



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROCUREMENT

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The issue

Gender responsive procurement can have a transformational impact on domestic and international markets and contribute to women's economic empowerment.

Procurement refers to the process of purchasing goods and services from outside suppliers by institutions. Public procurement alone accounts for 15-30 per cent of GDP in countries and represents a multi-trillion dollar market. Governments procure goods and services to carry out state functions in all sectors, including infrastructure and health. Corporations also source goods and services from other, smaller businesses throughout their value chains. In addition to maximizing efficiency and reducing corruption, focus has been placed on using procurement to contribute to economic development, environmental sustainability and social policy objectives.

Women-owned businesses secure a mere 1 per cent of procurement government contracts, suggesting systemic gender disparities within procurement systems. Women entrepreneurs have been largely unable to capitalize on government spending and international sourcing because they face a number of structural disadvantages. At the same time, procuring entities, corporations and investors lack the information necessary to analyze the gender impact of their decisions and identify female suppliers. Our Flagship Programme responds to the gap in women's access to procurement markets, and will address both demand-side (buyers) and supply-side (entrepreneurs) constraints.

Our strategy for change

Addressing the structural barriers faced by women entrepreneurs will require sustained engagement. Action in this area will require:

1. Gender-Responsive Public Procurement. Governments at all levels can stimulate demand for goods and services produced by women-owned businesses. Examples of gender-responsive procurement policies include setting targets and preferential schemes, such as in Kenya, where 30% of procurement goes to businesses owned by women, youth and persons with disabilities.

UN WOMEN'S FLAGSHIP PROGRAMMING INITIATIVES

Women's Entrepreneurship in Gender-Responsive Procurement Markets is one of UN Women's Flagship Programmes designed to ensure that UN Women can deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by expanding opportunities for women-owned businesses. The overarching idea is that the governments and corporations should make concerted efforts to "Buy from Women".

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PROGRAMME, CONTACT: meg.jones@unwomen.org



2. Gender-Responsive Corporate Procurement. Corporate procurement offices manage an average of 64% of a company's total enterprise spend (SAP Ariba, 2016). The value of these contracts adds up to billions of dollars of market opportunities in each country, and trillions of dollars world-wide.

3. Access to Finance. If women entrepreneurs are enabled access finance to start and grow their business in higher value-added sectors in which they are underrepresented, and secure financing to scale production once they receive purchase orders, then they will be able to realize their potential in procurement markets.

4. Skills Development. To complement the above three interventions, women entrepreneurs must be enabled to develop focused skills to benefit from procurement market opportunities and grow their businesses.

How the Programme works

In order to deliver expanded opportunities for women entrepreneurs at the country level, a Global Policy Support Project (GPSP) will lead normative work, evidence-based research, and knowledge management. It will provide global public goods such as methodologies and other tools to support implementation of the Flagship Program Initiative in country offices.

At the country level, UN Women will deliver projects that combine technical assistance for procuring entities to mainstream gender into their procurement process, with capacity development for suppliers. UN Women will identify high-impact projects, especially in areas where women are underrepresented, such as ICT, infrastructure, and energy. UN Women will support partners to leverage various policy mechanisms to create new opportunities for women-owned business. UN Women will also deliver capacity development for women's associations and women entrepreneurs so that they can navigate complex systems and respond to procurement opportunities.

COVER PHOTO: *Amira Abi Khalil drives a forklift while working for her family business Abou Khalil Trading Est, located in Beirut, Lebanon. UN Women and UN Global Compact-backed Women's Empowerment Principle 5 requires companies to: "Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women." This includes expanding business relationships with women-owned enterprises, including small businesses, and women entrepreneurs. See more at: <http://www.wepinciples.org/>.*

FACTS AND FIGURES - WOMEN AND DECENT WORK

- Women win only an estimated 1% of procurement (WeConnect 2015).
- Total government procurement worldwide is roughly equivalent to 82.3% of world merchandise and commercial services exports (OECD 2002).
- The public procurement spend is USD4.4 trillion dollars annually in 60 countries with trade agreements with the US (GAO, 2015).
- Only about 14-19% of IFC loans are issued to women-owned SME clients, despite evidence that they perform just as well those owned by men (IFC 2014).
- 57% of foreign bribery cases involve bribes to obtain public contracts (OECD 2014).
- More than 50% of jobs in developing and emerging economies are created by enterprises with less than 100 employees (ILO 2013).

Partnerships for change

To create the enabling environment for gender-responsive procurement reform will require the mobilization, coordination, and capacity-building of a broad range of stakeholders.

UN Women is well placed within the UN system to effect change by leveraging its coordination mandate to mobilise action on women's economic empowerment.

UN Women also engages with the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Additionally, UN Women will leverage its partnership with the UN Global Compact and position with the Women's Empowerment Principles (more than 1300 signatories in the network); and the Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors.

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