



STRENGTHENING THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW LEADERS: THE CHILEAN EXPERIENCE 2007

by

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INTRODUCTION

We all know that women constitute a large group in our economies in terms of business start-up and ownership.

Encouraging more women to become involved in enterprise and grow existing businesses will impact positively on our economic performance.

As in other developing countries, we face a number of challenges, not only due to the strong influence of historic and cultural values but also because of discriminatory barriers in the business environment.

What can we do?

Encouraging women's business networks; they can take on life on their own and yield continuous benefits.

Entrepreneurs associations provide forums through which women entrepreneurs can meet one other.

We can relate to each others difficulties and provide one another with advice and feedback.

All together we can fight against lack of influence.

OUR EXPERIENCE

I shall speak for myself concerning the big impact that I experienced when I found out about Women Leaders Network.

Being a regular housewife taking care of my little daughter living on my husband's temporary work salary and far away from him, I applied for volunteer work during the ninth WLN meeting to be held in La Serena, Chile. As the days of the meeting went by, a whole new world seemed to open up for me as I got to meet Women Leaders. It was only during that forum that I realized so many things were available to help me wake up and take control of my life. Six months later I made my dream come true. I opened my own business, a small coffee shop. It wasn't easy as I didn't have money, but I did it! I was so motivated that nothing was impossible for me. I didn't know that another group of women, academics, entrepreneurs and microentrepreneurs, also inspired by the WLN, were feeling the same as me. In 2005 we founded an association in our region.



ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LEADERS-CHILE

“The Association of Women Leaders-Chile was born due to the 9th WLN meeting in La Serena, Chile in 2004. A group of women entrepreneurs and academics had the opportunity to meet each other and realized that limitations exist in women’s enterprising that are similar for all women, no matter where they come from. To acknowledge women’s experiences in other economies also helped to create the group.

The idea of legalising the organization helped us to be more representative, not only in public sectors but also in private ones. This allowed us to coordinate and plan activities relating to productivity, where women can participate continuously and successfully.

Another motivation was to support and to fortify the women of the association. The doors are always open for women who need help to start their own business. The mission of the Association of Women Leaders-Chile is to support female entrepreneurship in order that a greater number of women can start their business”.



OUR MISSION

“The mission of the Association of Women Leaders-Chile is to support, to develop and to consolidate female entrepreneurship.

We understand entrepreneurship as a collaboration of abilities that allow the development of personal growth and improvement.

THE FUTURE OF OUR NETWORK AND OUR GOALS



After her visit to the WLN forum in Vietnam last year, the Minister for Women Affairs, Senora Laura Albornoz, was inspired to direct the formation a network of women entrepreneurs who are currently creating a macro-organization (Federation). This is a collaboration between the main organizations of entrepreneurs that exists in our economy. They support the formation of networks, promote productivity, activate technological and business missions and generate national representation. These initiatives act as an official channel for women in Chile. A web page has been administered by this organization, which is going to operate as an access point for information on a range of proposals. To date, it has been used to identify the existing organizations and to establish the participation requirements. Together with the Ministry of Economy, an agreement is being written up for the defined objectives.

LESSONS LEARNED

The power of example

The power of the individual

The power of networking

Things can grow...

We would like to remember
Judy, who is no longer with us...



12th APEC Women Leaders Network (WLN) Meeting

Port Douglas, Australia

25-27 June 2007

The President together with women leaders of Chile



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Some members of the Association of Women Leaders, Chile



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