## Innovation for Women and Economic Development: Facilitating Women's Livelihood Development and Resilience with ICTs

A Preliminary Inventory from Chinese Taipei

Background

Given that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) of Chinese Taipei is highly developed and our economy has accumulated years of experience, we propose a Multi-Year Project (MYP) in the subject area of "Women and Innovative Economic Growth" at Women and Economy Forum (WEF) in 2012, which was accepted by APEC with the title "Innovation for Women and Economic Development: Facilitating Women's Livelihood Development and Resilience with ICTs" in June of 2013.

The first years' research was divided into two stages - a preliminary inventory as the first stage, beginning from October 2013 to March 2014 and a case study as the second stage, beginning from March to August 2014. The research aims to, (i) identify and make cross-case comparisons concerning the barriers and constraints that hinder projects which use ICT-enabled tools to
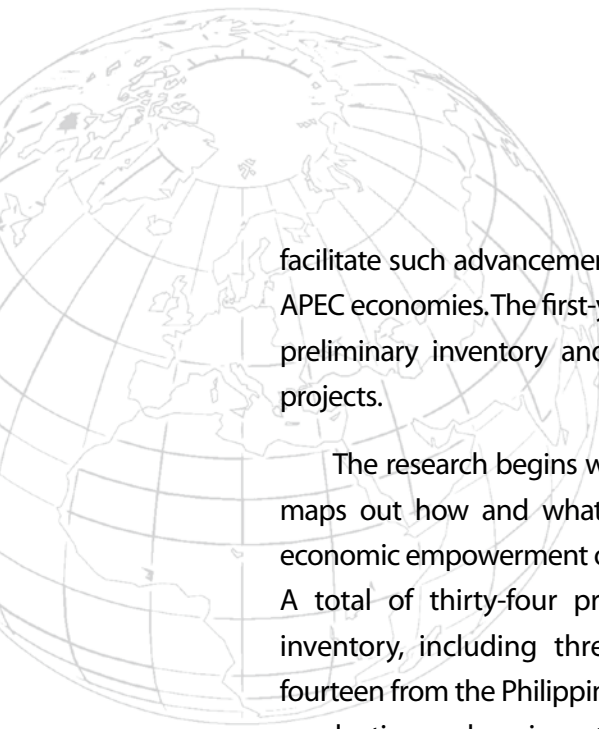
facilitate such advancement, and (ii) to make policy recommendations for all APEC economies. The first-year's research output, therefore, will consist of a preliminary inventory and a comparative case study that will examine these projects.

The research begins with the establishment of a baseline inventory that maps out how and what ICT-enabled tools are required to facilitate the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs or aspirant entrepreneurs. A total of thirty-four projects have been mapped in the preliminary inventory, including three from Chile, six from the Republic of area, fourteen from the Philippines, and eleven from Chinese Taipei. The purpose of conducting such an inventory is to obtain a landscape of the progress made in this particular research area. The data collected will be available on our website [1] - Global Gender.

The inventory will be followed by further case studies involving in-depth interviews with key informants - both organizers and participants - in order to obtain first-hand experiences based on project participation and implementation. Such in-depth interviews will allow researchers to gain deeper insights into the personal and organizational issues generated by the projects' implementation and execution plans. In order to explore possible approaches for a sustainable ecosystem that can be tackled by women in APEC regions to facilitate their long-term economic empowerment, regional constraints, or specific project implementation models, need to be identified and examined by establishing a basic understanding obtained from the research described above.

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[1] For further information, please visit our website.
  http://www.globalgender.org/en-global/database/index

Special Issue

Case Study – Summary report of inventory from Chinese Taipei

This multi-year project "Innovation for Women and Economic Development: Facilitating Women's Livelihood Development and Resilience with ICTs" focuses on how women's entrepreneurship can be facilitated by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Asia-Pacific region. This project is supported by Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and executed by the Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion and Development of Chinese Taipei and will be divided into three phases. In year one, with the participation of four APEC member economies: Chinese Taipei, The Philippines, Chile, and Korea, the aim is to investigate ongoing or completed government programs involving ICTs that are/were undertaken to better women's entrepreneurships within different culture.

The purpose of this summary report is to summarize existing practices and/or programs on the empowerment of women entrepreneurs through ICTs in Chinese Taipei. This inventory is undertaken by the Foundation for Women's Rights Promotion and Development of Chinese Taipei. The report provides the methodology of the 1st phase investigation, followed by some preliminary research findings.

1. Research methodology and research design

1.1 Preliminary Review Questionnaire

A preliminary review questionnaire is designed to gather details from the collected projects that focus on gender, ICTs and how women can be supported through their participations in these projects.

Step 1: Online Searches

Searches for data/information available online will be conducted in order to fill out the Preliminary Review Questionnaire as complete as possible before dispersing the questionnaires to the project organizers for collecting more primary and accurate data.

Step 2: Input from the project organizers

By dispersing the half-completed Preliminary Review Questionnaire to the project organizers, useful input will be provided for the completion of the questionnaire, which will also ensure the accuracy of the primary data collected from previous online searches.

1.2 Categorization

Four dimensions that have been identified as what have been hindering women from their fully economic participation in the High level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy Declaration held in San Francisco, California September 16, 2011:

- Skills and capacity building

- Access to market

- Access to capital

- Women's leadership

In this summary, the project objectives and ICT tools deployed towards the economic empowerment of women will be classified by the four dimensions mentioned above, which aims to provide an overview of the link between the designation of these projects and the four dimensions.

2. Preliminary Inventory of Projects in Chinese Taipei: at a Glance

2.1 Program Objectives

Table 1 gives an overview of each and every project objectives described on the Preliminary Review Questionnaire, which are categorized by the four dimensions mentioned above, although the project objectives may not be relevant to the use of ICTs.

By using the four dimensions as the criteria to examine these projects, table 1 provides an overview and an understanding of the focus of

resource distribution in the past and ongoing projects in Chinese Taipei, which will enhance new learning and ideas to the designation and planning for similar projects in the future. Further elaborations on project design and implementation can be made to meet women's needs to their full participation as entrepreneurs through this inspection.

Table 1: Program Objectives, by Four Dimensions

Project Name	Skills and Capacity Building	Access to Market	Access to Capital	Women's Leadership	Other
2013 Phoenix Micro Startups Digital Learning Program	v	v			
Bridging Digital Divide for Women	v				
Clicktaiwan	v				
Digital Inclusion for Small and Medium Enterprises Project	v	v			Establishment of the e-cluster
Flying Goose Program	v				
Heart 2.0		v			Establishment of networks for localized start ups
Kaohsiung Association of Women Entrepreneurs	v	v			Establishment of networks for Women-led start ups
Phoenix Micro-business Start-up Loan and Consulting Plan	v		v		Establishment of Women entrepreneurs' networks
"She Economic"- Empowerment with E-Commerce of Kaohsiung	v	v		v	
The Consultation Platform Project for Joint Business Partners of Micro Handmade Crafts	v	v		v	
Women Up	v				

Table 2 demonstrates an overview of ICT tools deployed among the 11 projects of Chinese Taipei, which stresses how different ICTs enhance the effective performance in the four dimensions proved to be helpful in improving the empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

Table 2: ICT tools undertaken in the Programs (by the four dimension)

Skills and Capacity Building		Access to Market	
Training Courses	● Basic computer literacy courses (Email/Microsoft Office) ● Advanced computer training courses (Graphics tools/ VideoTools/ Blogging/B2C e-commerce Retailing Solutions/ basic web design programming) ● E-business training courses	Advertising	● Short film advertising ● E-business case competitions ● E-business fair ● Short film advertising ● E-newspaper ● Blog advertising ● Facebook ● Simple retailer online directory
Access to training courses	● Digital opportunity centers ● Online learning programs	E-commerce	● E-auction platforms ● E-commerce shopping platform
e-resource repository	● Official websites		
Counseling	● Free business counseling		

Access to Capital	Women's Leadership	Other
• Crowd funding website (donation-based)	N/A	• Internet Communication Services • Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) • Instant messaging (IM) (both on smart phones or computers) • E-mail

3. Review of Existing Practices/Programs

Most of the projects were designed and organized by various public sector entities while there are only two projects initiated by private sectors: Women Up by Microsoft Taiwan and Clicktaiwan by Chunghwa Telecom Foundation. In Women Up, a public-private-academic partnership was nicely built to bridge the digital divide and to improve digital literacy and access to ICTs for marginalized women.

Free training courses on basic computer literacy are the most often offered activity in most of the projects in this inventory, which aim to bridge gender digital divide, given the high rate of digital illiteracy among marginalized women in Chinese Taipei.

The ICT tool frequently undertaken to increase women entrepreneurs' access to market is online advertising: blog advertising, e-business fairs, Facebook fan pages, etc. Apart from advertising, some projects offer the establishment of E-commerce platforms including simple online directory, or training programs on using online auction platforms owned by large Internet companies such as Yahoo Taiwan E-Auction or Ruten [2].

3.1 Skills and Capacity Building

Training Courses

Among the 11 projects in the inventory of Chinese Taipei, the importance of building skills and capacity is emphasized. To approach this emphasis, the most often ICT tool deployed is the offer of training courses related to ICTs, business management skills, and e-business.

Given the high rate of digital illiteracy among elderly women, resource poor women, or women in rural area, providing training courses on

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2 Ruten is a popular Mandarin-based online Auction Platform in Chinese Taipei. http://www.ruten.com.tw/

teaching basic ICT knowledge is normally the first step taken.

The follow-up training courses available for women who have acquired basic computer knowledge to start their micro-enterprises are business management skills, e-business strategies, online and/or offline marketing skills, etc.

Training courses were designed to be held in all-female environments. According to the attendees' responses, learning in an-all female environment prevents them from being forbidden to go to classes by their husbands or mother-in laws and makes women feel more comfortable without feeling worried that they could be looked down on by their male counterparts.

Access to training courses

In addition, in order to increase the access to these training courses, sufficient ICT devices and stable Internet connections for rural women, who cannot travel far away, or who are restricted by their family bound either as they are the only and major caretakers in the family or as they are banned from learning new skills by their husbands or mother-in-laws, Women Up by Microsoft or Bridging Digital Divide for Women by Council for Economic Planning and Development offered minivan-turned mobile learning centers that carried ICT devices and volunteer tutors to rural places where were hardly visited due to the inconvenient public transportation.

Digital opportunity centers

On the other hand, the establishment of many digital opportunity centers in rural areas is the main project activity of Clicktaiwan, which aims to achieve the sustainable development of these rural communities and to strengthen the connections between members in the communities.

3.2 Access to Market

E-commerce

The Project of She Economic"- Empowerment with E-Commerce of Kaohsiung organized by Social Affairs Bureau of Kaohsiung City Government, was firstly initiated especially for marginalized women, single mothers and Southeast Asian immigrant women to make small profits during Financial Crisis in 2008. Women attended training courses and started their own microbusinesses by selling their home-made food or handcrafts via e-auction platforms owned by large Internet companies like e-auction Yahoo Taiwan or Ruten.

Advertising

In this inventory, various ICTs are undertaken as advertising enablers. For example, Facebook, the most popular social media in Chinese Taipei, is used in many projects to get more attention for the project attendee's businesses/products or to increase the visibility of the project itself.

It is beneficial for project attendees to use Facebook as an optimization of advertising for it is very easily accessible, and most importantly, it serves as a low/non-cost marketing tool for women entrepreneurs at their early stage startups.

Apart from Facebook, in some of the projects (Flying Goose Program, Digital Inclusion for Small and Medium Enterprises Project, She Economic-Empowerment of E-commerce of Kaohsiung), online retailer directory were established to display contact information of project attendees' products/businesses.

3.3 Access to Capital

Online Crowd Funding

Heart2.0, funded by United Way of Taiwan and organized by 104 Corporation, sheds different light on the making of the environment friendlier for marginalized people. Inspired by Kiva-the successful loan-based crowd funding website, Heart 2.0 brought in the program the

similar system to crowd-funding, which was to reduce barriers to the access to capital for project participants, though a loan-based crowd funding can yet be legally exercised in Chinese Taipei due to the restrictions of the law. In Heart 2.0, a donate-based crowd funding system was created for 15 participants (gender was not specified in this project) of minority background, recommended by United Way-a social welfare group. The funding donated by the crowd was dispersed equally to the 15 cases, which became the primary capital for their businesses at the early start-up stage.

Women-Friendly Loan

Phoenix Micro-business Start-up Loan and Consulting Plan is the first and only project in Chinese Taipei that sustainably providing the opportunity of accessing to primary capital at the early start-up stage mainly for women entrepreneurs, though the use of ICTs is not that relevant in this project. Women aged from 20 to 65 who intended to start their businesses by taking the Phoenix Micro-business Start-up Loan are required to prove their attendances of both online and offline business-focused training courses offered by the same project.

3.4 Women's Leadership

Comparing to the sufficient practices in the dimension of Skills and Capacity Building, we see an absence of existing practices using ICT tools to build women's leaderships and level up women entrepreneurs.

3.5 Other

Internet communication services operated on either computers or smartphones such as Skype, Line, What's app, Google Talk, are deployed among project attendees. Using these free and convenient services strengthens their connections and then possibly can serve as a networking platform where women entrepreneurs can build up their leaderships within the establishment of women entrepreneurs' community.

4. Findings

- Target Market

  All of the projects designed to increase women's access to market target in domestic market.

- Target Beneficiary

  As demonstrated in this inventory, women from rural area, economically marginalized women and resource poor women are the target beneficiary.

- Perishable or less competitive Products

  The target beneficiaries of the projects in this inventory are mostly economically marginalized women, whose products are generally either less competitive to famous brands such as handmade accessories, or perishable such as handmade foods and agriculture commodities.

- Projects Organizers

  While most of the projects in this inventory were organized and carried out by various public sector entities, only two of the projects (Heart 2.0 and Women Up) were at first initiated by market-based private sectors and teamed up with other public sector entities afterwards.

- The Duration of Projects

  The average maximum project durations in the inventory are approximately 3 years.

- Sustainability

  Sustainable maintenances for e-commerce platforms established to support women entrepreneurs are absent. Most of the e-commerce platform links failed after the end of the projects.