



Growing Businesses

Developing countries must equip themselves in order to increase the financial sustainability, productivity and competitiveness of their micro, small and medium-sized businesses, and thereby create more jobs for the poor, including women and youth. They must also strengthen financial products and services, and make them available to their population.

In 2014–2015, Canada's contribution to the Agriculture Finance and Insurance System project in Haiti helped agro-entrepreneurs in 20 communities gain improved access to agricultural financing through grants of over 12,000 agricultural credits, for a total of \$15.7 million. Since 2013, Haitian agro-entrepreneurs have received over 21,700 agricultural credits (23 percent of which went to women), for a total of \$28 million.

In Ethiopia, the World Bank's Women Entrepreneurship Development project, supported by Canada, helped 2,500 women access larger individual loans by reducing collateral requirements and other barriers that limit women's access to finance.

During the 2014–2015 reporting period, the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project, implemented by Care Canada and funded by Canada, supported 2,070 female workers in Pakistan transition from road maintenance jobs to securing livelihoods in agriculture, retail and other service-oriented businesses.

Promoting growth that benefits the poor is also an ongoing IDRC focus. In 2014–2015, to empower women in small business, IDRC announced a \$560,000 grant to WEConnect International to give 500 women-owned businesses in India greater access to global markets. The grant is helping women entrepreneurs succeed in global value chains by registering and certifying them, and linking them to overseas buyers. This pilot project will eventually help to promote women entrepreneurs from 17 other countries.

Investing in People

Whether in the workplace or through skills training, it is important that people in developing countries develop their skills and knowledge in order to access jobs and reap the economic benefits.

To that effect, Canada provided \$5.5 million to Jordan's Business Development Center to scale up and improve the delivery of skills development programs for youth, such as human resource management, sales and interpersonal relations. In 2014–2015, 2,179 young women and men graduated from these skills development programs.

In Bangladesh, Canada worked through the World Bank to provide stipends for technical and vocational education and training programs for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Over two years, the project reached 96,329 students, including 14,082 women, surpassing the target of 82,000 students. Canada is also collaborating with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association to provide training to 10,000 low skilled or unskilled garment workers, including women and people with disabilities. In 2014–2015, 840 garment workers (92 women and 748 men) were trained, with 84 percent employed within three months.

In the Philippines, through the Local Governance Support Program for Local Economic Development, an initiative supported by Canada and implemented by the Canadian Urban Institute and Colleges and Institutes Canada, more than 8,600 people, 55 percent of whom were women, improved their skills to align with industry needs and develop more profitable businesses. These included micro and small entrepreneurs, smallholder farmers and low-skilled workers in the tourism and agribusiness sectors.

In Colombia, between 2010 and 2015, through the Sustainable Development for Youth in Rural Nariño project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canada helped 2,643 vulnerable youth living in regions affected by armed conflict improve their business management capacity and skills for employment. This project also helped 1,837 youths participate in 57 micro businesses established by the project, improving their entrepreneurial skills.

Since 2008, IDRC has managed the Think Tank Initiative, a major funding partnership that is building strong and independent policy research institutions in the developing world. Thanks to commitments from IDRC, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Norwegian government, 43 organizations are now supported by roughly \$100 million in new funding—an amount additional to a similar amount made available in the Initiative's first phase.