

# Empower Women and Girls Economically



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**Objective:** Harness Geneva's multilateral fora and enhance opportunities to economically empower women and girls, including through improved access to trade and entrepreneurship.

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*“Equality for women and girls is not only a basic human right, it is a social and economic imperative. Where women are educated and empowered, economies are more productive and strong.”* – U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon

## Key Facts<sup>1</sup>

- Women own only 1% of the world's wealth and account for 70% of the world's poor.
- From 1980 to 2008, 552 million women joined the labor force, making women 4 out of 10 workers globally, yet their wages represent between 70 and 90% of men's.
- Women and girls represent 55% of the estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labor.
- In 2010, women made up 43% of the agricultural labor force of developing countries, but dominate the sector in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (though their production is 20-30% less due to lack of access to technology).
- Women can reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17% if they have equal access to land, new technologies, and capital.
- Men are employed in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations at about twice the rate of women with the same qualifications.

## Where We Are

While women's economic opportunities are expanding, significant gaps remain in the area of full economic participation. Women business owners struggle to obtain equal access to capital, and thus face obstacles to establish new businesses or expand existing ones. Among the biggest hurdles are discriminatory laws, regulations, and business conditions, as well as women's lack of access to property rights, finance, education, training, technology, markets, mentors, and networks. Women's economic empowerment is critical to fostering open and accountable governance, peace, and security, as well as to growing vibrant market economies, and improving food security. Women, their families, and their countries cannot realize their economic potential until each woman can realize **The Future She Deserves**.

## What We Need...

is Geneva's collective action to economically empower women and girls across sectors and regions, increasing their participation as entrepreneurs and producers in value chains from local markets to international trade.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics collected by UN Women and the World Trade Organization.

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## How We'll Do It

Geneva offers a unique platform to empower women and girls economically. Together, we can identify targeted interventions at Geneva-based international meetings and programs that increase women's market access on fair terms. Collectively, member states, civil society, and sector experts can influence how United Nations agencies and others expand trade and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and girls. First steps should include:

1. Strengthen efforts to economically empower women and girls across Geneva platforms;
2. Enhance access for women business owners in UN procurement processes;
3. Focus negotiators and technical experts on addressing the unique economic demands and constraints faced by women and adolescent girls; and
4. Promote public-private partnerships that will foster women's economic potential.

## Potential Outcomes and Activities

In partnership with International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the U.S. Mission and others are working to address digital inclusion of women and girls through programs such as Girls In ICT Day and Women's Digital Literacy Campaign. With an anticipated 3 million employee shortfall predicted in the next 10 years for IT, technology holds great potential for reducing gender gaps and empowering women and girls in the growing field of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The U.S. Mission will collaborate with the women's entrepreneurship programs at the International Labor Organization to create synergies among governments, trade unions, and employers' organizations in facilitating registration of women-owned businesses, providing financing, and offering other support services. This is an opportunity for a public-private partnership program to create or identify apprenticeships for young women, particularly in industries where women are under-represented.

The U.S. Mission in partnership with "Women@TheTable" will host a salon where participants will explore through interactive catalytic questioning how, from the market lady to the central banker, women are changing the economic equation and uncover additional new ways to empower women and girls economically.

The U.S. Mission's annual Internet Freedom Fellows program will focus its 2015 program on efforts to protect and support women fighting for basic human and economic rights in the internet domain.

**\*\*We want your insights to other opportunities and your help in addressing them!**