



Concept Note

Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship: Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Vietnam National Launch and Technical Consultation on creating an enabling policy, financial and ICT ecosystem to advance women's entrepreneurship.

17 February 2020

Pan Pacific Hanoi Hotel, 1 Thanh Nien, Hanoi, Vietnam

1. Introduction

In Asia and the Pacific, entrepreneurship is one of the main pathways for women's economic empowerment and strive towards equality, which may - in turn - create 'multiplier effects' on family well-being, poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth. Thus, creating an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem where women can freely participate to reach their full potential, can yield expansive socio-economic gains stretching from households to communities and economies.

Women's entrepreneurship has been on the rise over the past twenty years in the Asia-Pacific region. While there are multiple, often inter-connected complex barriers to starting and conducting business across many countries in the region, these barriers tend to be significantly higher for women than men. Some of the main challenges facing women across the region include: (a) legislative frameworks that discriminate, or do not incorporate the specific circumstances, needs and interests of women; (b) limited access to finance, information and communication technologies (ICTs); (c) lack of opportunity for capacity development; (d) discriminatory socio-cultural norms and beliefs. Overcoming these challenges is essential to unlocking the potential of many women to manifest their full economic aspirations and capacities for building better livelihoods, prosperous communities and thriving societies.

ESCAP actively supports its member States in efforts to enhance women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship as a strategy for poverty reduction, social wellbeing and sustainable economic growth, towards the progressive realization of SDG 5 on Gender Equality and multiple related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of its support, ESCAP is implementing a five year (2018-2023) regional programme on "*Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship - Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem*" funded by the Government of Canada. The project endeavors to advance women's economic empowerment and contribute to poverty reduction in the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to increase women entrepreneurs' access to capital through innovative financing mechanisms, increase women

entrepreneurs' use of business development services and financial technologies, and support the development of gender-responsive business development and investment policies and programs.

Within the framework of this programme, ESCAP in collaboration with Agency for Enterprise Development, Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam to conduct a national consultation in Vietnam to discuss the following:

1. *Enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship;*
2. *Enabling role of digital technologies to increase access of finance for women entrepreneurs;*
3. *Leveraging the power of ICT for women's entrepreneurship*

These topics will serve as a forum for policy dialogue, capacity building and networking for key concerned stakeholders across public and private sectors, social organizations, women entrepreneurship incubation/acceleration programmes, innovative financial technology companies, technology startups incubation/acceleration program and impact investors.

The aim is to integrate gender considerations into entrepreneurship development and financial inclusion measures at all levels, contributing to efforts towards gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The project on "*Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship - Creating a Gender-Responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem*" will also be formally launched on this occasion, on 17 February 2020.

2. Objectives

Following the launch, the national consultation will aim to increase the capacity of public and private sector stakeholders to integrate gender considerations into entrepreneurship development in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Specific objectives of the technical consultation:

- Enhance awareness of the role of women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship as a strategy for poverty reduction, social wellbeing and sustainable economic growth in Vietnam
- Understanding of the current initiatives towards a gender responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Vietnam for enabling environment of women's entrepreneurship in Vietnam
- Enhance awareness of the needs, constraints and necessary actions to *enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship; enabling role of digital technologies, exploring the gaps and barriers that constrain women from using ICTs in their businesses; identify the need of capacity development for leveraging the power of ICT for women's entrepreneurship in Vietnam*
- Co-develop action plan for Enabling Environment for Women's Entrepreneurship in Vietnam, including three pillars:
 - Policy development and improving legal and regulatory framework for accelerating women's entrepreneurship in Vietnam.
 - Innovation for increasing access and use of financial and non-financial services for women entrepreneurs in Vietnam.
 - Leveraging the power of ICT for women's entrepreneurship in Vietnam.

3. Outcomes

The national consultation will contribute to enhanced capacity of concerned stakeholders across multiple sectors to integrate women's needs and considerations into policy and non-policy

initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, enabling role of ICT in promoting women's entrepreneurship and enabling environment for businesses.

Participants will be equipped with knowledge on specific tools and methods to design, implement and monitor gender-responsive measures, including policy and regulatory frameworks, financial and business development services and products, gender-responsive policies and programmes for ICT-empowered women entrepreneurship.

4. Participants

The national consultation will bring together 70-80 government leaders and policy makers from key ministries and agencies in the areas of gender equality, SME development, trade, ICT, planning, and economy and finance as well as representatives and stakeholders from the private sector, non-government organizations, (women's) business associations, women entrepreneurship incubator/accelerator, financial service organizations and FinTechs, international organizations and donor agencies. Experts in the areas of gender, business development and financial inclusion will be invited to participate as resource persons.

5. Modality

The national consultation will be conducted using an interactive format facilitating the exchange of knowledge, best practices and lessons learnt by stakeholders in design, implementation and monitoring of sectoral policies and non-policy measures that contribute to women's entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and business skills development.

There will be panel discussions or group discussion to provide a substantive background on the issues of enabling environment for business, from formal policy and regulatory environment to wider informal institutions and their impact on the capacity of women to engage in a profitable, productive and competitive entrepreneurial activity. The panel will also include presentations from successful women SME-owners.

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Tentative Agenda

Time	Activities
08:00-08:30	Registration
Segment 1: Vietnam launch of "Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship" Project	
8:30-09:00	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Vu Dai Thang, Vice Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam• Ms. Deborah Paul, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Canada to Vietnam• Ms. Cai Cai, Chief of Section, Gender and Social Inclusion Section, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)• Mr. Kamal Malhotra, United Nation's Resident Coordinator in Vietnam
09:00-09:30	Keynote presentation: <p>The role of women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship in the region and Vietnam. Initiatives towards a gender responsive entrepreneurial ecosystem and necessary actions to improve the enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship in Vietnam.</p> Keynote Speaker: Ms. Từ Thu Hiền, Founder, CEO of WISE Social JSC (Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship)
09:30-09:45	Introduction of "Catalyzing Women's Entrepreneurship" Project: Speaker: Ms. Sudha Gooty, Programme Manager, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
09:45-10:00	Tea break
Segment 2:	Consultation on Enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship;

Time	Activities
10:00-11:00	<p>Panel discussion 1: Constrains, solutions/initiatives for improving institutional, policy and legal framework for accelerating women’s entrepreneurship in Vietnam</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Agency for Enterprise Development, Ministry for Planning and Investment • Representative of Vietnam’s Women Union: Lesson learnt from National Women Startup Programme Ms. Hồ Thị Quý, Head of Women Economic Empowerment Department, Vietnam’s Women Union • Representative of Oxfam in Vietnam: Lesson learnt from Acceleration program for Inclusive Business and Women owned Inclusive Business Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Project Manager, Enterprising for Development Project, Oxfam in Vietnam • Representative from UN Women: Preliminary findings from the Study focusing on the SME legislation and its impact on women owned enterprises and capacity building gaps Ms. Elisa Fernadez, UN Women Head of Office in Viet Nam <p>Moderator: Mr. Trần Trí Dũng, Program Manager, SWISS Entrepreneurship Programme</p>
11:00-11:45	<p>Panel discussion 2: Constrains, solutions/initiatives for increasing access and usage of financial services for women entrepreneurs in Vietnam</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of State Bank of Vietnam • Representative of accelerator: ThinkZone Mr. Bùi Thành Đô, CEO, ThinkZone Accelerator • Representative of Patamar Capital: Sharing Patamar Capital’s investment strategy on impact businesses led by women • Representative of VPBank: Sharing lesson learnt of service provider for women led SMEs Mr. Đào Gia Hưng, Deputy Director, SME Department, VP Bank • Representative of Kilimo Finance: Sharing lesson learnt of banks agri-finance solutions on a digital platform Mr. Arnold Tjzens, Founder, Kilimo Finance <p>Moderator: Mr. Phan Vinh Quang, Impact Investment Specialist, MBI JSC</p>
11:45-12:30	<p>Panel discussion 3: Constrains, solutions/initiatives for leveraging the power of ICT for women entrepreneurship in Vietnam</p> <p>Panelists:</p>

Time	Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of Ministry of Industry and Commerce: Lesson learnt from Vietnam 4.0 Launch Pad • VERCO -VINASME: Lesson learnt of VERIG Platform for SMEs management consultation, B2B and investment arrangement Mr. Nguyen Kim Hung, Chairman, VERCO Entrepreneur Investment Group • Representative of Next Tech: Digital Transformation Solution Provider • Representative of VinTech city: Lesson learns from tech startup incubation program • Representative of Cherie Blair Foundation: Lesson learnt and opportunities of DevelopHer and HerVenture application Ms. Từ Thu Hiền, CEO, WISE Social JSC, Partner in Vietnam of Cherie Blair Foundation <p>Moderator: Mr. Nguyễn Trung Dũng, CEO BK Holdings, Hanoi University of Science and Technology</p>
12:30-13:30	Lunch
Segment 3:	Action Plan for Building a Gender-responsive Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for empowering women entrepreneurs in Vietnam
13:30-14:00	<p>Presentation of Tentative Action Plan of Catalyzing Women’s Entrepreneurship” Project in 2020</p> <p>Speaker: AED, Ministry for Planning and Investment</p>
14:00-15:30	<p>Open discussions, comments and propose actions/activities for Action Plan for 2020</p> <p>Topic 1: Policy development and improving legal and regulatory framework for accelerating women’s entrepreneurship in Vietnam</p> <p>Topic 2: Innovation for Increasing access to finance for women entrepreneurs in Vietnam</p> <p>Topic 3: Strengthening capacity of government leaders and policy makers to create an enabling environment for ICT empowered women entrepreneurs</p> <p>Chaired by: UNESCAP, MPI</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Trần Trí Dũng, Program Manager, SWISS Entrepreneurship Programme</p>
15:30-16:00	<p>Summary of the Draft Action Plan Framework for 2020</p> <p>Speaker: AED, Ministry for Planning and Investment</p>

Time	Activities
16:00-16:15	Closing of the Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representative of UNESCAP• Representative of MPI, Ministry of Planning and Investment