

Women 360

Improving Market Pathways for Female Entrepreneurs

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Project Duration: 09/01/2014 to 09/01/2016 (Pilot)

Population Served: Rural, vulnerable populations that are heavily dependent upon the informal sector

Constituents: Female entrepreneurs

Geographic Area Served: Egypt



Background and Overview

It is widely recognized that education and economic empowerment for women and girls is a prerequisite for sustainable development worldwide. However, the lack of access to savings and credit as well as business training and mentoring continues to keep a significant number of women and their families in poverty.

Providing women entrepreneurs with access to savings and credit not only gives them a way to build their business, but it also ensures that they have a greater economic role in decision-making. When women control decisions regarding credit and savings, they optimize and increase expenditure on the well-being of themselves and their children. An educated and economically empowered woman is more likely to marry later, have fewer children and make sure that her family is educated, vaccinated and well-nourished.

In Egypt, 46.1 percent of women work in the informal sector. Of those women, 60.3 percent do not receive a salary or any kind of payment (National Council for Research on Women, 2011). Business skills training, mentoring, and incentivized savings programs will not only help female entrepreneurs gain access to markets and enter the formal sector, but it will also allow them to save and invest more in their families' well-being.

Offering small, affordable loans and other financial services such as savings incentives to female entrepreneurs in Egypt who are not currently served by traditional banks and institutions will transform the lives of those living in poverty in the country.

Problem Statement

"Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, and produce 50 percent of the food, yet earn only 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property."

—Former President, Bill Clinton

The lack of access to enterprise growth and financial training services for female entrepreneurs in Egypt presents Women 360 with the unique opportunity to support female-owned businesses and subsequently provide great economic and social returns for women, their families and their communities.

Why economic empowerment for female entrepreneurs in Egypt is crucial:

- Higher female earnings and bargaining power translate into greater investment in children's education, health and nutrition, which leads to economic growth in the long term (Department for International Development (DFID), 2010).
- When more women work, economies grow (World Bank).
- Evidence from a range of countries shows that increasing the share of household income controlled by women, either through their own earnings or cash transfers, shifts spending patterns in ways that benefit children (UN Women).
- A study using data from 219 countries from 1970 to 2009 found that, for every one additional year of education for women of reproductive age, child mortality decreased by 9.5 percent. Between 1970 and 1990, the survival of 4.2 million children stemmed from women's increased education (UN Women).

Project Goal

To empower female entrepreneurs in Egypt to improve their livelihoods by providing business skills training, mentoring, micro loans and incentivized savings programs that will help them gain access to markets, enter the formal sector, and improve their financial and social status.

Main Objectives

1. Assist female entrepreneurs in Egypt in building personal and professional capacity through entrepreneurship and business skills training, mentoring, and education;
2. Provide greater market access through the development of an online marketplace platform;
3. Offer networking opportunities between female entrepreneurs in Egypt and women in the United States through the Women 360 platform;
4. Create financial opportunity for female entrepreneurs through incentivizing savings programs and revolving microloans.

Project Activities

1. Business Skills Training and Development

- Training and capacity building for women in the areas of communication, leadership, entrepreneurship and business skills with a focus on most promising economic sectors and on business development. This includes conducting training needs assessments, developing training programs and material, the implementation of trainings as well as follow up and monitoring and evaluation;
- “Training of Trainers” courses to ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of the project among other women entrepreneurs in their local communities.

2. Provision of Micro Loans and Saving Incentives

- Providing revolving micro loans for women to start their small and medium-sized projects;
- Distributing loans to other trainees after re-collecting the monthly premiums to ensure the equal opportunities for the trainees;
- Conducting a saving incentives program to encourage the women to sustain and expand their business.

3. Women 360 Online Marketplace and Platform

- Establishing an online platform to provide Egyptian entrepreneurs with access to the market in the United States;
- Conducting webinars between female entrepreneurs in Egypt and United States to share their challenges, success stories and experiences.

Expected Outcomes in Year One of Implementation

1. 300 women will have participated in business and entrepreneurial skills training programs and will be capable of working autonomously and self-sufficiently;
2. 150 women will have access to financial assets through the introduction and development of entrepreneurial initiatives and the provision of savings incentives and micro loans. As a result, they will have more bargaining power in the home and increased opportunity for self employment;
3. 500 women will have access to the women 360 platform to share their experiences with female entrepreneurs in the United States and import locally-made handicrafts and products to both countries;

4. 50 revolving loans will be provided to female entrepreneurs to support their small and medium-sized businesses in the pilot phase.

Expected Impact on Egyptian Communities and U.S.-Egyptian Relations

- Increased financial knowledge and technical capacity of participants;
- More women-owned businesses integrated into the formal sector in Egypt;
- Increased savings and control over financial resources for women;
- Active online platform/marketplace for locally-made Egyptian products;
- Enhanced linkages and partnerships between civil society and both the private and public sector in Egypt and United States.

Sustainability Plan

The sustainability of Women 360 will be ensured throughout the different channels that the Women 360 team has targeted. Firstly, the capable women entrepreneurs that graduate from the TOT training will be able to transfer the knowledge and skills gained through the workshops and trainings to other women in their local communities in addition to the mentorship program that will allow those women to contact professionals in their fields.

Revolving loans with low interest rates will allow Women 360 entrepreneurs to sustain and improve their business. In addition, the circulation of loans based on the monthly premiums will benefit a wide number of the trained women and allow them to increase their influence on economic spheres, and through the peer education module that will be implemented by the women trainers will sustain the learning process among the different categories of the women entrepreneurs.

Finally, the Women 360 online platform will provide the space and the capacity that will allow the women to import their products and to access the different markets as well as improving the economic status and ensure its sustainability. Sales from the Women 360 online marketplace will generate financial support for programming.

Implementing Partners

1. National Development Foundation (NDF)

The National Development Foundation (NDF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to benefit all peoples within the state of Egypt, with a focus on community and individual development. The foundation has worked in multiple governorates within Egypt

but holds a particular focus on those areas where the population happens to be marginalized or is most in need of help.

NDF emphasizes methods of community participation as an effective means of improving the lives and living conditions of those people it works with, and seeks to include and consult local institutions and civil society at every point so as to achieve lasting and sustainable development.

2. Academy for International Development-Middle East (AIDME)

The Academy for International Development-Middle East (AIDME) was originally established in Cairo, Egypt in 2006 as consultancy organization. AIDME has a multidisciplinary team of more than 50 professional staff and consultants with different educational backgrounds, skills and experiences in various developments, economic, social, political, and health fields. AIDME has an extensive network of more than 100 non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, civil societies, faith based organizations and privately owned business in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Europe and Africa.

AIDME is adopts strategic participatory planning, evidence-based and action-oriented approaches to enable civic participation, socio-economic development, governance, career and skills building, community behavior change, urban development, poverty alleviation, conflict resolutions and peace building programs.

3. The Batonga Foundation

The Batonga Foundation exists to empower young women and girls in Africa through secondary school and higher education. Founded in 2006 by Angelique Kidjo, Grammy Award-winning West African singer, songwriter, and UNICEF International Goodwill Ambassador, Batonga's work takes a holistic approach to help and encourage more girls to succeed in school.

Since 2007, Batonga has worked in partnership with US-based and local NGOs to provide holistic support for extremely vulnerable girls in 5 countries in Africa: Benin, Mali, Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. These girls have been orphaned by AIDS, are disabled, extremely poor, or otherwise disadvantaged yet they are driven to succeed, despite their circumstances. The vast majority would not be in school without Batonga's support. The girls have taken on multiple obstacles and personal challenges with enormous spirit, tenacity, and dedication to their education and are thriving in secondary school.

Batonga adds a credible voice to the growing consensus among global leaders that girls' education is a critical investment to improve their lives, the lives of their families, their communities, their countries, and the world.

Conclusion

There is a growing consensus that the most cost-effective way to help nations reduce poverty is to empower women and girls. Women 360 will empower female entrepreneurs in Egypt to grow their small and medium-sized businesses, increase their savings and control over financial resources, and invest in the livelihood of their families and communities. The online platform will enhance linkages and partnerships between civil society and the private and public sector in Egypt and United States.