Unlocking the potential for e-commerce and women economic empowerment in Least Developed Countries:

*Insights into the work of the EIF in partnership with UNESCAP*

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E-commerce and women economic empowerment: renewed area of focus of the EIF Strategic Plan 2019-2022.

- 62 e-commerce initiatives undertaken through EIF projects*.
- “Empower Women, Power Trade” initiative: 88,000 women benefiting from EIF support.

3 streams of work:

- Analytical work to identify challenges, opportunities, e-commerce readiness (DTIS, e-Trade Readiness Assessments).
- E-Commerce policy/strategy formulation & gender mainstreaming.
- Capacity-building (institutional and productive/ business).
Results and impacts (continued)

Analytical work

• The DTIS Updates of Bhutan and Cambodia included dedicated chapters on e-commerce. Gender dimensions are included in most of the recent DTIS/Updates.
  → providing a roadmap for e-commerce development; and
  → tools for resource mobilization for e-commerce.
  → Evidences for gender-responsive policies.
  → Priority actions identified to increase women’s participation in value chains.

• 9 e-Trade Readiness Assessments conducted in partnership with UNCTAD, with gender equality analysis included.
  → clear picture of the e-commerce ecosystem and priority actions.
  → great awareness-raising and multi-stakeholder engagement moving forward.
Results and impacts (continued)

E-commerce policy/strategy formulation

- E-commerce strategies/policies endorsed in Cambodia, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Senegal with gender and youth focus included.
  - Concrete steps towards an enabling ecosystem for e-commerce.
  - Blueprint for inclusive and sustainable e-commerce development.

Gender mainstreaming in trade and sector strategies.

- Guidelines on gender mainstreaming (in partnership with ITC).
- On-line training on gender and trade policy for the LDCs (in partnership with UNCTAD).
- Case studies on gender mainstreaming in the fishery sector in The Gambia.
Results and impacts (continued)

Capacity-building

**Institutional:**
- Bhutan (e-Infrastructure for trade and services)
- The Gambia (digitalization with a gender focus)
- Rwanda (E-commerce technical working group)

**Productive/Business:**
- Cambodia (Go4eCam—B2C e-commerce platform, start-up)
- ITU (digital skills for girls and women in Burundi and Haiti)
- UNESCAP (e-commerce training for women entrepreneurs in South Asia)

- Increased capacity and confidence of women to engage in e-commerce and value chains.
- Facilitation of cross-border trade.
- Reduced trade costs
Partnership in action and experiences on the ground:

**EIF-UNESCAP project on**

‘Capacity-building on e-commerce for South Asian MSME women entrepreneurs’
Project context

• Trade brings opportunities as well as challenges. Countries take commitments to liberalize trade, investment and other areas of the economy.

• Trade policy is considered “gender-neutral”.
  ➢ But the effects of liberalization are not.

• According to statistics, only 8 to 9% of formal SMEs are owned by women in South Asia, as compared to 38% to 47% in other regions (East Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe). Statistics reveal that the female labor force participation rate in South Asia currently stands at less than 30%, which is less than half of the 61% of ASEAN partners. Similarly, statistics from the World Bank Enterprise Survey state that the percentage of funds with majority female ownership stands at 9.6% in South Asia, against 29% in ASEAN countries, highlighting the need for women’s economic empowerment in South Asia.

• The project aims to enhance the knowledge and capacity of the target women entrepreneurs in the application of e-commerce platforms to expand their business exports and participate in local, regional and global supply chains.
National inception meetings with stakeholders - to identify specific skills and experience and guide the process of acquiring basic IT knowledge.

Train these women entrepreneurs in basic IT skills - online course.

Development of an e-commerce platform - freely register, monitor the performance of their platform and provide online support freely. Link to other e-commerce platforms for trading locally and internationally.

Hands-on classroom training. This training will, at first, set up the conceptual framework of e-commerce and its benefits, including sharing information about many popular platforms. The module will guide participants on how to create profiles of their products and firms/companies online, prepare catalogues for their products and how to register with various e-commerce platforms.

Project activities
Progress made

- National inception workshops held
- Project page developed – 3,470 hits until 09.07.21
- E-commerce platform developed
- Online e-learning course is live
- Publication of the manual is under finalization
- Two regional virtual trainings on e-commerce and digital marketing held
Project platform
https://www.unescap.wesellonline.org/
Online e-learning course on e-commerce and digital marketing

- Self-paced online course.
- 4 modules followed by a test.
- Upon successful completion of the test, certificates can be downloaded.
E-commerce platform - WESELLONLINE (Women Entrepreneurs Sell Online)

- Training platform to build the capacity of women entrepreneurs – how to connect to the e-market place
- Display products/services to generate enquiries from potential customers
- Helpline available
  ✓ On-line
  ✓ E-mail
  ✓ Telephone
  ✓ WhatsApp group
Trainings and webinars

- Nepal – 11-12 September 2019
- Bangladesh – 11 December 2019
- Bhutan – 4-5 February 2020
- Afghanistan – 28 January 2021
- Sri Lanka – 27 September 2019
- Pakistan – 4 December 2019
- India – 24 December 2019
- Regional virtual trainings: 8-9 April and 22-23 June 2021

A total of 1,000 women entrepreneurs from MSME have been trained so far
Networking platform

Wesell Online - Women Entrepreneurs Sell Online

public group - 266 members

new activity

Soni Joshi
9 hours ago

Namaste everyone! Thank you so much for this platform to share our handicraft products here. It’s a great honor to me. Nyano handicraft collection arts and crafts. Paying tribute to Nepalese heritage through a touch of rich craftsmanship.

https://www.instagram.com/nyano_handicrafts/?hl=en

#nyanohandicraft

introduction

WESELLONLINE (Women Entrepreneurs Sell Online) is a training and e-commerce platform launched by United nation’s ESCAP and EIF, designed to build... See more

public

Anyone can see who’s in the group and what they post.

I can see

Anyone can find this group.

Normal

recent media file
What some of our trainees say...
Promoting women's agency and empowerment is crucial, and has been a significant part of my professional work; economic self-reliance is one major step toward achieving it. UNESCAP’s e-commerce training and mentorship programme for women is an important regional initiative that provides a platform to connect women in small business across the region, allowing them to learn from each other, and helping them reach a wider market with their skills and products.
There are many women entrepreneur who are unable to reach their potential customers with their products, especially those who are from the rural areas of Bangladesh. I am helping them, through my own Facebook pages, to sell their traditional Bangladeshi-made products, such as dhak, Punjabis, Nagra shoes and bags.

UNESCAP can serve as a bridge between our local women entrepreneurs and worldwide customers. It can help to build our capacity and introduce our locally made products across the globe.

Being a full-time educated mother, I always felt the need to contribute to my society and that is the main driving point for me to become an entrepreneur.
Yangchen Dema, Bhutan
Entrepreneur

I am a single mother, contributing to women’s empowerment by making myself economically independent and helping women in the village to engage in economic activities with me as suppliers of raw materials for my noodle factory.

The UNESCAP e-commerce training is enabling women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to use Internet marketing platforms to promote their products online. It will help women entrepreneurs connect their products and services to global markets.
Shailaja Kasaju, Nepal
Producer of nature-based crafts

A huge gap exists between training and production, and market connection. For the rural producer, having a platform to sell is very rare and many do not get an opportunity to showcase their products internationally. With this UNESCAP’s platform, I see a tremendous opportunity for many rural women entrepreneurs to showcase the work of artisans, minimizing the gap between production and market accessibility.

“If you educate a man, you educate an individual. But if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”
Economically empowering the 4,400 financially poor and marginalized women home-based workers in Nepal by upgrading their inherent skills has been challenging yet gratifying. In the new normal, UNESCAP’s e-commerce platform and e-trainings are essential prerequisites if we want to bridge the gender digital divide and link the producers’ products directly to the consumers. As the Chair of SABAH Nepal and an entrepreneur myself, I believe that if women are well equipped with such technical know-how, they can turn any challenge into an opportunity!
Twirl.store is a young social enterprise and it is only because of online platforms that people across India and the world are getting to know about the work we are doing to reduce fabric wastage and ensure women empowerment. Twirl.store is committed to promoting upcycled fabric products, handcrafted by rural women.

In today’s world, it is essential to be able to showcase products online, and we appreciate the effort UNESCAP is making to ensure the same.
Aasia Saail Khan, Pakistan
Entrepreneur
Board Member, Lahore Chamber of
Commerce and Industry

I have been in business since 1992 and have faced many difficulties being a woman entrepreneur. E-commerce has now become an important catalyst to brighten the future of women entrepreneurs in South Asia, especially in the present COVID-19 pandemic and in the future as the buying habits of people have changed. UNESCAP’s initiative to train and support women entrepreneurs from MSME on e-commerce and digital marketing is a new avenue for empowering women, both economically and socially.
Farha Mahmud Trina, Bangladesh
Owner and CEO Trina’s Closet

E-Commerce and digital marketing – how it is transforming lives…..

Making women more confident and greater recognition…..

Bringing empowerment…..

Leaders - setting examples for others…..
Thank you

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is the only multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to assisting Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in their use of trade as an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

www.enhancedif.org