

Report Workshop 2

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Title: “Creating a business enabling and gender sensitive legal environment for women to develop business in the context of globalization”.

This workshop included presentations on the USA, Vietnam, Moscow City, Chinese Taipei and Australia.

The workshop stressed the importance of creating an ‘enabling environment’ for women entrepreneurs in the regional and global economy. The five papers discussed different strategies in each economy to integrate women’s enterprise into the global supply chain. The case study of the USA discussed the growing interest among multinational enterprises in using women-owned businesses as suppliers -> there are mutual economic benefits for both multinationals and women-owned businesses in collaborating. In the US, corporate supplier diversity programs as part of the corporate social responsibility movement and serve as internal advocates for women suppliers. The women’s business enterprise national council in the US helps to match corporations with women-owned suppliers as well as provide business training to them. This is an important intermediating organization that is accelerating women’s business. The global business committee is enhancing this role by identifying potential women suppliers beyond the US in other countries – and in so doing increasing the global market opportunities for women.

The Vietnam paper also stressed the interest of global corporate investors in women’s businesses – since they view them as ‘more reliable’ less risky investments in Vietnam. Both the Vietnamese government and Moscow city have recognized the importance of women’s entrepreneurship and its potential contribution to Vietnam’s economic growth and development. The Chinese Taipei paper discussed growth of women-owned SMEs and the government programs that are supporting this development. In particular, it noted that women’s businesses are concentrated on different areas than men’s- especially in retail, services, and education. Although, there are new funds that make it easier for women to access credit, that business training in Chinese Taipei is not yet gender-sensitive, recognizing the smaller scale of women’s business relating to men’s, the competitive challenges for these businesses. The Chinese Taipei paper stressed the need to develop the seed capital or venture funds to support women’s business and to explore the area of branding and women’s businesses with new research.

The last paper from Australia stressed the crucial importance of an ‘enabling environment’ to advance women’s businesses in the digital economy. We need a long term empowerment strategy to build capacity in core business skill and access to technology and to raise the profile of women entrepreneurs. Patrice Brawn’s presentation illustrated an erasing framework for women business with the example of the Atlantic Canada integrate framework that involves synergies between ICT e-business training and mentoring access to finance, research networking and targeted government initiatives. There is no singular strategy for advancing women in the global economy. We need all these actions taken together.