The WOGC Campaign to Unlock the Full Rural Women’s Potential through the Power of Entrepreneurship: Hand in Hand Global Businesswomen Mentoring Network

“We need to face the fact that we will never overcome poverty and hunger without empowering rural women.”

Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Synopsis

The World Organization of Governance and Competitiveness (WOGC) will, through a multi-year campaign, collaborate with Businesswomen who are members of WOGC to set up a Global Network of Businesswomen in support of unlocking the full rural women’s potential through the power of entrepreneurship, and to work with women’s associations, youth organizations, the private sector, civil society, international organizations and Governments to overcome social and economic obstacles inhibiting women’s access to productive assets, inputs and services, including land, livestock, markets, labor, extension, and financial services. These factors often undermine women’s ability to contribute to reducing poverty and hunger.
The campaign will be spearheaded by a contribution from WOGC in collaboration with its partners working with UN ECOSOC, the UN common system, Governments, private sector and civil society organizations. It will be launched at a ceremony cosponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations and WOGC on the margins of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018.

This note provides the overall framework for the development of the campaign. The related arrangements for the side event are set forth in the Annex to the note.

Introduction

Rural women constitute a sizable proportion of the poorest and excluded population. Today, out of 767 million people who still live on less than 1.90 USD a day and the 793 million who routinely confront hunger, 75 percent of people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Six out of ten poorest people are women. That means that from the total of the people living in extreme poverty, 60-70 percent are girls and women.

If girls and women account for a large percent of the poor in the world, they are also an integral part of the solution to extreme poverty and hunger.

Rural women make significant contributions to the rural economy in all regions of the world. In developing countries, according to FAO research, women make up to 43 per cent of the agricultural labor force, ranging from 20 per cent in Latin America to 60 per cent or more in certain parts of Africa and Asia. Their roles range from being cultivators on their own or others’ plots, as unpaid or paid workers, employers or employees, alongside their key role as providers of unpaid care work in their households and communities.

Yet, women still comprise only 3-20 per cent of agricultural landowners, depending on the country. In many countries, gender biased social norms, laws and practices limit women’s access to economic opportunities, productive resources, jobs, health services, social protection and education.

Evidence shows that malnutrition rates and poverty fall significantly when women have access to training, education and employment opportunities. FAO estimates that just giving women the same access as men to training, modern seeds, fertilizer and tools could increase production on women’s farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 per cent, sufficient to feed up to 150 million more of the world’s hungry people.

Since 2000, over 700 million people who lived in extreme poverty have seen their life standards rise. The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development projects that if this trend continues, extreme poverty could be eradicated by 2030. However, this projection depends on ensuring that women and all typically excluded populations
would have equal access to resources, knowledge, assets, services and economic opportunities as men. Moreover, FAO estimates that feeding of a global population of just over 9 billion people in 2050 will require a 60 per cent increase in global food production. Three fourths of that production will need to come from developing countries.

Mentoring and training of rural women by successful businesswomen is a powerful tool with the potential to unlock rural women's capacities and provide them with additional income they spend more than men on food, health, clothing, and education for their children. This not only translates into improved overall well-being for children, households and communities, but contributes to building human capital for future generations and to long term social and economic growth.

In the past decade, rural women have made great strides in opening businesses, building credit and increasing their participation in the economy. In East Asia and Oceania, 64 per cent of women were in work force in 2012, and in Southeast Asia, women-owned Small Medium Enterprises (SME) are growing rapidly, in particular in middle-income countries. In Malaysia, the annual rate of growth for women-owned SMEs was almost 10 per cent. In Thailand, approximately 40 percent of businesses were owned or operated by women, including rural women.

Challenges Facing Women Aspiring to Become Entrepreneurs

However, despite their important contributions to socio-economic development, women’s full economic power and potential to entrepreneurship remain underutilized and they continue to suffer from various constraints which inhibit them from optimally realizing their capacity for economic development.

One of the biggest obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs around the world is a lack of access to capital to help grow their businesses. The World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates that as many as 70 percent of women-owned SMEs in developing countries are unserved or underserved by financial institutions, resulting in a credit gap of around $285 billion.

The use of formal financial services is lower for women than men in all regions of the world; globally, 47 per cent of women have an individual or joint account at a formal financial institution compared to 55 per cent of men, with wider gaps in some countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in Southern Asia.

Additional challenges would be to reach poor women who live in remote communities, who are landless labourers, smallholder agricultural producers, cross-border traders and who work in informal sectors of economy; to overcome low levels of literacy, limited access to networks and people who can assist and support, greater vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse at the community level, if not the household level.
Women’s access to their own cash labor income remains low in developing regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Many women are excluded from economic decision-making within their own households. On average 1 in 3 married women in developing countries have no say about major household purchases, and 1 in 10 are not consulted on how their own cash earnings are spent.iii

In addition to many socio-economic obstacles and cultural and traditional constraints in women’s economic agency, one of the major challenges rural women face as entrepreneurs is the lack of attitude towards entrepreneurship as their career, insufficient knowledge regarding access to resources, services, marketing and finance. Despite being talented and having a viable and creative business idea, often rural women are unable to put their plans into action because of the absence of an enabling environment and support.

If women and girls are to contribute effectively to the improvement of rural livelihoods and agricultural production, it is essential that their needs and aspirations are met, and their rights are secured.

**WOGC Vision**

The vision of WOGC is that the economic empowerment of rural women, through increased access to entrepreneurship and economic opportunities, through mentoring and training, technology transfer and financial services, is key to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

WOGC envisages the following main areas of its involvement:

First, to create and expand a Network of Businesswomen, who are members of WOGC, to provide mentoring to women who have an entrepreneurial talent and a vetted viable business project. The Businesswomen Network will assess the projects and advise on their implementation, including through field missions;

Two, through its own financial resources, WOGC will provide access to women entrepreneurs to resources, financing and marketing.

Three, advocate with governments to invest more in women’s entrepreneurship and introduce policies aimed at reducing gender gap in rural areas, stimulate inclusive growth, create jobs for women, income and markets for small scale farmers, rehabilitate infrastructure, and improving the local supply of fresh, safe and nutritious food.

Four, establish cooperative relationships with the private sector of the host country and seek their support as advisers and investors in women’s projects, including through technology transfer.
Objectives of the Campaign

The campaign will have the objective to substantially increase:

(a) direct support and mentoring for rural women in encouraging their entrepreneurship and supporting their initiatives after a thorough analysis and evaluation of their projects;

(b) in close cooperation with the Government and local authorities, contribute to existing financial and productive infrastructure in support of rural women’s initiatives and projects;

(c) advocating and supporting political will and commitment to promote an enabling environment for women’s entrepreneurship at all levels of Government, the private sector and civil society, and public awareness of the issue and action required to advocate for reducing gender gap in entrepreneurship at the country level and develop women’s human capital and potential;

(d) effective mainstreaming of women’s entrepreneurship in national, regional and international activities by WOGC, through its partners and its Network Businesswomen, including raising funds for its local, national, regional and international partners programmes benefitting those who are furthest behind; and

(e) create partnerships of Governments, women and youth associations, private sector, civil society and other actors.

Key Areas of the Campaign

The Campaign to Unlock full rural women’s potential through the power of entrepreneurship will focus on four key areas: 1) support to rural women entrepreneurs, 2) global advocacy; 3) mainstreaming of women’s entrepreneurship into SDGs; and 4) strengthened partnerships at the national and regional levels.

The campaign links directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as women’s economic empowerment constitutes a cost effective and flexible tool in achieving Sustainable Development Goals and promote human rights of the poorest, marginalized and socially excluded.

The campaign will be all-inclusive, encompassing a wide range of partners from Governments, women’s and youth organizations, NGOs, academia, the private sector and the United Nations system, and will provide a forum for stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels to strengthen their engagement in mainstreaming entrepreneurship into their specific contexts.

It will use synergies with existing private sector groups, civil society and women’s business community networks and advisory boards, intergovernmental and interagency
mechanisms of the United Nations dedicated to work on entrepreneurship, particularly in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.

**Target Audience**

There is a range of target audiences of the campaign which need to be mobilized to bring about societal change to integrate entrepreneurship into SDGs, including through transforming cultures and attitudes which condone and/or tolerate social barriers, inequality, stigma, conflict and exclusion of the poorest, marginalized and excluded rural women groups.

Key target audiences include:

- Government leaders and legislators at all levels with the power to make policies, enact/amend and enforce laws and/or allocate resources;
- The entities of the United Nations system, in their role of providing support (including expertise and financial resources) to Member States;
- Youth and women groups, academia, professional organizations and associations, women networks and other civil society organizations working on SDGs;
- Private sector leaders with influence over large numbers of people who can lend critical support to the work to integrate entrepreneurship into sustainable development;
- Media enterprises and organizers of business fairs and other events who can give visibility to this issue and promote awareness/understanding of benefits of entrepreneurship and contributions of rural women for the achievement of SDGs; and
- The public at large, women and men, girls and boys, who can bring about societal change.

**Expected Results**

The expected results include:

- Creating opportunities for rural women and strengthen local productive capacity by developing linkages with outside markets.
- Increasing rural women’s employment thus contributing to their and their family’s wellbeing, increasing revenue potential, developing new skills through transfer of knowledge by the Businesswomen Network, technologies and innovative business models; this, in turn, can contribute to more inclusive and equitable economic growth while protecting the rights of women.
- Mobilization of financial resources for women aspiring to become entrepreneurs and create micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.
- Enhancing women’s decision making on financial matters.
- Advocacy with Governments and parliaments to enact policies and laws that protect women’s economic and social rights, in particular land and land inheritance rights and contribute to creating an enabling environment for unlocking the full potential of rural women through the power of entrepreneurship.
Annex

Launch of the WOGC Campaign to Unlock the Full Rural Women's Potential through the Power of Entrepreneurship: Hand in Hand Global Businesswomen Mentoring Network

WOGC has decided to spearhead a multi-year campaign to significantly strengthen and expand ongoing efforts of the international community to promote and develop rural women’s potential through the power of entrepreneurship.

The campaign will be launched at the ceremony co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations to recognize the first seven distinguished Businesswomen Founders of the WOGC Businesswomen Network. The launch will be part of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women which will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018.

The campaign will run through 2030 to coincide with the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals. The objectives and areas of the campaign are set forth in the note above.

Programme (TBC)

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<td>Ambassador and Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations in New York</td>
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<td>H.E. Mrs. Inonge Wina</td>
<td>Vice President of the Republic of Zambia</td>
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<td>H. E. Madam K.D.M.</td>
<td>Minister of Women and Child Affairs of the Democratic Socialist</td>
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Chandrani Bandara  Republic of Sri Lanka

Mr. Charles Lu  Entrepreneur and Consultant of the Chinese Women’s Association, People’s Republic of China

Ms. Xinwei Wu  People’s Republic of China

Ms. Jinlin Lv  Entrepreneur (Vanuatu)

Concluding Remarks
Mr. Cary Yan  President of the World Organization of Governance and Competitiveness

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i Goldman Sachs. 10,000 Women; Capital for Women Entrepreneurs. Retrieved here http://www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000women/capital-for-women-entrepreneurs/
