing challenges women face in the LPG industry right now is the pervasive lack of funding and support. Despite the growing recognition of the critical role women play in this sector, they often find themselves marginalized and under-resourced. Women are frequently not trusted with major projects and are instead relegated to smaller, lower-risk initiatives, as if their capabilities are in question.

This lack of trust can stem from deeply ingrained biases and stereotypes that suggest women are less capable of handling significant responsibilities. As a result, many talented female professionals and entrepreneurs are left to compete for limited resources and opportunities, often settling for "crumbs" rather than being given the chance to lead transformative projects.

To truly make strides in the LPG industry, it is essential to create an environment that fosters trust, actively invests in women's capabilities, and supports their leadership in high-impact projects. By addressing these barriers, we can unlock the potential of women in the industry and drive meaningful change.

7. Can you share a moment this past year that truly inspired or humbled you?

This past year, I encountered a moment that truly humbled me and reminded me of the unpredictable nature of our industry. It became clear to me that no matter how long one has been in business, each industry has its own unique politics and challenges that can threaten even the most established operations.

I found myself reflecting on the years of experience I have gained in building businesses and fostering numerous partnerships and collaborations. During some of the darkest days we faced, it was these connections and the strength of our relationships that helped us persevere. This reinforced my gratitude for the support and camaraderie built over time, reminding me that resilience is often a collective effort.

This experience was a powerful reminder of the importance of community and collaboration in navigating the complexities of our field, and it inspired me to continue advocating for a more supportive environment for all players in the industry.

8. What habits or mindsets have helped you sustain your success?

1. **Consistency:** Maintaining a consistent approach in my work has been fundamental. Whether it's in daily tasks, long-term goals, or building relationships, consistency breeds trust and reliability.
2. **Resilience:** The ability to bounce back from setbacks has been vital. Challenges are inevitable in any industry, but resilience allows me to learn from failures and keep moving forward with renewed determination.
3. **Willingness to learn:** I've always embraced a mindset of continuous learning. The landscape is constantly evolving, and being open to new ideas, skills, and perspectives has helped me stay adaptable and innovative.
4. **Partnerships:** Building strong partnerships has been instrumental in my journey. Collaborating with others not only expands opportunities but also enhances collective strength and support, allowing us to tackle challenges more effectively.
5. **Exercise Routine:** Maintaining a regular exercise routine helps manage stress and keeps me physically and mentally sharp. It is essential for maintaining balance and well-being amidst the demands of business.
6. **Self-Development:** I prioritise personal growth through reading, attending workshops, and seeking mentorship. Investing in my development empowers me to improve my leadership skills and adapt to shifting landscapes.

9. What does being a WINLPG Woman of the Year mean to you now, one year later?

Reflecting on the past year, being named a WINLPG Woman of the Year has been both an honour and a profound responsibility. It serves as a recognition of the crucial role women play as powerful impact leaders within the LPG industry. Women possess the unique ability to drive change and influence outcomes, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalised communities.

If the LPG sector is truly going to transform lives and uplift those who are underserved, it is imperative that women step into leadership roles and lean into this journey of empowerment and advocacy. Being part of WINLPG has deepened my commitment to championing initiatives that prioritize inclusivity and support for women in this field.

The recognition has also fueled my passion for creating pathways that enable more women to join this critical industry, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. As we move forward, I am inspired to continue leading efforts that highlight the importance of collaboration, mentorship, and support for women, all of which are essential for driving meaningful change in our society.