

South-South Series:

Empowering and Growing Women-led Business



Session n°8:

Artificial intelligence for women entrepreneurs

Wednesday 15 April 2026 – 14:00-15:45 UTC

[Online \(Zoom\)](#)

Live interpretation in English, French and Spanish

1. Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming economies and reshaping the future of work. Yet, access to and adoption of these technologies remain uneven, particularly along gender and geographic lines. Women are approximately 25% less likely than men to adopt AI, often due to lower confidence levels, limited access to digital tools and skills¹. These disparities are further exacerbated in developing countries and in particular in agrifood and rural sectors. In low-income countries, only 27% of the population is online, with women facing the highest exclusion rates., reflecting persistent challenges related to infrastructure, affordability, and digital literacy².

As a result, only a small share of the workforce is currently exposed to AI, despite global estimates suggesting that up to half of all jobs will require reskilling in the coming years. Beyond access, AI adoption depends on key enabling conditions, including the availability of relevant skills, access to quality data, affordable technologies, and clear regulatory frameworks. Without these foundations, there is a risk that AI could reinforce existing inequalities rather than reduce them.

At the same time, the rapid expansion of Generative AI (designed to create new content rather than just analyze or process existing data) presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While adoption is accelerating globally, with approximately 75% of knowledge workers already using such tools³, important gender gaps persist. Only around 23% of women report using Generative AI tools at work⁴, compared to significantly higher rates among men. This highlights the urgency of ensuring that women entrepreneurs are not left behind in the current wave of technological transformation.

2. Opportunities for women entrepreneurs

Despite these challenges, AI offers significant opportunities to level the playing field for women entrepreneurs, particularly in the Global South. When supported by the right ecosystem, AI can help address structural barriers that have historically limited women's participation in business and economic growth.

AI tools, especially Generative AI, can enhance productivity in areas such as communication, marketing, customer engagement, and information processing. This can be particularly transformative for women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), enabling them to operate more efficiently, access new markets, and scale their businesses with fewer resources.

¹ UN. 2025. [Artificial intelligence unleashed: Transforming the entrepreneurial scene in developing countries](#).

² IMF. 2024. [Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work](#)

³ Microsoft. 2024. [AI at Work Is Here. Now Comes the Hard Part](#).

⁴ World Bank Group. 2025. [Digital Progress and Trends Report 2025](#).



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Importantly, evidence shows that women-led businesses, when given adequate access to finance and resources, often generate higher returns on investment than average⁵. Leveraging AI in an inclusive and targeted manner is therefore not only a matter of equity but also a strategic economic opportunity to foster innovation, competitiveness, and resilience.

Evidence shows that women are underrepresented both among AI users and in the AI workforce, with only 29% reporting interaction with AI tools compared to 41% of men and are less likely to engage with generative AI tools even when accounting for occupation and skill levels⁶. They are also underrepresented in high-exposure AI sectors, such as science, engineering, and leadership, and overrepresented in roles vulnerable to automation⁷.

At the same time, global and regional disparities in AI readiness shape how these opportunities can be realized. In the Caribbean, AI companies represent less than 2% of the total in Latin America and the Caribbean, with growth constrained by high operational costs and infrastructure gaps⁸. In Africa, investment levels remain limited, with only one significant AI deal recorded in Q4 2024 (below USD 100 million) and FinTech deals representing just over 2% of global activity⁹. In contrast, parts of the Asia-Pacific region show more advanced adoption, with over 60% of firms already using or piloting AI technologies, though significant disparities in digital infrastructure and access still exist across countries¹⁰. While AI presents global opportunities, its impact depends on the strength of local ecosystems, including access to finance, infrastructure, skills, and enabling policy environments.

AI also presents transformative opportunities in the agri-food sector, a cornerstone of economic development in the Global South that employs a large share of women and youth. AI-powered solutions can support precision agriculture by optimizing farming practices, reducing waste, and increasing yields, particularly for women-led smallholder farms and youth-led agri-startups. They can also improve market access by connecting entrepreneurs to buyers, fair trade networks, and e-commerce platforms, helping bridge the gap between rural producers and urban markets. In addition, AI can strengthen climate resilience through predictive analytics on weather patterns, soil health, and pest control. Finally, AI-powered fintech solutions can expand access to credit, insurance, and digital payments, helping address persistent financing gaps for women-owned SMEs and youth-led enterprises.

3. Way forward

As Artificial Intelligence continues to reshape economies, ensuring that women entrepreneurs—particularly in the Global South, can access, adopt, and shape these technologies is both an equity imperative and an economic opportunity. Addressing gender gaps in AI is critical not only to prevent the deepening of inequalities, but also to unlock the full potential of women-led businesses as drivers of innovation, growth, and resilience in an increasingly digital economy. This webinar will bring together women entrepreneurs, practitioners, and experts to explore how AI can be leveraged by and for women entrepreneurs. Through shared experiences and practical insights, the discussion will highlight how women are already using AI in their businesses, the challenges they face, and the types of support, partnerships, and policies needed to foster more inclusive AI adoption.

⁵ Boston Consulting Group. 2018. [Why Women-Owned Startups Are a Better Bet](#).

⁶ OECD. 2024. [Policy Brief: Algorithm and Eve: How AI will impact women at work](#).

⁷ OECD. 2024. [Who will be the workers most affected by AI?](#)

⁸ ECLAC. [Caribbean Artificial Intelligence Readiness: An Exploratory Review](#).

⁹ OECD. 2025. [Africa Capital Markets Report 2025](#).

¹⁰ Boston Consulting Group. 2025. [AI at Work: Is Asia Pacific Leading the Way?](#)

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Agenda

Moderator: *Alonso Bobes, Program Associate, UN Women MCO Caribbean*

14:00-14:10 Introduction to the session

14:10-14:20 Welcoming remarks:

- *Angela Davis, Program Specialist, UN Women MCO Caribbean*
- *Inês Bastos, Head of Networks & Alliances, COLEAD*

14:20-15:20 Panel on the experiences of women entrepreneurs in adopting AI

- *Akoua Awoudja, Strategic Digital Transformation Advisor in Data Exploitation for Artificial Intelligence, GIZ, Togo*
- *Kai Clarke, Founder, EthicalAI Caribbean, Jamaica*
- *Priscilla Wakarera, Co Founder, Rhea, Kenya*
- *Lisa-Marie LaVeau, Vice President, Heft IQ, Trinidad and Tobago*

15:20-15:40 Q&A

15:40-15:45 Way forward: *Nina Desanlis-Perrin, Project Officer, COLEAD*



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