



Empowering Women to Trade

IN BRIEF

The ITC Empowering Women to Trade Programme seeks to increase the participation of women entrepreneurs from developing countries in trade, raising the value of the international business they transact and diversifying the markets they access.

THE PROBLEM AND ITC SOLUTION

Improving the performance of women entrepreneurs participating in trade can translate into more jobs and drive poverty reduction. Countries that provide more economic opportunities for women, including entrepreneurship, are more competitive in the global economy. Furthermore, when women-owned businesses trade, the contribution they make to the economy in terms of wages, jobs and productivity is disproportionately higher than that made by men-owned businesses. Women are more likely to use their earnings and increased bargaining power to buy goods and services that improve family welfare, which has the potential to break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

However, women entrepreneurs face many barriers. ITC surveys show that women entrepreneurs own and manage only one in five exporting firms. The obstacles preventing women from participating in international value chains include cultural and regulatory barriers; limited access to productive resources, information, networks and credit; and skills mismatch.

Building on results achieved since 2010, the Empowering Women to Trade Programme seeks to address this

situation. The programme works to improve the policy and regulatory environment in which women entrepreneurs operate to strengthen the institutional framework of trade-related support to women entrepreneurs; enhance their capacity and competitiveness; and make markets more accessible to them.

The programme works with a broad range of beneficiaries including formally registered women-owned businesses; producers working in export value chains; and women informal cross-border traders.

Seeking to mobilize partners around the world to collaborate towards achieving the economic empowerment of women through trade, ITC launched a global call to action to connect one million women entrepreneurs to markets by 2020 in September 2015. The Call to Action was developed through an extensive consultation process.

The programme contributes directly to achieving United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development 5 on gender equality and 8 on decent work and economic growth.

IMPACT

The programme has generated over US\$ 50 million of export opportunities for almost 300 women entrepreneurs and has built the capacity of an estimated 2,500 women entrepreneurs with technical assistance and advice. Thousands more have been reached as members of associations and networks supported and developed by ITC, for example, the International Women's Coffee Alliance. It has leveraged pro-bono support through partnerships with market leaders in various sectors, including Google, Illy caffè and Parsons the New School of Design. Examples of ITC's interventions include:

- ITC's coffee project, which works in partnership with the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA) to support producers and processors in East and Central Africa. ITC has helped to establish IWCA chapters in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. In the last 12 months, IWCA members
- supported by the project have generated close to US\$ 5 million in sales through ITC support.
- The Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors is a multi-stakeholder platform which aims to increase the amount of corporate, government and institutional procurement secured by women. In 2015, the Platform's flagship event, the annual Women Vendors' Exhibition and Forum, has enabled women entrepreneurs to sign deals with an estimated value of US\$17.7 million.
- In Papua New Guinea, ITC is working with groups of women bilum (string bag) weavers to link them to international markets. ITC has established the Bilum Export Promotion Association, delivered training on product development to weavers and facilitated an initial order from an Australian buyer.