

# **Fact Sheet on Key United States Government Initiatives**

## **to Empower Women in Development**

April 23, 2012

The following are representative of some of the key initiatives that demonstrate the United States government's (USG) commitment to women's economic empowerment and engagement in trade:

1. In 2011, Secretary Clinton chaired the first-ever Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy, convening hundreds of private sector leaders and government officials to discuss the inclusion of women as an economic growth strategy in the region. The 21 APEC economies endorsed the San Francisco Declaration and committed to developing concrete actions and policy recommendations focused on advancing women's economic participation. The four key areas for the region are: 1) access to capital, which includes increasing women's financial inclusion at all levels, 2) access to markets, both domestic and international; 3) skills and capacity building which underpins all four areas; and 4) women's leadership, which includes addressing barriers which prevent women from rising to leadership positions such as institutional mindset and work-life balance. During the upcoming APEC Women and the Economy Summit in St. Petersburg Russia, member economies will share their Individual Action Plans, which lay out current practices, and will develop a strategic plan on how to work together to leverage practices and knowledge to create greater impact.
2. Investing in women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is one of the best ways to simultaneously achieve economic, financial, and social impact worldwide. Research shows that women-owned SMEs are significant accelerators of economic growth. Two signature USG initiatives, the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) and Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas), leverage public-private partnerships to increase women's economic participation and address three key barriers women confront when starting and growing SMEs: access to training and networks, access to markets, and access to finance.
  - AWEP: The rate of women's entrepreneurship is high in Africa – higher than in any other global region (World Bank). To increase opportunities and business growth for women entrepreneurs, in 2010 the United States launched the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP). This program brings businesswomen from Sub-Saharan Africa to the United States for trade and advocacy related training. Each year, women from nearly 40 African countries meet with companies, business incubators, and capacity building organizations to gain trade and business opportunities and training. The AWEP program coincides with the U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum (AGOA Forum) which is hosted in Washington, DC. Upon returning to their countries, many of these women experience significant growth in their businesses, and also pay it forward by sharing what they learned with other women business

owners. By the end of 2012, AWEP women will have launched 17 women's business networks (AWEP chapters) in their countries.

- WEAmericas, launched this month following the Summit of the Americas, illustrates concrete actions that economies can take to invest in women's economic participation. WEAmericas leverages public-private partnerships to expand a) training and mentoring to women entrepreneurs throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with a focus on business growth; b) support for market access initiatives in countries throughout the region; and c) initiatives which facilitate women-owned SMEs' access to credit and other financial services. WEAmericas builds on commitments made during the 2011 APEC Leaders Summit—which countries throughout the Americas supported, including Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and the United States—and ongoing work under Pathways to Prosperity.
3. The Joint Action Plan on Gender which Secretary Clinton announced at the Busan Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness outlines ways to collect more and better sex-disaggregated data to inform policy and development plans, strengthen accountability for gender equality commitments, and include women's empowerment in the post-Busan work streams. During this forum, the USG announced the launch of Evidence and Data for Gender Equality, or EDGE, by the United Nations Statistics Division, UN Women, and other partners.
  4. The U.S. State Department's Global Food Security Office, in coordination with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), promoted women's leadership in agriculture as a key element of the U.S. Food Security Initiative (Feed the Future). The initiative fosters policy changes that increase women's land ownership, strengthens their access to financial services, encourages female farmers to adopt new agricultural technology aimed at increasing productivity and reducing unpaid work, and invests in improved nutrition outcomes. Feed the Future investments are combined with impact evaluation and empirical research, including through utilization of a new Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index.
  5. One of the guiding principles of Aid for Trade, supported by the United States, is that it "should be rendered in a coherent manner taking full account, inter alia, of the gender perspective and of the overall goal of sustainable development. Last July, the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Aid for Trade Third Global Review established that the Aid for Trade Initiative is achieving real results. Donors have scaled up assistance since its launch. The WTO's analysis of information submitted for the Global Review showed that the impact of Aid for Trade ranged from increased export volumes to more employment, notably of women, to faster customs clearance and border transit times and impacts on poverty.

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