

The Gender Dimension of E-commerce

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While the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development aims to enhance the use of ICT to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", there is an acknowledged digital divide in access to ICTs between women and men.

For women entrepreneurs in particular, the Internet improves access to information, mobile technology enables new payment channels and access to finance, and ICT-enabled solutions help them to overcome time and mobility constraints, to become trained, and to network. E-commerce provides women with new business opportunities and can help increase their participation in domestic and international trade.

However, there is little official data about how many women-owned business access the Internet, how they use it or to what extent they engage in e-commerce. In addition, most women-owned businesses are in low-value sectors that are outside global value chains.

There is evidence that lack of literacy, skills, access, resources and other factors are excluding women entrepreneurs from the opportunities offered by e-commerce. For example, an UNCTAD-ILO assessment of women entrepreneurs in Tanzania found that as many as 97 per cent of the women used mobiles, but only one in ten used websites and only 16 per cent had sold products online, pointing to the need for skills development.

Women can be empowered by increased participation in e-commerce, including in the higher value added sectors of the ICT industry and ICT-enabled services. A tool such as the International Trade Centre's SheTrades app connects buyers and women-owned enterprises worldwide, as part of a wider initiative to connect one million women entrepreneurs to markets by 2020, while the ITU-UN Women "EQUALS" coalition can promote gender equality through digital leadership. Also, more disaggregated data on women's participation in the digital economy and e-commerce will help shape and assess policies to improve their situation.

This session will consider the role e-commerce can play in connecting women to international markets and value chains.

- How can women raise technical skills and build their capacity to engage in the digital economy?
- How can we build digital leadership in order to bring more women online as entrepreneurs, content creators, and trade policy influencers?
- What can be done in the context of the eTrade for All initiative?

Moderator: H.E. Ms. Frances Lisson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation, Australia

Panelists:

- H.E. Ms. Anusha Rahman Khan, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecom, Pakistan
- Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women
- Ms. Arancha Gonzalez, Executive Director, International Trade Centre, ITC
- Ms. Shamika Sirimanne, Director of Division of Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD
- Ms. Doreen Bogdan, Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership Department, ITU
- Mr. Joakim Reiter, Group External Affairs Director, Vodafone
- Mr. Francesco Pasti, Senior Services Analyst, Connected Women, GSMA

- Ms. Angela Steen, EU Public Policy & Government Relations Director, Etsy
- Ms. Candace Knoth-Bisseck, Country Manager, Jumia Market, Cameroon
- Ms. Lucy Lawrence, Fellow, Victoria147
- Ms. Ann McCreath, Founder and Chairman of Festival of African Fashion & Arts (FAFA), Managing Director at KikoRomeo Africa
- Ms. Asma Shaikh, Chief of People Officer, TCS Holdings