

The SME

Bulletin **June 2026 Edition**



In This Edition

- Enhancing the role of small businesses as drivers of sustainable growth and innovation
- The mid-year burnout check: Resetting your goals for the second half of the year
- The loneliness of leadership



more than banking

Welcome Note

Hello, Go-Getters!

One moment, many business owners are setting goals, making plans, and entering the year with excitement. Next, they are halfway through the year managing customers, responding to market changes, solving problems daily, scaling and trying to keep everything moving at once.

For entrepreneurs especially, June often becomes more than just another month on the calendar. It becomes a moment to pause and ask important questions: What is working? What needs to change? And how do we move into the rest of the year with more clarity and balance?

In this edition of the SME Bulletin, we explore some of these conversations honestly. From resetting business goals for the second half of the year to navigating the quieter emotional realities of leadership, this edition aims to encourage reflection while also offering you practical insights for growth.

At Access Bank, we understand that behind every growing business is a person carrying responsibilities, making difficult decisions, and constantly adapting to change. That is why we remain committed to supporting SMEs not only with financial solutions, but also with relevant insights and resources that help businesses grow sustainably.

As always, thank you for letting us be part of your journey. We hope this edition gives you something valuable to reflect on, apply, and carry with you into the months ahead.

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Table of

Page 03 - 05	Feature Article
Page 07 - 08	Business Growth Tips
Page 09 - 10	Industry & Market Insights
Page 12 - 13	Events Corner
Page 14 - 16	Lifestyle & Wellness
Page 18	SME Play Zone
Page 19	Closing Note

Contents

ENHANCING THE ROLE OF SMALL BUSINESSES AS DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND INNOVATION



Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are often described as the backbone of many economies, but that phrase sometimes understates just how much they truly do. In reality, they are present in our everyday lives in very practical ways from the food we eat and the services we rely on, to the shops we walk into and the digital services we now use almost without thinking.

As we mark MSME Day 2026, the focus is on enhancing the role of small businesses as drivers of sustainable growth and innovation, particularly through digital transformation, sustainability, and resilience. It is a reminder that the future of economic growth is not reserved for large corporations alone, it is also being shaped every day by small businesses that are adapting, experimenting, and finding better ways to serve their customers.



One of the most visible shifts in recent years has been digital transformation. For many SMEs, this has not been a dramatic overnight change, but a gradual adjustment in how they operate. A small business owner who once relied only on walk-in customers may now take orders through WhatsApp. A fashion brand that once sold within its neighbourhood can now reach customers through Instagram or online marketplaces. Even simple tools like mobile banking, digital payments, and basic inventory apps are helping SMEs operate more efficiently and with greater visibility.

What makes this shift important is not just the technology itself, but what it enables, which is access.

Access to customers, access to markets, and access to opportunities that previously felt out of reach. In many ways, digital tools are leveling the playing field, allowing small businesses to compete in spaces that were once dominated by larger players.

Alongside this digital shift is a growing conversation around sustainability. For SMEs, sustainability is often less about large corporate frameworks and more about practical decisions made daily from reducing waste to sourcing raw materials responsibly, managing resources carefully, and thinking long-term about how the business impacts both people and the environment. A food business that minimizes waste, a retail store that reduces excess packaging, or a service provider that operates efficiently is already contributing to a more sustainable economy, even in small but meaningful ways.

But perhaps the most defining characteristic of SMEs is resilience. Many small business owners do not have the luxury of long planning cycles or large buffers. They respond quickly to changes in the economy, customer demand, and operating conditions. Over time, this ability to adjust has become one of their strongest survival tools. Still, resilience today is not just about "pushing through", it is also about building structure, improving financial discipline, and putting systems in place that make it easier to withstand uncertainty.

What often gets overlooked is that SMEs are also quiet innovators. Innovation does not always look like technology breakthroughs or large-scale inventions. Sometimes it looks like a small business finding a better way to serve customers, simplifying a process, or introducing a product that solves a very specific local need. These small improvements, repeated across thousands of businesses, are what drive real economic movement.

There is also something deeply human about SMEs that makes their role even more important. Behind every small business is usually a story, someone trying to build something meaningful, support a family, or solve a problem they personally experienced. That human element is what keeps many SMEs close to their customers and responsive to real needs.

As we reflect on this year's MSME Day, it becomes clear that supporting small businesses is not just about policy or funding, it is about creating environments where they can continue to learn, adapt, and grow. Whether through better access to digital tools, improved training, or stronger business networks, the goal is to help SMEs not only survive but grow with intention.

When small businesses are empowered, they do more than contribute to the economy; they shape it quietly, consistently, and in ways that touch everyday life.

And that is why, at Access Bank, we are committed to providing you with the tools, financing, and digital solutions you need to grow sustainably, innovate with confidence, and build a resilient business that can thrive in an increasingly dynamic economy.

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SMEs**

small businesses, big impact

Today, we celebrate the entrepreneurs building, growing, and shaping the future. Keep going, we are with you every step of the way.

Happy World MSME Day.



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THE MID-YEAR BURNOUT CHECK: RESETTING YOUR GOALS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR

By June, many business owners find themselves asking the same question: *Where did the year go?*

The first half of the year often moves quickly, filled with deadlines, customer demands, financial responsibilities, and the constant pressure to keep operations running smoothly. Somewhere between chasing targets and solving daily business challenges, many entrepreneurs begin to feel mentally exhausted, discouraged, or disconnected from the goals they originally set at the beginning of the year.

For some businesses, growth may not have happened as expected. Certain plans may have stalled, priorities may have changed, and the reality of running a business may have introduced challenges that were impossible to predict in January.

However, the middle of the year should not be viewed as a reminder of what has not been achieved. Instead, it can serve as an important opportunity to reassess, refocus, and set clearer goals for the months ahead. Rather than pushing forward without direction, you can use this period to make more intentional decisions for sustainable growth in your business.

Build a Business on Strong Standards

Mid-year is the perfect time for you to evaluate the goals set at the beginning of the year. Which goals are still relevant? Which ones no longer align with current business realities? What strategies have produced measurable results so far?

Honest reflection allows you to identify what is working and what may need adjustment. In some cases, burnout comes not only from hard work, but from pursuing goals that are no longer practical or aligned with business priorities.

Reassessing your goals does not mean giving up. Instead, it helps you move into the second half of the year with greater clarity and focus.

Focus on Sustainable Growth Instead of Constant Pressure

Many business owners operate under pressure to achieve rapid success within a short period of time. However, constantly chasing unrealistic expectations can lead to frustration, exhaustion, and poor decision-making.

The second half of the year gives you an opportunity to focus on more sustainable and achievable growth strategies. This may include improving customer relationships, strengthening business systems, managing finances more effectively, or focusing on fewer priorities with greater consistency.

Business growth is not always measured by how much is being done at once, but by how effectively progress is being maintained over time.

Create Better Structure Around Your Work

One major reason many business owners experience burnout is the lack of clear structure between work responsibilities and personal well-being. Constant availability, endless notifications, and trying to handle every task alone can quickly become overwhelming.

As your business scales, become more intentional about managing your time and energy. Creating better work boundaries, delegating responsibilities where possible, and reducing unnecessary distractions can improve both productivity and mental clarity.

Sometimes, working more strategically is more effective than simply working longer hours.

Prioritise Yourself Alongside Your Business

Many entrepreneurs spend so much time taking care of their businesses that they neglect their own well-being in the process. Yet a business can only function effectively when the person leading it is mentally, emotionally, and physically capable of making sound decisions.

Rest, reflection, and recovery are not signs of laziness. They are necessary parts of long-term productivity and resilience. When you prioritise your well-being, you are often better equipped to lead with clarity, creativity, and consistency.

More than just a progress check for businesses, the middle of the year provides an opportunity for renewal. Regardless of how the first half of the year has gone, you still have time to reset your priorities, adjust your goals, and move forward with greater focus and balance.

Sometimes, the best way to prepare for growth in the months ahead is not by doing more, but by becoming more intentional about what truly matters.



Highlights of the Nigerian Economy

- Real GDP expanded to 3.89% in Q1 2026 from 3.13% in Q1 2025, primarily driven by sustained growth in the services sector (57.73% from 57.50% in Q1 2025).¹
- Headline inflation edged up to 15.69% in April from 15.38% in March, marking a second consecutive monthly increase. This is the highest rate since November 2025 (17.33%), driven by rising food costs during the planting season and the impact of the March fuel price hike to NGN1,330/litre.¹
- Foreign reserves rose to USD49.49bn in May 2026, reflecting a cumulative increase of USD1.04bn from April. This increase underscores improved investor confidence, providing import cover of 9.04 months for goods and services.²
- Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 52.4 points in April 2026 from 51.9 points in March 2026, remaining above the 50-point expansion threshold and signalling a continued improvement in private sector conditions.³
- Oil production increased to 1.48 million barrels per day (mbpd) in April 2026 from 1.38mbpd in March 2026. This was driven by increased output from key export terminals, including Bonny, Forcados, Bonga, and Anyala-Madu.⁴
- The Naira remained relatively stable in May, averaging NGN1,373.34/USD in the official market and NGN1,390.00/USD in the parallel market, narrowing the rate gap to NGN16.66/USD from NGN51.86/USD in April.²
- Local fuel prices have increased in May to NGN1,360/litre, from NGN1,250/litre in April, as rising global oil prices and refinery price adjustments continue to drive domestic cost pressures.⁵

Industry Highlights



Consumer (Agriculture, Hospitality, FMCG, etc.)

- [OmniRetail launches new platform to digitise FMCG distribution and financing](#)
- [HEDA enlightens farmers across 17 states on seasonal climate forecast](#)



Energy, Resources & Industrials

- [Two Nigerian states key into mini-grid projects to electrify 33,262 homes](#)
- [LPG price to hit NGN1,500/kg as depot stocks fall](#)



Life Sciences & Health Care

- [Lagos unveils 10-year primary healthcare financing plan](#)
- [MedReach unveils telehealth, care coordinated platform in Nigeria](#)



Technology, Media & Telecommunications

- [NACAN, tackles broadband affordability and policy reforms for Nigerian SMEs](#)
- [NITDA, Galaxy Backbone partner to subsidise cloud costs for startups](#)



Government & Public Services

- [Lagos releases NGN5bn LASMECO loans for small businesses](#)
- [FG, World Bank launch USD65mn SPESSE funding to benefit 24,000 Nigerians](#)



Financial Services

- [AfDB approves USD200mn facility for BOI to support Nigerian SMEs](#)
- [IFC, Access Bank sign USD500m local-currency framework to boost African MSMEs](#)

Global and Regional Happenings

- ❖ **Eurozone:** Euro area growth is slowing while inflation is re-accelerating (~3%), with energy shock pressures pushing the ECB toward potential rate hikes despite weakening demand.⁶
- ❖ **Kenya:** Kenya's annual inflation rose to 5.6% in April 2026, driven mainly by food (8.8%), transport (10.0%), and housing/utilities (2.4%).⁷
- ❖ **United States:** Fed officials have signalled a shift toward tighter policy, with a growing majority open to rate hikes if inflation stays elevated. This will be driven by energy-price pressures linked to the Iran conflict.⁸
- ❖ **China:** China is positioning itself as a key driver of Asia-Pacific growth, as trade officials push for deeper regional cooperation and expansion of digital trade and supply-chain resilience.⁹
- ❖ **Global oil market:** Brent crude has fallen to USD103.75/bbl, from mid-May highs of USD111. This reflects periodic easing of the Hormuz risk premium and renewed hopes for a US-Iran deal, despite ongoing supply disruptions.¹⁰



Macroeconomic Indicators

<p>3.89%</p> <p>GDP growth rate (Q1 2026)¹</p>	<p>15.69%</p> <p>Inflation rate (April 2026)¹</p>	<p>26.50%</p> <p>MPR (May 2026)²</p>	<p>NGN1,369 /USD</p> <p>Avg. Exchange rate (May 2026)²</p>	<p>16.15%</p> <p>364-day T-Bill stop rate (May 2026)¹¹</p>
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● Positive change
 ● No change
 ● Negative change

Outlook

Nigeria¹²

- ❖ Inflationary pressures are expected to remain elevated in May, driven by the continued pass-through effect of higher energy and transportation costs.
- ❖ Food inflation is projected to remain elevated, driven by supply shortages from the planting season and elevated fuel costs, which are increasing interstate transport costs.
- ❖ Naira stability is expected to persist, supported by higher foreign exchange inflows from elevated crude oil prices.

- ❖ **Ghana:** Food inflation may rise in the coming months due to seasonality, as supply of staple crops such as maize, rice, and cassava is reduced, putting upward pressure on the food index.¹²
- ❖ **US:** Elevated energy prices are likely to keep inflation rates upward in May, following April's increase to 3.8% YoY.¹³
- ❖ **China:** Mid year GDP growth is expected to moderate to 4.4% in 2026, as weak domestic demand and property-sector strains offset policy support.¹⁴
- ❖ **Eurozone:** Inflation expectations for the remainder of the year have been revised up to 2.7%, mainly due to higher energy prices, though pressures are expected to ease toward the ECB's 2% target thereafter.¹⁵

Upcoming Events

Nigeria

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Afretrade Entrepreneurship Festival 2026, Lagos: June 17 - 19</p> | <p>6th Canada–Africa Business Conference, Lagos: June 24 - 25</p> | <p>Africa Technology Expo 2026, Lagos: June 26 - 27</p> | <p>The Growth Room Conference 2026, Lagos: June 27</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

Africa

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>eLearning Africa 2026, Accra, Ghana: June 3 - 5</p> | <p>SME Funding Summit 2026, South Africa: June 18</p> | <p>African Youth SDs Summit 2026, Ghana: June 23 - 25</p> | <p>Fintech Summit Africa 2026, South Africa: June 24 - 25</p> |
|--|---|---|---|

Global

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Commerce Capital Summit 2026, New York, USA: June 4</p> | <p>Global Entrepreneurship & Business Management Summit, Dubai: June 8 - 9</p> | <p>2026 Global SME Forum, United Kingdom: June 15 - 16</p> | <p>Global Business Convergence Summit, India: June 30</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)¹, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)², Stanbic IBTC Bank Nigeria³, Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)⁴, Business Day⁵, Bloomberg⁶, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics⁷, Reuters⁸, USnews⁹, IEA¹⁰, First Securities Discount House (FSDH)¹¹, Deloitte Analysis¹², CNBC¹³, IMF¹⁴, and ECB¹⁵

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EVENTS CORNER



On Thursday, 30th April, 2026, the Bank participated in the Nigeria National SME Business Awards 2026, organised by the Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) in partnership with the Lagos State Ministry of Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment. The event, themed “Celebrating Excellence, Inspiring Growth and Unlocking Opportunities for SMEs,” brought together key stakeholders within the MSME ecosystem to recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions to SME development in Nigeria.

A key highlight of the event was the Bank’s recognition as the **Best Bank for Women-Led Enterprise Support Award – 2025**, reaffirming its commitment to empowering women entrepreneurs through tailored financial solutions and impactful support initiatives.

This recognition reflects the Bank’s continued dedication to driving financial inclusion and supporting the growth and sustainability of SMEs across Nigeria.



THE LONELINESS OF LEADERSHIP

From the outside, leadership probably looks very attractive. People see the meetings, the growth, the confidence, the way you keep showing up and holding things together. To many people around you, it may even seem like you're thriving.

But what they often do not see is the pressure that follows you after the meetings end. They do not see the mental exhaustion that comes from constantly making decisions. They do not see the moments where you are trying to stay calm for everyone else while quietly carrying your own fears, uncertainties, and frustrations. And the truth is, leadership can become lonely very quickly.

As a business owner or entrepreneur, you spend so much time supporting people, solving problems, and making sure things do not fall apart that you can slowly forget to check on yourself too. That is why conversations like this matter - because while ambition can build a business, silent exhaustion can slowly wear a leader down if it is ignored for too long.

You Do Not Have to Carry Every Decision Alone

One of the pressures that comes with leadership is feeling like every decision rests on your shoulders. And yes, leadership requires responsibility. But it does not mean you must mentally carry every burden by yourself.

If you are constantly making decisions in isolation, eventually the exhaustion catches up with you. Not because you are weak, but because no one was designed to carry pressure endlessly without support. Sometimes, the healthiest thing you can do as a leader is build systems that allow you to breathe. Delegate more intentionally.

Ask trusted people for perspective. Create room for honest conversations instead of trying to have all the answers alone. Strong leadership is not about suffering silently. It is about learning how to lead sustainably.



You Are Allowed to Be Human Too

Many leaders quietly feel pressured to appear strong all the time. Employees look to them for reassurance, clients expect confidence, and partners expect stability, so even when they feel overwhelmed, they still try to hold everything together.

Over time, that pressure becomes exhausting. But leadership does not require suppressing your emotions to prove strength. You are still human outside the business title, and you still need rest, honesty, and support.

Healing can also look like taking a real break, having honest conversations, praying, journaling, seeking therapy, or simply admitting, "This has been a lot." Ignoring pressure does not make it disappear. It only delays the moment your mind and body force you to slow down.

Growth Means Nothing If You Are Constantly Burnt Out

One thing many entrepreneurs discover too late is that business growth does not always reduce pressure. Sometimes, it increases it. More success can mean more demands, expectations, and people depending on you — and in the process, you may start losing yourself.

That is why sustainable leadership matters. Not every opportunity needs a yes, and not every responsibility should rest on your shoulders. Sometimes growth is not about working harder, but about building healthier systems around your life and business through boundaries, delegation, rest, and structure - because when the leader runs on empty, the business eventually feels it too.

You Need Spaces Where You Can Put the Weight Down

One of the loneliest parts of leadership is feeling like you always have to be "on." Always answering questions. Always solving problems. Always being the strong one. But even strong people need safe spaces.

You need people you can speak honestly with without feeling judged. You need relationships where you are valued beyond your productivity or position. You need moments where you can step away from the pressure and simply exist as a person, not just a leader.

Whether that support comes from mentors, friendships, family, faith communities, leadership groups, or trusted conversations, it matters more than many people realize. Isolation can quietly drain even the most capable leaders. And sometimes, strength looks like admitting you need support too.

Leadership will always come with responsibility. There will always be pressure, difficult decisions, and moments where carrying the weight feels overwhelming. But you do not have to carry it all alone. The business matters. The vision matters. The goals matter. But you matter too and sometimes, one of the most powerful things you can do as a leader is pause long enough to ask yourself not just, "How is the business doing?" but also, "How am I really doing?"

Sustainable leadership is not built only on ambition and resilience. It is also built on support, honesty, balance, and learning how to care for the person behind the title.



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THIS OR THAT

(Entrepreneur Edition)

Running a business comes with tough decisions every day but let's keep things light for a moment. Which of these would you choose?

This	That
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Morning Productivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Late-Night Creativity
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Storefront	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Online Business
<input type="checkbox"/> One Loyal Customer	<input type="checkbox"/> Constantly Reaching New Customers
<input type="checkbox"/> Delegating Tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Doing Everything Yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Networking Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media Marketing
<input type="checkbox"/> Bigger Profits	<input type="checkbox"/> More Free Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Voice Notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Long Emails
<input type="checkbox"/> Working From Home	<input type="checkbox"/> Working From an Office
<input type="checkbox"/> A Small Reliable Team	<input type="checkbox"/> A Large Expanding Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Slow and Steady Growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Rapid Expansion

No matter your answers, every entrepreneur approaches growth differently — and sometimes, the best business decisions are the ones that align with your goals, strengths, and lifestyle.

Bye Go-Getters!

As we wrap up this month's edition, one thing remains clear building a business is more than reaching targets or chasing growth. It is about showing up consistently, adapting through challenges, learning along the way, and continuing even on the days when things feel uncertain.

The middle of the year often reminds entrepreneurs to pause and reflect, not just on business performance, but also on personal growth, resilience, and the journey so far. Progress may not always look exactly as planned, but every lesson, adjustment, and small win still counts.

At Access Bank, we remain committed to supporting SMEs as they navigate the evolving realities of business and leadership. Whether you are refining your goals, expanding your business, or simply taking things one step at a time, remember that sustainable growth is built through consistency, clarity, and resilience.

Thank you for spending time with us once again. We hope this edition gave you practical insights, meaningful reflections, and a reminder that even in demanding seasons, growth is still possible. For enquiries or support, feel free to email us via welovesmes@accessbankplc.com

Until next month, keep building, keep learning, and keep showing up for the vision you started with.

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