



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

GENDER EQUALITY & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT TRAINING: IN BRIEF

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Canada 

- Economic growth is supported by initiatives that promote women as workers, entrepreneurs and managers. Ignoring the potential and contributions of half the labour force is not good business sense.
- Improved understanding of the gender dynamics of the labour force, the gender elements of economic policy, and international norms relating to labour standards produces better managers.
- There are significant gender-based disparities and constraints in CEE economies.
- Attention to gender equality issues in CIDA programmes can go beyond counting the number of female participants in specific project activities. There are opportunities to increase women's opportunities, reduce inequalities between women and men, and - at the same time - promote economic productivity.

1. EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IS IMPORTANT IN THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO A MARKET ECONOMY

Women constitute a significant percentage of the actual and potential labour force in the CEE region. By ensuring that both women and men participate in and benefit from economic activity, long-term economic growth and stability can be strengthened.

A productive labour force: Most CEE countries have a history of significant involvement of women in the labour force. Working conditions and opportunities for women and men in the formal sector are an important issue. Recognizing the diversity of the labour force and ensuring that human resources practices respect women's employment-related rights makes good business sense.

A vibrant entrepreneurship sector: Promoting entrepreneurship is an important strategy to promote economic growth. Unless there are specific measures to ensure women's participation, they may not be able to take advantage of new opportunities.

A pool of capable managers: All managers (both women and men) can benefit from an understanding of gender equality issues in the workplace and the economy. For example, an understanding of how and why gender segregation in the labour force affects economic performance or the implications of international labour standards for specific businesses can strengthen all managers.

A diverse pool of managers: By focusing only on the training and advancement of men, a significant group of potential managers will not be developed. Recent research found that most Canadian chief executives consider women's advancement highly important to the continued success of their organizations.

2. YET OBSTACLES BLOCK WOMEN'S EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

The costs of economic transition have not been shared equally between women and men. For example:

- Women make up more than half the unemployed. Numbers vary but estimates place women as 80% of the jobless in the Ukraine and 75% in Russia.
- The ratio of women's wages to men's is falling. For example, in 1989 Russian women's wages were 70% of men's. By 1995, they had slipped to 40%.

Resources

Publications

- Bullock, Susan (1994). **Women and Work**. London: ZED Books.
- Date-Bah, Eugenia (ed.) (1998). **Promoting Gender Equality at Work: Turning Vision into Reality**. London: ZED Books.
- Lim, Lin Lean (1996). **More & Better Jobs for Women: An Action Guide**. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Internet Sites

- **Businesswomen in Trade** is sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada). The site provides general information for businesswomen (emphasizing export promotion).
<<http://www.inforexpert.gc.ca/businesswomen/menu-e.asp>>
- **Canadian Women's Business Network** features networking opportunities, a newsletter, background information and resources for women in business.
<<http://www.cdnbizwomen.com>>
- **Women and Gender Issues in the World of Work** provides briefing notes on gender equality issues in various work areas (including micro-credit and small-scale enterprise promotion). It also provides information on International Labour Organization (ILO) programmes and treaties.
<<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/140femme/index.htm>>
- **Resources for Business Women** provides articles, contacts, success stories and directories. It is sponsored by Industry Canada.
<http://www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/mi054523.html>

- Women continue to carry the majority of domestic responsibilities. These tasks are more difficult given declining social services and supports such as childcare.

The economies of CEE countries tend to be marked by several trends:

- There is increasing gender segregation in the labour market. Male and female workers are concentrating in different sectors and industries.
- New jobs often require new training and skills. Although women in the region tend to be well educated, they do not always have the skills to take advantage of emerging opportunities.
- Men own most of the industrial resources. Women workers have often only benefited in a marginal fashion from the privatization of property and factories.
- Women often face discriminatory attitudes in recruitment and hiring. Although international norms relating to labour standards are reflected in domestic legislation, these standards are all too often ignored in practice
- Men and women face different health problems, which affect their work lives. The increase in men's alcoholism is a productivity issue. Time lost due to domestic violence is also high.

3. SUPPORTING EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Just as gender equality can support economic growth, business initiatives can also promote equality between women and men. Governments of CEE countries have made both general commitments to gender equality and specific commitments to equality in the workplace and women's economic empowerment.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

In programmes designed to improve access to credit, CIDA should ask:

- Is there recognition that men and women have different opportunities and face different obstacles when trying to participate in credit programmes (including unequal access to productive resources and varying time availability)? Are there strategies to equalize access? (Strategies to ensure that women can participate in mainstream programmes are more effective than a marginal women's credit component.)
- Do projects track loans and services on a sex-disaggregated basis so that differential access can be monitored?

In programmes to promote small business development, CIDA should ask:

- Is there a clear understanding of the different obstacles faced by women and men in participating in the programme? Are compensatory strategies appropriate to assist women participate in the main programme (specific training for women, training for business advisors to minimize gender stereotyping, etc.)?
- Do initiatives learn from previous projects designed to promote women entrepreneurs and document their own lessons?

In programmes providing management training, CIDA should ask:

- Do training programmes go beyond counting the number of women participants in specific activities? Do programmes take up gender equality issues at the level of content? (This could include topics such as 'gender and organizations', 'dealing with diversity in the workplace', 'strengthening women's participation in nontraditional areas', 'compliance with international norms on labour standards.')
- Do programmes aim to increase the capacity of both women and men to identify and address gender-based inequalities in the workplace?
- Do programmes aim to increase the participation and skills of women managers? (This requires specific initiatives, not just the recruitment of women to existing programmes.) Do they draw on and adapt Canadian expertise and resources?

*Prepared for the Central and Eastern Europe Branch, CIDA
By B. Woroniuk and J. Schalkwyk, July 1999*

Canadian resources

- **Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work** supports research on issues women face in the workplace and offers a Management Development Programme for Women. It is based in the School of Business at Carleton University. <<http://www.business.carleton.ca/research/creww/index.html>> or Tel: (613) 520-2600 ext. 2389
- **Centre of Excellence for Women's Advancement** is a new initiative is sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada. Its mandate includes: research on issues related to the retention, development and full utilization of women in Canadian firms and the development of practical strategies in this area. <<http://www2.conferenceboard.ca/>>
- **Vanier Institute of the Family** is national charitable organization that researches the demographic, economic, social and health influences on contemporary family life. Research themes include the family and economy and workers with family responsibility. <<http://www.familyforum.com/vanier/>>
- **Women Entrepreneurs of Canada (WEC)** links women entrepreneurs and offers them "an opportunity to profile, promote and meet with other successful business women." The WEC Foundation aims to provide research on women entrepreneurs and promote entrepreneurship among women. One publication, **Fast Forward**, is a resource guide for and about women entrepreneurs in Canada. Tel: (416) 361-9065. <<http://www.wec.ca>>
- **Women Business Owners of Canada (WBOC)** is a non-profit organization that provides information to female business owners via its website, databases, directories and a newsletter. <<http://www.wboc.ca/>> Tel: 1-888-822-9262.