Preface

The 2030 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have set a new scene for economic development, production and consumption. The SDGs have explicitly engaged the private sector, including entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and large corporations, to initiate new business models to solve sustainable development challenges, thus minimizing negative impact and maximizing positive effects on people and the planet.

Covering a broad spectrum of sustainability areas such as poverty eradication, health, education, climate change and environmental degradation, the SDGs can generate opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Despite remarkable progress, women continue to represent an underutilized pool of entrepreneurial talent. Women entrepreneurs also face significant gender-based barriers that need to be removed so that they can gain better access to business development skills, markets and finance. Women lag men in earnings and productivity, mainly due to their unequal access to economic opportunities. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to operate smaller firms in less-profitable sectors with low value added gains but, on the whole, high social impact.

To raise awareness of this economic gender gap and to support women’s entrepreneurship, in 2008, UNCTAD initiated the Empretec Women in Business Awards. This year, more than 60 nominations from 23 countries were received. The finalists were selected by a panel of distinguished experts in entrepreneurship on the basis of three criteria: innovation, leadership and impact in the community.

The finalists are all examples of individuals who have overcome obstacles and persevered to establish and grow successful companies. They come from countries across Africa, Latin America and Asia, and work in a variety of sectors ranging from education to health care, construction, fashion and cosmetic industries, and media and communication. They all share a contagious passion for their work. They serve as models of success for other women, and all of them are giving back to their communities, spearheading a process of cultural change.

UNCTAD’s Empretec Women in Business Awards will be presented at the World Investment Forum, as part of UNCTAD 14, in Nairobi, Kenya, on 21 July 2016.

The Empretec Team
About Empretec and the Women in Business Award

Empretec

Empretec is UNCTAD’s flagship capacity-building programme coordinated from Geneva, Switzerland, by the Enterprise Branch of the Division on Investment and Enterprise.

The programme aims to promote entrepreneurship and to enhance the productive capacity and international competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries and economies in transition.

Empretec’s core product, the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop, teaches entrepreneurs how to put their ideas into practice. Participants are taught how to identify business opportunities and to take practical steps to expand fledgling businesses. The programme uses an experiential and “learning by doing” methodology and focuses on motivating and strengthening entrepreneurial behaviours.

Since its inception in 1988, the Empretec network has expanded to 37 countries. In cooperation with national counterparts, the programme has assisted more than 370,000 entrepreneurs.

Empretec network’s growth over 27 years

Key facts, 1988–2015

- 370,299 entrepreneurs trained
- 11,399 workshops conducted
- 600 Empretec trainers
- 39 Empretec installations
- 20 requests for new installations

*Empretec Network, 1986–2015 in chronological order by year of establishment: Argentina, Uruguay, Ghana, Chile, Brazil, Zimbabwe, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Colombia, Botswana, Morocco, Ethiopia, Uganda, El Salvador, Nigeria, Mauritius, Mozambique, Panama, South Africa, Senegal, the State of Palestine, Guatemala, Berlin, Guyana, Jordan, Angola, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Romania, Zambia, United Republic of Tanzania, Ecuador, Peru, Russian Federation, Viet Name, India, Saudi Arabia, the Gambia, Cameroon, Paraguay.
The Empretec Women in Business Award

Women run between a third and a quarter of all enterprises worldwide, according to the World Bank. For many women in developing countries, their own enterprises are their major source of income. For their ventures to succeed, it is crucial that these women receive adequate training, encouragement and recognition.

UNCTAD created the Empretec Women in Business Award as an acknowledgment of the great achievements of women entrepreneurs trained by the Empretec programme. The award, granted every two years, has made a real impact on the lives of past recipients. It has improved their access to education and resources, and boosted their motivation to continue growing their enterprises. It has also helped these women become role models in their communities.

The first series of awards was launched on the occasion of the UNCTAD XII Ministerial Conference in Accra, Ghana, in 2008. The second series of awards was presented in April 2010 at the annual session of UNCTAD’s Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. The 2012 awards took place in Doha, Qatar, during UNCTAD XIII and the World Investment Forum, and the 2014 edition took place in Geneva during the World Investment Forum.
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