



WSIS FORUM | 19-23 MARCH 2018

Geneva | Switzerland

WSIS Forum 2018 OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Template for Submission of Executive Summaries for

Thematic Workshop - Equal opportunity sourcing in tech from women-owned businesses

Deadline: Thursday 22 March, 2018

1) Title of your session

Equal opportunity sourcing in tech from women-owned businesses

2) Name of Organization/s organizing the session

It was conducted jointly by ITU, ITC, UN Women & We Connect International in support of EQUALS.

3) Relevance with the WSIS Action Lines – please specify the Action lines C1 to C11

WSIS Action Line 1 - The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

WSIS Action Line 2 - Information and communication infrastructure: an essential foundation for an inclusive information society

WSIS Action Line 3 - Access to information and knowledge

WSIS Action Line 8 - Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

4) Key achievements, announcements, launches, agreements, and commitments (these will be reflected in the press release and Outcomes Document of the WSIS Forum 2018)

The goal of the session was to raise awareness of the opportunity to, and impact of, equal opportunity sourcing from women owned/managed businesses. This is an emerging practice that has taken root in other sectors, but is relatively new to the ICT/tech sector. Given gender imbalance in the sector, gender responsive sourcing promoting supplier diversity is a key approach to both strengthening supply chains and empowering women - a multiplier effect for sustainable development and business success.



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5) Main outcomes highlighting the following:

I. Debated Issues

- Women face many barriers in trying to grow their businesses, including financial and social and cultural barriers.
- E-commerce can level the playing-field – according to an ITC survey, women-owned businesses achieve parity in numbers in online business, whereas only 25% of businesses engaging in offline trade are women-owned.
- Women face a delicate juggling act in trying to balance the many different demands on their time, as well as expectations of their roles.
- How taking an intentional approach to ensure equal opportunity sourcing from women’s owned businesses makes business sense and is the right thing to do.

II. Quotes

- Anna Mori, Partnerships Officer at ITC – “the #SheTrades initiative to connect one million women to international markets by 2020. This might seem ambitious, but it is achievable, and ITC is working with a wide range of partners to achieve this”.
- Andrea Fimian, EMEA Supplier Diversity Program Manager at IBM – “IBM launched its Supplier Diversity Programme in the US in 1968, 50 years ago, before the Civil Rights Act, to encourage out-of-the-box thinking and diversity of inputs and supplies from minorities. And we took it global in 2003, with great success – we won the European Diversity Award for our Global Supplier Diversity Program in 2017”.
- Ms. Christine Löew, Director, UN Women Liaison Office in Geneva: “UN Women with inputs from WeConnect developed a Guide to Gender-Responsive Corporate Procurement developed in 2017, explaining the problem and what we can do to solve them. This guide is very handily made, it will be accompanied by online materials for corporations, but also for the other side to train women and SMEs to see what they can do better and what they have to learn to have better access”.
- Pippa Biggs, ITU – “EQUALS is a global partnership for gender equality in the digital age with a focus on access, skills, leadership and research. ICT Ministries and tech companies can benefit women, while improving their procurement / supply chains by adopting equal opportunity sourcing from women owned/managed businesses. It is a key way of positively impacting women’s entrepreneurship and employment.”

III. Overall outcomes of the session highlighting



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- Equal opportunity sourcing from women owned/managed businesses is a strategy that has been successful to strengthen government and business' supply chains as well as strengthen women's entrepreneurship with the associated benefits for gender equality and the economy.
- Some governments have already made commitments and set policies across their departments for procurement along these lines.
- Some tech companies already have long experience with such supplier diversity policies and practices.
- There is a huge opportunity to scale up such policies, practices and commitments in tech with benefits for governments, businesses, women, families and economies.
- Bringing women owned/managed businesses online has a major impact on the growth of those businesses
- As with many other dimensions of gender equality, partnerships are key to achieving greater reach and impact.

IV. Main linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 5 and SDG 8.

V. Emerging Trends related to WSIS Action Lines identified during the meeting

The majority of women-owned businesses tend to be smaller.

A growing trend towards sourcing to women-owned and women-controlled businesses.

VI. Suggestions for Thematic Aspects that might be included in the WSIS Forum 2019

The importance of bridging the gender digital divide.

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