

## United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

The mandate of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) in developing countries and economies in transition by creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness and safeguarding the environment.

The relevance of ISID as an integrated approach to all three pillars of sustainable development is recognized under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Organization's programmatic focus is structured in four strategic priorities:

- Creating shared prosperity
- Advancing economic competitiveness
- Safeguarding the environment
- Strengthening knowledge and institutions

Each of these programmatic fields of activity contains a number of individual programmes, which are implemented in a holistic manner to achieve effective outcomes and impacts through UNIDO's four enabling functions: (i) technical cooperation; (ii) analytical and research functions and policy advisory services; (iii) normative functions and standards and quality-related activities; and (iv) convening and partnerships for knowledge transfer, knowledge transfer, networking and industrial cooperation.

In carrying out the core requirements of its mission, UNIDO has considerably increased the scope of its technical services over the past ten years. At the same time, it has also substantially amplified its mobilization of financial resources, testifying to the growing international recognition of the Organization as an effective provider of catalytic industrial development services. In 2018, UNIDO is implementing a portfolio of 723 projects with total programmable resources of around USD 500 million.

UNIDO advocates that the economic empowerment of women has a positive impact on economic and social development, enabling prosperity and social cohesion at the regional, national and international level. One of the programmatic goals of UNIDO is to promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment under its mandate to accelerate ISID for achieving shared prosperity. Women are key agents of change, who, as economic actors, leaders and consumers, play vitally important roles in every country's drive towards a higher level of industrialization in their economies.

The primary focus of UNIDO's activities in this area is on the knowledge, skills, technologies and business support services needed to enable women to engage in productive activities, generate income and thereby reduce poverty. This is achieved through capacity-building activities and policies to equip women with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to seize economic opportunities, gain control of their lives and exert influence in society. UNIDO's activities in this area also concentrate on the creation of an enabling environment for female entrepreneurs, support for youth entrepreneurship and the promotion of clusters and partnerships to facilitate access to information, technology and markets for women. UNIDO applies mainstreaming strategies to respond to the needs of women to materialize their economic potential, thereby improving their standard of living.

### OPORA RUSSIA Women's Entrepreneurship Development Committee

The main mission of the OPORA RUSSIA Women's Entrepreneurship Development Committee is to bring entrepreneurs together to form favourable economic, legal and policy conditions for business activity, paving the way for competitiveness and prosperity in the Russian Federation. OPORA RUSSIA attempts to support Russian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) facing common challenges with legal protection, fundraising, and obtaining state support, amongst others. Furthermore, OPORA RUSSIA aids in the establishment of contacts within the business community.



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## UNIDO International Forum

Increasing the contribution of women  
to economic growth and prosperity:  
Creating an enabling environment



**Organizers:** United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)  
OPORA RUSSIA Women's Entrepreneurship Development Committee  
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ST. PETERSBURG  
INTERNATIONAL  
ECONOMIC  
FORUM



Organized by UNIDO on the sidelines of the  
St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2018

## ABOUT THE UNIDO INTERNATIONAL FORUM

The UNIDO International Forum “Increasing the contribution of women to economic growth and prosperity: Creating an enabling environment” day before the official start of held on 23 May 2018, the day before the official start of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2018, which is taking place from 24 to 26 May 2018. The UNIDO Forum is being organized in cooperation with the OPORA Russia Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Committee.

The International Forum will facilitate experience-sharing between high-level government representatives, members of the international business community, women’s entrepreneurship advocacy groups and business networks. Each session will be led by moderators and opened by a keynote speaker who will introduce the main theme for discussion. Experts will present success stories and practical solutions for supporting women’s entrepreneurship and discuss challenges and opportunities for increasing women’s economic empowerment.

### The main questions which will guide the International Forum include:

- How can we scale up women’s entrepreneurship and increase their economic empowerment? Which innovative business models and smart solutions support this objective?
- How can the private sector, governments and civil society pave the way for women to harness their economic potential for growth and prosperity?
- How do UNIDO and other international partners support the promotion of women’s economic empowerment and capacity-building for female entrepreneurs?
- What can be done by all partners to support women’s economic empowerment and increase the contribution of women to economic growth and prosperity?

### The International Forum will be divided into three main sessions:

**Panel Session I:** “Fostering smart and innovative business models through women’s economic empowerment: Success stories from the region and beyond”

**Panel Session II:** “The intersection of policy-making and business: Harnessing the economic potential of women for growth and prosperity”

**Interactive Session III:** “Tools to empower female entrepreneurs to succeed in global markets: Dialogue with successful business women”

A session on “Doing business with UNIDO” will be organized for attendees from the business community.

The event is expected to generate practical recommendations for harnessing the potential of women in economic development, with the support of UNIDO in cooperation with the private sector, business associations and civil society. Potential follow-up actions to be discussed include the creation of a global talent pool of women leaders and advanced e-learning platforms for women in business, as well as the development of concrete capacity-building projects.

## WHY WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT MATTERS

Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. Economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society.

One of the key elements in women’s economic empowerment is education and training. In developed countries, gender balance in access to higher education has been achieved and the percentage of women in higher education now slightly exceeds 50%<sup>1</sup>. However, the share of women in academia is relatively low, especially in certain spheres. While 43% of academics in the arts and humanities and 38.5% in the social sciences are female, the proportion falls to 19% in the physical sciences and 15% in engineering and technology<sup>2</sup>.

It remains more difficult for women to realize their potential in their chosen professions and fields of entrepreneurship. Only about 34% of firms worldwide have female participation in ownership<sup>3</sup>. Even fewer firms have a female top manager: only 18% worldwide<sup>4</sup>. The percentage of senior roles in businesses held by women also requires improvement. Around 27% of senior positions are currently occupied by women globally, while in North America it is 21%, Latin America – 30%, Africa – 30%, and Asia-Pacific – 23%. Eastern Europe has the highest share of women in senior roles, at 36%<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2008). The Reversal of Gender Inequalities in Higher Education: An On-going Trend.

<sup>2</sup> Times Higher Education (2013). Global Gender Index.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank Data (2017). Firms with female participation in ownership.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Data (2017). Firms with female top manager.

<sup>5</sup> Grant Thornton (2018). Women in business: beyond policy to progress.

The empowerment of women has been recognized as a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where the empowerment of all women and girls is a standalone goal (SDG 5) that strongly interconnects with all the other goals. The global commitment to women’s empowerment is growing stronger and women’s entrepreneurship, as one of the most important focus areas, should be actively promoted with the efforts of international organizations like UNIDO in partnership with the public sector and private stakeholders.

UNIDO believes that governments and businesses need to do more to empower women on multiple fronts for them to fully realize their economic and entrepreneurial potential. This will allow countries to tap into the unused economic resources of women’s talent and entrepreneurial skills, which will support prosperity across all economic sectors. This means providing women with more opportunities to participate in all productive sectors, in trade and investment networks and in the financial system, as well as in entrepreneurship at the local, national and international levels. Women’s economic empowerment is a necessary and smart investment that increases productivity and effectiveness for both enterprises and national economies.

Equipping women with skills and opportunities to succeed in the digital economy has become an increasingly pressing issue, given the growing role of digital technologies. The digital revolution offers a variety of new opportunities for women’s empowerment and for their higher engagement in labour markets and entrepreneurship. Artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and mobile robotics should be harnessed to improve women’s participation in economic life and augment the economic and social autonomy of women in a variety of ways. Modern technology can help bypass some of the traditional cultural and mobility barriers and allow easier access to labour markets or the opportunity to work from home with the help of innovative business models. However, current inequalities in the labour market may create obstacles that limit access to the opportunities offered by digitalization.

Promoting the participation of women in the economy would bring immense benefits to the world of business, with changing business practices being one of the key drivers of empowerment. Higher levels of female participation have been associated with increases in per-capita income and enhanced economic stability. Most, if not all, businesses possess the capacity to reform in order to increase economic opportunity and improve career outcomes for women’s. Acting on a number of fronts simultaneously would guarantee faster progress towards women economic empowerment.