

# Defining the Global Woman Entrepreneur

by CIPE

Who is the global woman entrepreneur and what are her needs? This is the question CIPE asked before embarking on efforts to strengthen women's associations. To answer this question, CIPE is surveying women around the world to gauge their goals and direction in the next century.

If you are a woman currently starting or running your own business, or if you represent an association of such women, CIPE would like to add your voice to this important endeavor. There is a survey form available at [www.cipe.org/survey.html](http://www.cipe.org/survey.html), or you may request it by email at [forum@cipe.org](mailto:forum@cipe.org).

The surveys and narrative comments CIPE has received to date compared the goals of US women's business associations to those in the developing world. Because the survey is ongoing, the number of survey responses to date is insufficient to draw specific conclusions about all women's business associations. It does, however, provide CIPE with a clear picture of the goals of the associations in its network and underscores the unique role advocacy plays in all of these organizations.

Priorities that women's business associations have set in developing and transition economies include:

► **Training**—instruction in managing and developing businesses as well as subjects particular to running a successful business association such as conflict management and funding strategies.

► **Membership development**—how to expand and create a more active, empowered membership.

► **Networking**—essential to expanding women's businesses and the reach of their organizations.

► **Organizational fundraising**—developing strategies to supplement dues and move away from donor agency support.

The responses also underscored one important difference between women's business associations in developing countries and their US counterparts. US respondents

value on entrepreneurship training over advocacy campaigns, with many respondents feeling that they first needed to expand their membership and improve their entrepreneurial skills. As Uma Reddy of the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka in India said "even if policies are made in favor of women... until women are motivated to become entrepreneurs, few will make use of such policies."

In the same vein, the associations in developing economies cite fundraising as a priority. Several receive support from foundations and other outside sources, but must generate additional funds in order to expand their activities. The next important priorities for these associations are having access to capital and understanding technology's role in business. Respondents from women's business organizations also consider the lack of women decision-makers in their governments to be a

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*Networking builds stronger women's associations.*

regarded networking as valuable but not a valid reason to form an organization and support its development. The survey replies from the US associations instead highlight the need for advocacy and its role in supporting the needs of women entrepreneurs.

The associations from less developed economies report that networking is an extremely valuable tool because they operate in an environment that is less supportive of their goals and interests. These organizations also place a higher

major challenge.

The associations in less developed economies were generally new. Most were formed just in the last five years. But the growth in the number of women's business associations seems to mirror the trend of an increasing number of women who are establishing their own businesses. Greater recognition for women in business is without a doubt the key objective these organizations will be pursuing in the 21st century. 🌐