

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR

Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator Welcomes International Telecommunication Union as New UN Partner in Bridging the Digital Gender Divide

Activities will Benefit Women Entrepreneurs from Developing and Least Developed Countries

NEW YORK, NY – GENEVA. – (February 8, 2022) – A landmark McKinsey Global Institute report finds that \$12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 if underserved women around the world are given access to crucial digital skills education.

This alarming gap informed the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator's (WEA) latest partnership with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialized agency of the United Nations for information and communication technologies. Together, WEA and ITU plan to bridge the digital gender divide.

Along with the support of Mary Kay, ITU and WEA will soon equip women entrepreneurs around the world with the necessary digital skills for their own economic empowerment through a high-quality skills training program. In addition to the online modules, and in support of WEA, ITU and Mary Kay will also contribute to building a women empowerment ecosystem through the launch of an annual Innovation Challenge.

"Digital literacy isn't a nice-to-have anymore—it's a necessity," said Deborah Gibbins, Chief Operating Officer of Mary Kay Inc. "It's crucial that women in developing and least developed countries are given access to high-quality, highly-effective digital skills training so they can equally compete with entrepreneurs from developed markets. Through our work with WEA and ITU, we're going to make it happen."

The digital divide remains wide in developing countries, where only 19% of women are using and benefiting from the internet¹. These inequalities have been particularly exposed through the COVID-19 pandemic. Many—if not all—entrepreneurs have had to adapt to current circumstances by moving their businesses online. Simply put: potential women entrepreneurs in developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) cannot get businesses up and running unless they have the digital skills required.

"ITU is thrilled to partner with the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator to inspire, educate, and empower women entrepreneurs around the world," said Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau at ITU. "By working together to build digital skills and an ICT-enabled environment around these entrepreneurs, we can help women take their place as equal, skilled leaders in driving economic growth."

¹ <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2021/11/15/the-gender-digital-divide/>



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The “Bridging the Digital Gender Divide” initiative, which will be translated into several languages, will consist of:

- 17 online modules on General Digital Skills training for young women and entrepreneurs in developing countries and least developed countries
- 8 online modules on Digital Skills for Women Entrepreneurs in the Textiles and Apparel sector
- 4 online modules on Management Skills for Women Entrepreneurs in Technology
- 2-4 online modules for the Course on Green Entrepreneurship and Economy
- 2-4 online modules for the Course on Care Entrepreneurship and Economy

The project is unprecedented in its potential global reach. The focus of the training—on providing gender transformative digital skills for women entrepreneurs—will also contribute to ensuring inclusive societies and economies through Information and Communication Technologies. It will enable women, from developing and LDCs to access a free, high-quality curriculum that will take them through a strategic learning journey from self-identifying as an entrepreneur to acquire the digital skills required to advance in the digital economy.

The project will contribute to the Women’s Entrepreneurship Accelerator by creating an enabling ecosystem for women entrepreneurs to thrive and advance inclusive and sustainable growth. It also directly contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and several of its goals, those related to SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 4 (education), SDG 5 (gender) and SDG 17 (partnerships).

About International Telecommunication Union

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs), driving innovation in ICTs together with 193 Member States and a membership of over 900 companies, universities, and international and regional organizations. Established over 150 years ago in 1865, ITU is the intergovernmental body responsible for coordinating the shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoting international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, improving communication infrastructure in the developing world, and establishing the worldwide standards that foster seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems. From broadband networks to cutting-edge wireless technologies, aeronautical and maritime navigation, radio astronomy, oceanographic and satellite-based earth monitoring as well as converging fixed-mobile phone, Internet and broadcasting technologies, ITU is committed to connecting the world. For more information, visit www.itu.int



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About the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator

The Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA) is a multi-stakeholder partnership on women's entrepreneurship established during UNGA 74. It convenes six UN agencies, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Trade Centre (ITC), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Global Compact (UNGC), 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.org). Follow us: Twitter (We_Accelerator), Instagram (@we_accelerator), Facebook (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator), LinkedIn (@womensentrepreneurshipaccelerator)

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

