

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator Announces Partnership with Commonwealth to Drive Change for Women Entrepreneurs in 54 countries

NEW YORK – (October 27, 2021) – The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), a strategic multi-partnership convening five UN agencies and Mary Kay Inc., is today joining forces with the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN) to empower and support underserved women entrepreneurs across the 54 countries of the Commonwealth.

WEA is designed to maximize the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs that fosters growth, sustainability, and resilience. In June 2021, WEA joined the Generation Equality Forum in Paris and committed to empower five million women around the world by 2030 to accelerate progress for gender equality.

WEA recently announced the launch of a series of impactful initiatives and knowledge products, all shaped through a gender lens, as 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. WEA's impact work includes digital capacity building tools and training; entrepreneurship research; and gender-responsive procurement (GRP) advocacy and training.

CBWN works with women in business by connecting governments and the private sector to encourage, enable and embed women's economic empowerment and women in leadership. Originating in May 2021, the Commonwealth Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (CWEA) is a strategic multi-stakeholder partnership from the CBWN, the Global Entrepreneurship Network UK (GEN UK) and Oxentia. It is a direct response to three developments: the agreement by all Commonwealth Heads of Government in London in 2018 "to work towards an increase in the number and enhancement of the success rate of women-owned businesses, break down gender barriers in all sectors, and increase opportunities for women to trade internationally"; the recognition by the G20 in 2020 that "there is a missed opportunity – to tackle the gap that needs immediate action, which is the representation of women in emerging fields"; and the UN Global Acceleration Plan to advance gender equality by 2026 and its Action Coalitions on Economic Justice and Rights and Technology and Innovation launched in 2021.

The new partnership with CBWN in support of CWEA further solidifies WEA's geographic scope of action across the 54 Commonwealth diverse country members in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific, with 32 countries classified as "small states." Small states are especially vulnerable to climate change and developmental challenges including gender inequalities.

Beyond scaling WEA and CBWN's foundational areas of work, the partnership will also significantly focus on policy and advocacy to advance systemic change engaging Commonwealth member states and



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leveraging its networks of organizations and key stakeholders in support of women in business or aspiring women entrepreneurs in and across the Commonwealth.

“We know that multi-stakeholder partnerships and collective engagement is crucial to drive the change that women entrepreneurs need across sectors around the world,” said Deborah Gibbins, Chief Operating Officer of Mary Kay Inc. “WEA is thrilled to join forces with the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network and the Commonwealth Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator. Our collaboration will focus on augmenting, amplifying and accelerating impact. We’re more powerful together, and I look forward to our collective action journey in support of the SDGs.”

“The Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network is delighted to partner with the United Nations Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator in this landmark initiative so we can unlock and unleash the power and potential for more women of diverse backgrounds,” said Freda Miriklis, Chair, Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network. “Through this partnership, we’ll be able to more quickly harness our collective assets - for women, their communities and every girl that can and will be inspired by their stories.”

To learn more about the Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator, visit we-accelerate.com.

About the Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator

The Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) is a multi-partnership initiative on women’s entrepreneurship convening 5 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](https://we-accelerate.com). Follow us: Twitter (@We_Accelerator), Instagram (@we_accelerator), Facebook (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator), LinkedIn (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator)

About the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network

The Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network (CBWN) works with women in business by connecting Governments and the private sector to encourage, enable and embed women’s economic empowerment. This is achieved through delivering activities, initiatives, products, and services focused on trade, talent, and training. It is the only accredited organisation focused on women’s economic empowerment and directly recognized by 54 governments across six continents. Learn more at www.cbwn.org

About the Commonwealth Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator

The Commonwealth Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator is a strategic multi stakeholder partnership on women’s entrepreneurship established as an outcome of the inaugural Commonwealth Women’s Entrepreneurship Summit (CWES) in May 2021, the first global event to focus on women in emerging tech sectors. CWES was convened by the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network; the Global Entrepreneurship Network; the UK Government (Women in Innovation Network, a programme of Innovation UK); and Africa’s largest network of women entrepreneurs (AWEP: African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program). The Commonwealth Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator is a partnership between the Commonwealth Businesswomen’s Network, Global Entrepreneurship Network-UK and Oxentia. Learn more at www.thecwea.org



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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