





A SURVEY ON WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION



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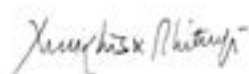
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PREFACE

In the past decade, many studies have produced information about how innovation affects entrepreneurship and small business development. However, very few studies have introduced gender influences on entrepreneurship.

The findings of this report clearly show that female entrepreneurs face the same challenges male entrepreneurs face. However, women entrepreneurs must face additional challenges, including a lack of visibility and access to support networks, and cultural acceptance. For example, due to their difficulty in dealing with the life puzzle originated by the need of taking care of family and business at the same time, women entrepreneurs are less experienced in handling external business contacts for innovation. However, such difficulties have also enabled women to embrace the opportunities provided by information and communications technologies (ICTs) to create marketing channels, collect customer information and improve efficiencies in their business processes. ICTs—when available and affordable—play a major role in allowing women entrepreneurs to stay ahead of competition, leading to small firms' success stories, such as those included in this survey.

Ultimately, this survey aims to start a dialogue with policymakers about how to support increased innovation in women-owned firms in both developing and developed economies. It aims to generate gender-aware policies and concrete improvements in programmes targeting women empowerment.



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Secretary-General of UNCTAD

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