

# Women Entrepreneurs. Women Empowered.





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# Foreword

Women are increasingly contributing to the economic development of their countries, while continuing to provide for their families. A Chinese proverb says that “women hold up half the sky” and, to help them realize their full economic potential, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) provides women in developing and transition countries with knowledge, skills and technologies so they can engage in productive activities. This is part of UNIDO’s effort to achieve inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Through its Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) programme, the UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office (ITPO) in Bahrain empowers women to seize economic opportunities. It provides training and coaching to encourage self-employment and enterprise creation. There is no limit to what women can achieve, and these success stories of women who attended the EDIP are very strong testimonials to what a nurturing environment can help develop.

Expanding the economic opportunities available for women is vital for poverty eradication and requires a strong emphasis on gender-sensitive employment creation and the provision of productive resources, such as land, credit, technology and skills. The EDIP focuses on transferring skills and technologies to assist women to either enter the formal labour market or become self-employed.

The UNIDO ITPO Bahrain has accumulated over 20 years of expertise in women entrepreneurship development, using various tools and mechanisms, such as capacity-building at policy, institutional and enterprise levels; creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs by strengthening business support services; and helping women entrepreneurs gain access to financial resources.

Women represent half of the world’s population, and we must therefore increase our efforts to ensure equal rights and opportunities. If women are provided with credit to invest in business ventures, are able to access markets to sell their products, and are given the knowledge needed to expand their businesses, diversify and undertake value addition, they will be in a position to better contribute to economic growth and development.



**LI Yong**  
**UNIDO Director General**

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# Introduction

Based on the 2010 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) report “The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics”, the rate of women’s contribution and participation in the global economy in 2001 was estimated at 55.2%.

In the East and the Pacific, the rate was 70%, in South Asia 43.6%, and in Latin America and the Caribbean 42%. However, only roughly 29% of Arab women participated in the national economies of their region. Coupled with a

global unemployment rate of women, estimated at 17.1 per cent for women compared to that of men at 10.6 per cent for men, the situation calls for an overall restructuring of programmes for the economic empowerment of women, one to be launched through the support of UNIDO and various stakeholders in order to bridge the gap which the Arab region is facing.

In his commemoration of International Women’s Day in 2014, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said:

“Gender equality and women’s economic empowerment are essential to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to achieve inclusive growth leaving no one behind. It is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do: Gender equality is a matter of basic human rights and women’s economic empowerment can generate huge gains for human development, economic growth and business.”

The economic empowerment of women, to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions, is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the past two decades, there has been progress in closing gender gaps, especially in education and health. Yet there still is much to do to achieve the full and equal participation of women in society and in the economy.

The status of women varies from country to country, and in fact it varies even within these countries themselves. To address these divergent gaps, programmes for economically empowering women have to be addressed at four levels: the public sector, the private sector, the multinational organizations and the non-governmental organizations. The UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office (ITPO) in Bahrain, part of a larger global network of UNIDO ITPOs, works at precisely this nexus.

The Investment and Technology Promotion Offices were established under joint agreements between the host country and UNIDO. Their main aim is to facilitate investment flows and technology transfer in support of inclusive growth and wealth creation in developing countries.

The UNIDO ITPO Network carries out its mandate through partnerships, fora, capacity building, advisory services, and business matchmaking. The first UNIDO ITPO was established in 1980. Currently, eight UNIDO ITPOs operate throughout the world, in Bahrain, Beijing, Shanghai, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria and the Russian Federation, with more on the horizon.

Realizing the mounting pressures from the growing Arab youth population and the need to create 170 million jobs for Arab youth by the year 2020, UNIDO ITPO Bahrain together with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) embarked on a major study about the major challenges limiting the economic empowerment of Arab youth in Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. The study concluded that although the Arab region has various positive attributes towards economic empowerment, a specialized and focused organization is necessary to share best practices and develop an environment conducive to entrepreneurship development.

Accordingly, under the banner of South-South cooperation, the Bahraini and Indian Governments established the Arab Regional Center for Entrepreneurship and Investment Training (ARCEIT) under UNIDO ITPO Bahrain in 2001, which was transformed into the Arab International Center for Entrepreneurship and Investment (AICEI) in 2013. This publication compiles the success stories of the female entrepreneurs who participated in this centre's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) Programme.



# Mission

The mission of UNIDO ITPO Bahrain is to mobilize resources (finance, technology, know-how, managerial) from Bahrain and the Arab region to developing countries and economies in transition. UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's entrepreneurship development work is housed under AICEI which conducts programs and courses such as the Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) Programme. The EDIP is a package approach aimed at developing the capacities of potential entrepreneurs, both male and female, in order to assist them in developing their own private businesses. The programme is multifaceted in the sense that it not only assists in developing start-up entrepreneurs (Enterprise Creation Programme) but also represents an important mechanism for upgrading and expanding existing enterprises (Enterprise Growth Programme).

Moreover, it facilitates and promotes domestic investment which undoubtedly leads to the attraction of foreign direct investments mainly through the linkage with the UNIDO ITPO Network, thus leading to job creation and a more diversified economy. The mission of AICEI has seven features which also complement the larger work of ITPO Bahrain.

- Contribute to the economic empowerment of youth and women regionally and internationally;
- Unleash and stimulate the spirit of entrepreneurship through various awareness-raising and support programmes for women and youth;
- Assist in developing eco-systems for the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through capacity-building programmes, technology transfer, financing and incubation systems;
- Share and disseminate best practices for the development of value-added services to entrepreneurs through local support institutions;
- Institutionalize business counselling and mentoring programmes aimed at facilitating enterprise growth;
- Establish and maintain business incubator systems as they play a key role in the development and growth of MSMEs through a range of services;
- Develop linkages between financial institutions and entrepreneurship programmes.



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