



Florida High Schools Model United Nations

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UNITED NATIONS ENTITY ON GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

ENGENDERING EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIALISM

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“Don’t just stand for the success of other women – insist on it.”

Gail Blanke, President & CEO of Lifedesigns

Introduction

The UN System’s emphasis on achieving gender equality by 2030 necessitates that significant attention and resources are devoted to improving the status of women along all relevant dimensions of sustainable human development. Financially, the emphasis on eliminating gender imbalances and inequities in pay and employment is truly foundational; it is also vitally important that the UN System, its Member States, and all relevant civil society stakeholders also address the glaring inequalities in management and ownership of businesses and financial assets. Increasing the numbers of female entrepreneurs is essential; just as important is improving the overall business and economic climates and/or ecosystems to improve the likelihood of the successes of the creative ventures established and led by women.

Scale of the Problem

The stark realities that confront not only female entrepreneurs but in reality the entire human community were succinctly summarized by John Hendra, UNWOMEN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the High-Level Panel on Women Entrepreneurship to Reshape the Economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through Innovation in October 2012 when he asserted that “globally women own only 1 per cent of the world’s wealth, earn only a 10 percent share of global income, and occupy just 14 per cent of leadership positions in the private and public sector. And, while women produce half of the world’s food, they own a mere one percent of its land.”¹ While it is immediately evident that current and prospective female entrepreneurs confront a vast panoply of challenges and

¹ John Hendra, “Opening Remarks at the High-Level Panel on Women Entrepreneurship to Reshape the Economy in MENA through Innovation” October 17, 2012. Found at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/10/women-entrepreneurship-to-reshape-the-economy-in-mena-through-innovation-high-level-panel-during-eu>

obstacles, the full extent of many of these challenges and obstacles is not always easily measured. Frequently economic data is incomplete, nonexistent, or must be significantly supplemented by whatever information is available about the informal economy, particularly relevant data about female employment and entrepreneurship. As an example of the lack of readily available relevant data, the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute's (GEDI) 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index ranks 77 countries, more than double the number of countries from 2014, just over 40% of UN membership. Improving data collection and analysis about female entrepreneurship is a critical first step towards increasing the number of female entrepreneurs overall as well as improving the overall business and investment climate for women.

Regional disparities must also be examined critically. In the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute's (GEDI) 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index, the US and Australia are ranked first and second, respectively, and then followed by 12 European countries before Chile and Singapore at numbers 15 and 16, respectively; on the opposite end of the spectrum, 7 of the 11 lowest rank countries are in Africa, along with India (#70), Guatemala (#71), Iran (#73), and Pakistan (#77).²

Current and prospective female entrepreneurs confront a litany of challenges, including reduced access to capital, lack of essential economic and entrepreneurial education, and prejudicial attitudes and business and governmental practices. Women and girls also shoulder more of the responsibilities for, mostly, uncompensated domestic work and child-raising; these domestic and family responsibilities also mean that women “tend to start ventures at a later age (35-40) than men, and must manage work-family conflicts.”³ Delegates to UNWOMEN need to consider the most effective manners through which the UN System, its Member States, and interested civil society partners may most effectively mitigate and/or eliminate the impacts of these challenges for female entrepreneurs. While UNWOMEN cannot mandate the domestic legislation of Member States, it is certainly within the purview of the committee to remind the Member States of their own stated previously stated commitments to improving the status of women and girls and to fostering equitable economic and human development.

Obstacles to Female Employment and Entrepreneurship: Attitudes & Financial and Legal Barriers

The motivations for female entrepreneurs and the opportunities afforded them frequently differ substantially from men. “Worldwide, women are much more likely to be driven by necessity than men when starting a business.”⁴ Furthermore, “women-owned businesses tend to be informal, home-based and concentrated in the areas of small-scale entrepreneurship and

² Siri Terjesen & Ainsley Lloyd, “The 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index”, Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute (GEDI) 2015 p. 11.

³ Siri Terjesen & Ainsley Lloyd, “The 2015 Female Entrepreneurship Index”, Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute (GEDI) 2015 p. 5.

⁴ Saskia Vossenbergh, “Women Entrepreneurship Promotion in Developing Countries: What explains the gender gap in entrepreneurship and how to close it?” Maastricht School of Management Working Paper No. 2013/08 March 2013 p. 3.

traditional sectors, which primarily includes retail and services.”⁵ Female entrepreneurs all too often encounter attitudinal, financial, and legal obstacles in the founding, establishment, and operations of their business enterprises.

Female employees and entrepreneurs routinely encounter considerable familial, legal and societal attitudinal resistance to their aspirations and initiatives. The World Bank Group notes that “only 38 of 141 economies covered in the *Women, Business and the Law* database set out equal legal rights for women and men in key areas such as opening a bank account, getting a job without permission from their spouse, and owning and managing property.”⁶ Educational institutions are also at times culprits. Women and girls frequently have lower overall literacy rates and school completion rates; they are also frequently discouraged from studying accounting, business, economics, and math classes that will be of considerable benefit to their business endeavors. In families and societies where women are not encouraged to seek employment outside of the home, much less to start or manage business enterprises, social pressures frequently delay, if not prevent, prospective female entrepreneurs from pursuing their goals. Another frequently cited obstacle is that there are often very few well-known female entrepreneurs for women and girls to emulate. Female employees and entrepreneurs are also far more likely to experience harassment, further contributing to overall more challenging employment and entrepreneurial environments⁷. In countries that do not permit mixed-gender offices and workplaces, female entrepreneurs encounter additional difficulties in hiring the staff that they want or collaborating directly with male colleagues.

Financial barriers are critical for any entrepreneur but they are often greater for female entrepreneurs. Women are less likely than men to have bank accounts, receive less frequent and lower overall bank and investment financing, and are more likely to be employed and/or operating businesses in the informal sectors of the economy. In a 2013 Brookings Blum Roundtable policy brief, Carmen Niethammer noted that, according to Group of 20 (G20) data, “it is estimated that women-owned businesses have an annual financing gap of \$290 billion to \$360 billion in unmet financing needs....”⁸ Closing this financing gap is an area where government and private sector civil society actors may find promising congruence of interests and policy priorities. Governments and financial institutions need to also consider how requirements for male co-signers for loans and inheritance laws that discriminate against women not only increase the hurdles that female entrepreneurs face but also how these forms of discrimination restrict overall sustainable economic and human development for all people.

Overcoming the Obstacles to Female Employment and Entrepreneurship

Addressing the obstacles to female employment and entrepreneurship will require sustained and systematic approaches from the UN System, regional organizations and international financial institutions (IFIs), national governments, and related civil society partners

⁵ World Bank Group, “Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies” 2012 p. 5.

⁶ World Bank Group, “Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies” 2012 p. 8.

⁷ Olga Khazan, “The Sexism of Startup Land” *The Atlantic* March 12, 2015.

⁸ Carol Niethammer, “Women, Entrepreneurship and the Opportunity to Promote Development and Business” 2013 Brookings Blum Roundtable Policy Briefs p. 33.

and stakeholders. At the recent (December 4-5, 2017) 2017 Women's Economic Empowerment Global Summit in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, UNWOMEN and its civil society and private sector partners analyzed data indicating that equal female to male participation in global labor markets could increase the global Gross Domestic Product by an estimated \$28 trillion USD within 10 years.⁹ An oft cited remedy for redressing the obstacles to female entrepreneurship is the extension of microcredits and microloans, frequently called microfinance. While certainly an important and useful tool, microfinance is more palliative than remedy. "The small size and terms of micro-loans makes this source of financing more useful for providing working capital and addressing liquidity constraints, but unsuitable to support longer-term investments."¹⁰ Even where microcredits and microloans are available, in many countries, women must have male co-signers before the loans will be approved and/or disbursed.

Improving access to capital and financing is essential to improving the fiscal outlook and viability of female-owned enterprises (FOEs). Governments, the UN System, regional bodies and international financial institutions (IFIs), and private sector businesses and investors are all avenues for potential startup capital and assistance to businesses. The World Bank Group has funded programs to increase access to capital for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Egypt, the Gambia, Papua New Guinea, and Togo; in Egypt, 30% of all loans must be provided to women-led businesses and in Papua New Guinea women-owned and/or women-led businesses received increased access to capital as well as training in money management skills, business planning, and marketing strategies.¹¹

Governments need to examine their laws and policies to determine if there are discriminatory regulations enshrined in law, but they also need to analyze patterns of behavior that may also constitute, even unwitting, discrimination. Even when gender discrimination is officially illegal, entrenched patterns of chauvinism and favoritism, including disproportionately directing public funds to male-owned businesses, present daunting obstacles to emerging, established, and prospective female entrepreneurs. Ensuring that governments engage in equitable contracting and purchasing of goods and services is a vital step towards improving the numbers and viability of female-owned enterprises (FOEs).

Improving educational access for women and girls is another promising area where government actions and policies may reduce and/or eliminate a number of obstacles confronting female entrepreneurs. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropic foundations, and businesses may also contribute through the design and implementation of entrepreneurship education and training. In Jordan, Making Cents International, Chemonics, and local Jordanian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have established the Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Access to Training Program while the American investment bank Goldman Sachs launched its 10,000 Women Project to train female entrepreneurs in 2008; in Rwanda, the

⁹ UNWOMEN, "UN Women Executive Director calls on private sector to boost women's empowerment and entrepreneurship at the Economic Empowerment Summit in Sharjah" December 3, 2017. Found at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/12/announcer-ed-phumzile-at-the-economic-empowerment-summit-in-sharjah>

¹⁰ World Bank Group, "Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies" 2012 p. 26.

¹¹ World Bank Group, "Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies" 2012 p. 27-29.

10,000 Women Project was implemented by the Rwandan government and overseen by faculty from the University of Michigan.¹²

Creating and implementing family-friendly policies, including paid parental and/or family leave, are vital steps that governments, employers, and civil society partners often find to be essential to improving economic competitiveness and performance overall. All but 1 of the 41 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have paid parental leave programs for new mothers, and in some cases for new fathers, and these countries have benefited from significantly greater female participation in the labor force and in the entrepreneurial ranks, too. In the sole OECD country without paid maternity leave, the United States, states such as California and private sector employers have introduced paid maternity leave and substantially reduced attrition in their states and firms.¹³ In the developing world, almost all countries feature some paid maternity leave benefits; the only current outlier is Papua New Guinea.¹⁴

Overcoming infrastructural gaps, including in the provision of information and communications technology (ICT), is another foundational element of improving the economic environment for female entrepreneurs. Simultaneously the most famous examples of information and communications technology (ICT) and microfinance for female entrepreneurship would be the “telephone ladies” in Bangladesh, a program that provides startup capital to women in rural areas and villages to purchase cell phones and rent them for short periods of time to other villagers to make phone calls and possibly access the internet. In recent years, similar programs have been established in Indonesia, Rwanda, and Uganda.¹⁵ Other programs at improving information and communications technology (ICT) for female entrepreneurs and female-owned enterprises (FOEs) have focused on providing computers and training for incorporating digital technologies into their businesses as well as various applications and services that provide updated market information, particularly in the agricultural sector.

UN System Actions

The UN System features a number of agencies and related entities that strive to improve the situation for female entrepreneurs. UNWOMEN, the United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Commission on the Status of Women all specifically address female entrepreneurship in a direct fashion. The work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and many other UN bodies further expands on these and various national and local initiatives to scale up the efforts and successes of female entrepreneurs around the world. The most high-profile UN System events dealing with the rights and status of women were the 4 world conferences on women held between 1975 and 1995, with the 1995 conference in Beijing, culminating in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for*

¹² World Bank Group, “Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies” 2012 pp. 16-18.

¹³ Alexis Crow, “How to Get Women Back into the Workplace” *Foreign Affairs* May 5, 2017.

¹⁴ Janet Walsh, “Paid Family Leave Matters – For All Workers”.

¹⁵ World Bank Group, “Female Entrepreneurship: Program Guidelines and Case Studies” 2012, p. 37.

*Action*¹⁶, generating the greatest attention. The UN System now hosts 5-year reviews of the progress made on the rights and status of women; delegates may wish to examine the proceedings of the 2015 Beijing +20 review conference¹⁷. The UN System also periodically convenes high-level panels on female and/or women entrepreneurship such as the October 2012 High-Level Panel on Women Entrepreneurship to Reshape the Economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) through Innovation.

Conclusion

Increasing the numbers of female employees and entrepreneurs is an important part of improving the overall economic climate but it is equally important that female employees and entrepreneurs enjoy equal access to financing, relevant information and communications technology (ICT), and a legal and educational infrastructure that supports their endeavors. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be possible without improving the overall status of women and increasing the opportunities for female employees and entrepreneurs to create and expand their businesses is a vital initiative for the UN System, its Member States, and civil society representatives all around the world.

Guiding Questions:

What are the respective percentages for male and female employment in your country? How equitable are wages and salaries in your country? Does your country have laws and/or policies banning gender discrimination in employment and/or compensation? If so, how effectively are those laws and policies enforced? If not, does your government plan to introduce new legislation or policies about gender discrimination in employment, compensation, and benefits soon?

What are your country's policies regarding parental/family leave after childbirth? Is your country considering any potential changes to these parental/family leave policies, and if so, what kinds of changes are being considered and why?

What are the respective percentages of female and male entrepreneurs in your country? Have the percentages changed in recent years? If so, have the percentages become more equitable or has a more pronounced gender gap developed?

What are the most significant and/or persistent obstacles confronted by female employees and entrepreneurs in your country? Has your government undertaken any recent legislative and/or policy initiatives to redress these problems? If so, what have been the results thus far?

¹⁶ *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* 1995. Found at: http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?v=1&d=20150303T234153

¹⁷ UNWOMEN, "Beijing +20", 2015. Found at: http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/intergovsupport/unw_beijing_brief_v3%20pdf.pdf?v=2&d=20150226T212442

How does your government promote the successes of female entrepreneurs within your country?
What are the most effective ways for the private sector and related civil society representatives to promote the successes of female entrepreneurs in your country?

How may the UN System, including specific agencies and bodies such as UNWOMEN, UNIDO, and the ILO, most effectively improve the global and national environments for female entrepreneurs? How might international financial institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank Group and regional development banks, most effectively address the concerns and needs of female employees and entrepreneurs?

United Nations System Resolutions:

UN General Assembly, “Women in Development” A/RES/70/219 December 22, 2015.

UN General Assembly “Improvement of the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas” A/RES/70/132 December 17, 2015.

UN General Assembly, “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women” A/RES/70/131 December 17, 2015.

UN General Assembly, “Violence Against Women Migrant Workers” A/RES/70/130 December 7, 2015.

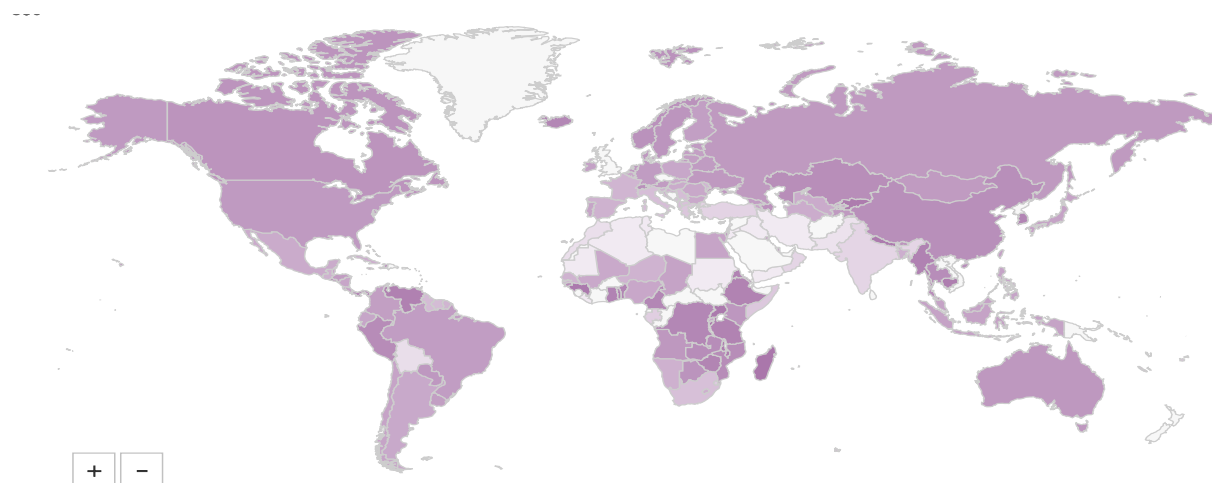
UN General Assembly, “World Survey on the Role of Women in Development” A/RES/69/236 December 19, 2014.

UN General Assembly, “Entrepreneurship for Development” A/RES/69/210 December 19, 2014.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), “Women’s Economic Empowerment” E/CN.6.2010/L.5/ECOSOC/CSW March 12, 2010.

Percentage of Women in Employment (Ages 15 & older)

Source: International Labour Organization 2015



Darker colors on the map indicate higher percentages of female labor force participation.

Women Entrepreneurship Cities

Source: Dell 2017



Paid Maternity Leave by Country

Source: World Policy Forum

