

WED in numbers:

- The ILO WED programme is present in 25 countries, covering Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Central Asia and Latin America.
- It has developed 13 tools (and counting), each designed for a distinct purpose and to be implemented at different levels. Tools are available in up to 22 languages including English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and local languages such as Khmer, Kurdish and Sesotho.
- In Eastern Africa, an estimated 59,798 entrepreneurs and service providers have received WED training (80% of these entrepreneurs were women). Membership of Women Entrepreneurs' Associations has increased by 60 per cent in Tanzania - after the promotion of the Month of the Women Entrepreneur -, 35 per cent in Ethiopia, and 7 percent in Uganda.
- In Southern Africa, WED has certified 138 trainers in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa upon completing a rigorous six-month certification process.

Investing in Women's Entrepreneurship is a smart investment!

In Lao PDR, a 2010 assessment of the programme found that after training and support from the WEDGE technical project, monthly profits by women-led businesses increased by 50% (from 180 USD to 270USD), and their sales multiplied by four (from 490USD to 2150USD). Business were also more likely to be engaged in formal bookkeeping (38% versus 22% before), and a higher percentage were providing full-time employment.

Within the household, after the programme, 11% of husbands were said to be undertaking household chores compared to none of them before!

Partnerships

Building solid national and local partnerships is a key aspect of WED's approach. WED's expertise and support is made possible thanks to strong collaboration with, among others, the Ministries of Labour, Women, Youth, Gender and local business development services.

The WED programme counts on the constant support of its main partners; Irish Aid, the Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD), and the UK-Department for International Development (DFID). Without their precious collaboration, WED's projects would not have the scope and the success that they currently know.

Also, the WED programme has created many fruitful partnerships with other international organizations. WED has worked with ILO-CRISIS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to promote women's entrepreneurship in refugee camps in Mozambique, and among returnee refugee women in Angola. The African Development Bank and the ILO are also joining forces with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in a programme in Kenya that promotes, among other things, an increased access by women entrepreneurs to business development and financial services.

Contacts and further information

For more information on ILO's work on women's entrepreneurship development, please visit www.ilo.org/wed or contact the WED Global Programme Coordinator:

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International
Labour
Organization



Women's
Entrepreneurship
Development

Women's Entrepreneurship Development

Promoting women's entrepreneurship development

Small, medium and micro enterprises are the main instruments of job creation. The emergence and growth of women entrepreneurs is a global trend, with many countries working to stimulate women's entrepreneurship development (WED) as a means to bolster economies. Women's full participation in the economy and society contributes directly to economic growth and prosperity of families, communities and countries.

The ILO has built its WED programme on the experiences of technical cooperation projects launched in 2002 with the support of Irish Aid on Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality or 'WEDGE'. These projects were at the heart of the ILO's actions for promoting women's entrepreneurship, building the capacity of governments, employers' organizations, trade unions and local community-based organizations to create an enabling environment for WED and provide services for women-led enterprises at start-up and growth stages.

Key elements of the WED strategy are:

- Creating an enabling environment for WED that generates quality jobs;
- Building and strengthening the capacity of constituents and relevant organizations to promote and support WED;
- Developing tools and support services for women entrepreneurs;
- Undertaking gender-specific actions and gender mainstreaming for all micro, small and medium enterprise policies, programmes and tools;
- Documenting, researching and promoting WED.

The ILO's work in Women's Entrepreneurship Development is directly linked with the first and third Millennium Development Goals – reducing poverty and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Moreover, the WED programme contributes to achieving ILO's objectives and mandate by promoting and contributing to sustainable enterprise development, the Global Jobs Pact, the Global Employment Agenda and the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.



ILO works through key actions:

- Developing the knowledge base on women entrepreneurs;
- Promoting representation, advocacy and voice for women entrepreneurs;
- Developing innovative support services for women entrepreneurs and their service providers;
- Privileging partnerships and sustainability in order to maximize the impact.

Developing innovative support services for women entrepreneurs

An important part of the work done within the framework of WEDGE technical cooperation projects consisted of the elaboration of a series of tools based on the research and field experience from pilot projects organized with local partners and country offices. These tools are innovative guides for those working in WED (women entrepreneurs, associations, policy-makers, business and financial service providers, governments) to favour strategies that work for women.

Developing the knowledge base on women entrepreneurs

In each country covered directly by the WED programme, the ILO has undertaken research on women entrepreneurs' access to resources, needs and opportunities, including specific challenges that may be faced by women entrepreneurs with disabilities. The ILO has also striven to ensure that any national research and data collection being carried out on entrepreneurship incorporates gender issues and disaggregates data by sex, so that the specific issues being faced by women entrepreneurs are highlighted.

Developing an entrepreneurial culture inclusive of women entrepreneurs

To enable women entrepreneurs to achieve their full socio-economic potential, it is important to foster norms and attitudes that contribute positively to an entrepreneurial culture in support of WED. The WED programme seeks to promote, celebrate and disseminate widely the successes, achievements and socio-economic contributions of women entrepreneurs and to increase the voice and representation of women in decision-making places. "The Month of the Women Entrepreneur" is one effective method to promote WED (see tools), which is comprised of a series of special events that recognise, reward and promote Women Entrepreneurs locally and nationally.



Why a global strategy ?

The experience, the knowledge and the partnerships developed throughout the WEDGE projects enabled the ILO to build a significant expertise in the field of women's entrepreneurship.

Based on this expertise, the demand for ILO support in WED among constituents has steadily increased over the years and other UN and international development agencies have sought to partner with the ILO in this area.

There was therefore a clear need to scale up and develop a viable strategy for replicating and building upon achievements to date.

The strategy that emerged seeks to reduce the vulnerability of women's enterprises and have a particular focus on women entrepreneurs whose businesses have growth potential.

ILO strategy on promoting women's entrepreneurship development

Adopted in 2008, this strategy follows upon a multitude of initiatives for women's entrepreneurship at the ILO and was driven by a broader call by constituents for more structured action and coordination for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship development.

The global objectives of this strategy concern the creation of decent and productive work, gender equality, women's economic empowerment, combating discrimination in the labour market as well as poverty reduction.