

# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

## Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator Celebrates Second Anniversary by Announcing Impactful Initiatives to Drive Change for Women Entrepreneurs

**NEW YORK, NY.** – (September, 23 2021) – The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), a strategic multi-partnership initiative established by five UN agencies and Mary Kay Inc., is today celebrating its second-year anniversary by announcing progress on several programmes designed to impact 5 million women around the world by 2030. The programmes and knowledge products, which further demonstrate WEA's commitment to maximizing the development impact of women's entrepreneurship in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will be rolled out in the fourth quarter of this year.

"Two years ago, the Accelerator committed to enabling women entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses as a means to accelerate progress towards women's equality," said Deborah Gibbins, Chief Operating Officer of Mary Kay Inc. "Today, we're thrilled to report progress on that promise and demonstrate the unique impact five UN agencies and the private sector can have when working together. These programs represent concrete steps toward the systemic transformation needed to foster an environment of growth, sustainability, and resilience for women entrepreneurs."

The strategic programmes, all shaped with a unique focus on gender, are the joint outcome of the collaboration between the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC) UN Global Compact (UNGC), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women with the strategic support and funding of Mary Kay.

- **Digital Capacity Building Tools & Training**

In collaboration with ITC SheTrades, the Accelerator will offer a guided curriculum supplemented by on-the-ground training for women from developing countries interested in entrepreneurship and/or planning to integrate into regional and global value chains. The 2021 in-country training sessions will take place virtually in Brazil, Colombia, India, and Mexico.

The online curriculum on Entrepreneurship aims to teach women entrepreneurs the skills to design and set up businesses that have potential to be economically viable. Through 27 interactive modules covering seven key stages of business development and enriched with over 200 videos, participants will learn how to adopt an entrepreneurship culture, develop ideas through design thinking and lean start-up methodologies, prepare a business model canvas, design a pitch, identify sources of funding, find the right partners, arrange for mentorship, build a team, and set up their businesses.

The curriculum is free for all users with no barrier to entry, and participants will receive a certificate upon completion.

The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator ITC SheTrades curriculum will be gradually released between October and December 2021 in English, Spanish, and French, with Arabic, Russian and

# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

Mandarin coming in 2022. It will be accessible on the Accelerator website and directly on the ITC SheTrades virtual learning space and mobile app starting October 2021.

- **Entrepreneurship Research**

As part of WEA's objectives for 2020-2021, the ILO is focusing on strengthening advocacy for women's entrepreneurship development in Mexico and Brazil. In Mexico, WEA and ILO will be releasing findings from an assessment on framework conditions that impact women's entrepreneurship development.

The study is sector specific to trade and industry in Mexico City and touches upon the impact of COVID-19. The assessment includes a series of actionable recommendations for a more conducive environment, developed in close collaboration with national partners, including employers' associations, chambers of commerce and associations of women entrepreneurs to ensure national ownership and sustainability.

In Brazil, through WEA, ILO is collaborating with SENAI, a national leader in technical and vocational training, to advocate for women's entrepreneurship development and foster dialogue based on the findings of a WED Assessment conducted in the framework of the EU-funded Win-Win project. A programme of national and regional conferences, seminars, trainings, and communication campaigns has been put together to generate and consolidate momentum in favor of women's entrepreneurship development.

- **Gender-Responsive Procurement (GRP) Advocacy and Training**

Gender-responsive procurement (GRP) can have a transformational impact on domestic and international economies and contribute to women's economic empowerment. Globally, one in three small, medium, and large businesses are owned by women<sup>1</sup>, yet women win only 1% of the procurement spend of large corporations and governments<sup>2</sup>.

The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator participated in the Generation Equality Forum in Paris (June 30-July 2) through the "Drivers of Change" Programming, hosting a panel titled "Building a Transformative Strategy for Gender-Responsive Procurement," which aimed to create awareness around the complex and interconnected barriers of women's entrepreneurship and to promote GRP.

UN Women's main contributions to the Accelerator's GRP line of work in 2021 include establishing the Business Case for GRP through the launch of a community of practice (CoP) in July in collaboration with UN Global Compact to engage stakeholders from the private sector.

UN Women, with the support of the UN Global Compact, is also conducting a global survey across sectors on GRP. UN Women is then interviewing more than 50 companies and organizations, which,

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2020). Enterprise Surveys, [World Bank Gender Data Portal](#) cited by World Bank Blogs (2020) [Women entrepreneurs needed – stat!](#)

<sup>2</sup> Vazquez and Sherman (2014). Cited by UN Women (2017) [The Power of Procurement: How to source from women-owned businesses](#).

# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

together with the survey responses, will result in case studies and an evidence-based advocacy tool to highlight the business case of GRP. The advocacy tool will be published by December 2021, and will be a contribution to WEA in support of UN Women's Flagship Programme Initiative "Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs."

In December, UN Women Europe and Central Asia (ECA) will launch an inaugural Pilot programme to increase the capacities of both women entrepreneurs and private sector with an aim to boost women's entrepreneurship: (1) Building procurement capacities of women entrepreneurs to compete for bidding opportunities with public and private sectors; (2) Strengthening capacities of the private sector entities from all the sectors to establish policies and practices and design initiatives on gender responsive procurement and investment.

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The Accelerator's announcement of these programmes' milestones is just the latest in a series of steps taken by the multi-partnership to raise awareness on entrepreneurship as a critical lever to advance women's equality in 2021 and beyond.

At the Generation Equality Forum in Paris, the Accelerator announced its commitment to empower 5 million women by the end of 2030 and to build an ecosystem for women's economic empowerment that fosters growth, sustainability, and resilience for women entrepreneurs.

On September 28<sup>th</sup>, the Accelerator will hold a virtual event titled "Joining Forces to Drive Change," convening the senior management of ILO, ITC, UNDP, UNGC, and UN Women with introductory remarks from Mary Kay. Organized during UNGA 76 for WEA's 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary, the high-level event will provide an opportunity for the stakeholders within the women's entrepreneurship ecosystem to hear from the leading experts on the following topics: gender equality and women's empowerment, the economic and social contributions of women entrepreneurship; emerging policies and practices that could be applied and replicated globally to support women's leadership in businesses. For registration and other enquiries click [here](#).

To learn more about the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator, and the work performed since its inception two years ago, visit [we-accelerate.com](http://we-accelerate.com).

## About the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator

The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) is a multi-partnership initiative on women's entrepreneurship established during UNGA 74 by five UN agencies, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), UN Global Compact (UNGC), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and Mary Kay Inc. to empower 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2030.

The ultimate goal of the initiative is to maximize the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs around the world. The Accelerator exemplifies the transformational power of a multi-partnership of unique magnitude to harness the potential of women entrepreneurs.

Learn more at [we-accelerate.com](http://we-accelerate.com). Follow us: Twitter (We\_Accelerator), Instagram (@we\_accelerator), Facebook (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator), LinkedIn (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator)



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Resilient nations.



# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

## About the International Labour Organization

[The International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) is a specialized UN agency created in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues. The unique tripartite structure of the ILO gives an equal voice to workers, employers, and governments to ensure that the views of the social partners are closely reflected in labour standards and in shaping policies and programmes.

The ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship Development programme (ILO-WED) is part of the Small and Medium Enterprises Unit (SME) and has been running for close to two decades. ILO-WED works on enhancing economic opportunities for women by carrying out affirmative actions in support of women starting, formalizing and growing their enterprises, and by mainstreaming gender equality issues into the ILO's work in enterprise development. Website: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) | Twitter - @ILOWED | Facebook – ILO WED (@International Labour Organization)

## About the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets to contribute to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

ITC's SheTrades Initiative aims to connect three million women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses to international markets by 2021. SheTrades works with governments, corporations and business support organizations to undertake research, shape enabling trade policies and regulations, facilitate financing, and expand access to public tenders and corporate supply chains. It provides women entrepreneurs with a varied learning environment and flexible curriculum on its [www.shetrades.com](http://www.shetrades.com) platform. For more information, visit [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org) and follow ITC on [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Flickr](#)

## About the United Nations Global Compact

As a special initiative of the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Global Compact is a call to companies everywhere to align their operations and strategies with Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Our ambition is to accelerate and scale the global collective impact of business by upholding the Ten Principles and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals through accountable companies and ecosystems that enable change.

With more than 13,000 companies and 3,000 non-business signatories based in over 160 countries, and 69 Local Networks, the UN Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative — one Global Compact uniting business for a better world.

For more information, follow @globalcompact on social media and visit our website at [unglobalcompact.org](http://unglobalcompact.org).



# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

## About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

## About Mary Kay

One of the original glass ceiling breakers, Mary Kay Ash founded her beauty company more than 58 years ago with three goals: develop rewarding opportunities for women, offer irresistible products, and make the world a better place. That dream has blossomed into a multibillion-dollar company with millions of independent sales force members in nearly 40 countries. Mary Kay is dedicated to investing in the science behind beauty and manufacturing cutting-edge skin care, color cosmetics, nutritional supplements, and fragrances. Mary Kay is committed to empowering women and their families by partnering with organizations from around the world, focusing on supporting cancer research, protecting survivors from domestic abuse, beautifying our communities, and encouraging children to follow their dreams. Mary Kay Ash's original vision continues to shine—one lipstick at a time. Learn more at [marykayglobal.com](http://marykayglobal.com)