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Ministerial Round Table on Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Recovery Post-Covid-19



new policy initiatives that could assist medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) towards a long-term green, inclusive and resilient recovery post Covid-19 and in support of sustainable development goals.

UNCTAD's newly appointed Secretary-General, Mrs. Rebeca Grynspan of Costa Rica, noted that investment and trade seem to have "turned the corner" in this post-Covid-19 situation, but that investment in least developed countries continued to decline. She highlighted the important role of entrepreneurship in post-pandemic economic recovery and noted the changing paths of global value chains, increasing regionalization and the role of private sector in economic recovery.

Ministers noted challenges posed by the current Covid-19 crisis and emphasized that MSMEs will be key in the post-pandemic economic recovery. Therefore, governments should bring forward effective fiscal and regulatory measures to support entrepreneurs and the MSME sector. The Roundtable included addresses by the Ministers of Cameroon, Dominican Republic, The Gambia, Guatemala, Mauritius, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe. They joined more than 8,000 WIF participants, including 300 high-level speakers, 13 heads of State and Government, 54 Ministers, 24 heads of international organizations and over 70 CEOs that made the WIF 2021 a memorable event.

The WIF takes place every two years and is a premier global platform for investment and development, bringing together experts and high-level government officials, representatives of the private sector, civil society, and academia. This year's theme of Investing in Sustainable Recovery focused on the global challenges facing international investment in the post-pandemic era.

For the full program of the World Investment Forum and its various session videos, please visit <https://worldinvestmentforum.unctad.org/7th-world-investment-forum/>



UNCTAD Secretary-General, Mrs. Rebeca Grynspan of Costa Rica, addresses participants of the World Investment Forum that took place from 18 to 22 October 2021.

WIF sessions on Entrepreneurship in the New Health Economy

From 18 to 22 October 2021, three sessions on entrepreneurship in the New Health Economy were organized during the World Investment Forum. Experts discussed the role of various ecosystem partners in shaping the new health economy of the Asia Pacific region, as well as Africa and Latin America. They shared practical experiences and insights on challenges and opportunities facing the health sector, including in responding to the current Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The participants debated policy reforms needed to scale up innovation and bring significant system efficiencies, better patient outcomes and population health standards through personalized health care.

The video recordings of the three sessions can be found at <https://worldinvestmentforum.unctad.org/7th-wif-videos/>

XXVII Empretec Directors Meeting

Forty representatives from twenty-two Empretec national centers and one prospective center (Costa Rica) attended the XXVII annual meeting of Empretec Directors, held on 1-2 December 2021 in a virtual format. The meeting provided participants with an opportunity to highlight the major achievements over the past two years, share updates and news concerning their country programs and discuss strategic and operational issues related to the Empretec programme and the impact of COVID-19 on the work of Empretec centers. The centers shared experiences and new approaches developed to mitigate the repercussions of the pandemic. Additionally, they elaborated on the opportunities seized and challenges faced during the pandemic.

During the meeting, UNCTAD announced the call for nominations for the 2022 *Empretec Women in Business Awards*. All centers were invited to nominate outstanding women entrepreneurs who benefited from Empretec training.

Finally, the meeting discussed UNCTAD's progress in developing online games and tools that could be integrated into future virtual Empretec ETWs. At the time of the meeting, a pilot ETW was being conducted in Brazil, at SEBRAE's headquarters, with a view to

"road test" developed games and tools during an in-presence 6-day training workshop, with a group of entrepreneurs equipped with laptops, tablets and mobile phones (see picture below). The new set of games and tools is expected to be released in early 2022, and tested again during one of the ETWs, before being made available to all Empretec centers worldwide.

The next generation of UNCTAD Empretec training arrives: A pilot training project out of Brazil has reshaped the way Empretec delivers amid pandemics and in a digitally transformed world.

For many education and training organizations worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic was an extreme pivot point to the online teaching environment.

It has not always been an easy transformation, especially for more interactive learning contexts. UNCTAD's Empretec programme was no different and grappled with how to convert its unique training during the pandemic.

This approach requires "more hands-on than computers on ... COVID-19 forced a reconceptualization around how this training is delivered, and we now have an innovative training product that feels hands-on while being delivered digitally," says Arlette Verploegh, head of Empretec.

In December 2021 in Brazil, Empretec launched its first hybrid workshop using newly developed online tools. The training was delivered in partnership with the Brazilian Micro and Small Enterprises' Support Agency (SEBRAE), which hosts Empretec in the South American nation.



Empretec in Brazil embrace a hybrid training scenario © SEBRAE/UNCTAD

The UNCTAD Empretec team spent 18 months designing, developing and testing solutions that would allow its centers to continue offering the ETW in a virtual environment. From November 29 to December 4, a group of Brazilian entrepreneurs in a classroom used the online platform developed by UNCTAD, international master trainers and an information technology company to complete exercises, experience role-playing and play strategic games that would have otherwise taken place in person. Outside of the fact that the training can be delivered in person-to-person format, hybrid or completely online, it now includes several new online tools and games that are part of the interactive environment.

Three UNCTAD-Empretec International Master Trainers, Roberto Gandara, Renato Santos and Luiz Felipe Escarlata, facilitated the workshop and supervised the group to assess impact and learning outcomes of the new format. So far, the feedback is very positive, says the trainers and trainees. “We managed to simplify our workshop and make it more playful and tailored for new generations,” said Daniella Santana, SEBRAE Empretec manager. “As with every pilot, adjustments are still necessary, but the successful results of this first experience are very positive. Another “plus” was reducing the consumption of paper and materials that, in addition to being expensive, goes against the best practices of sustainability that inform our approach,” she added.

One participant, Fernanda Nascimento, a 39-year-old mother who runs *Bahnhof*, an ice-cream kiosk specializing in typical Amazon region flavors, in a shopping mall in the heart of Brazil’s capital, said the workshop helped her embrace change. “Empretec woke me up to how important my behavioral change is for the growth of my company, and to identify important opportunities for improvement. Bahnhof will grow in 2022 because we are more focused on data and more assertive decision-making – all lessons from the training.”

These positive results mean that UNCTAD is moving ahead with the development of a fully online entrepreneurship training workshop. A second workshop aimed at incorporating suggestions from the pilot and refining the tools is planned to be carried out in Brazil in the first quarter of 2022.

This project is being developed under the [Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector](#), a UN multi-partner program that supports governments and MSMEs by developing and implementing capacity-building tools. The initiative aims at mitigating the economic and social impact of the global Covid-19 crisis, while facilitating the achievement of the SDGs.



The team involved in the delivery of the Brazil workshop: Daniella Santana, National Empretec Manager at SEBRAE; the pilot ETW trainers and backstage support team – Luiz Felipe Escarlata, Renato Santos and Roberto Gandara.

This article can also be found at: [The next generation of UNCTAD Empretec training arrives | UNCTAD](#).

Entrepreneurship Strategy in Uganda

The Ugandan Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives working in collaboration with UNCTAD, organized a three-day workshop from

15 to 17 September 2021, to obtain perspectives and recommendations on key priority areas that should be considered in the eventual formulation of an Integrated National Entrepreneurship Strategy. The workshop also discussed how best to integrate migrant and refugee entrepreneurs into Uganda’s private sector development policies. The three-day workshop included representatives from various United Nations entities in Uganda, the Government, development partners, financial Institutions, incubators, private sector foundations, Kampala City Traders Association (KACITA), and the academia.

Regional workshop on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees in the Andean Region

UNCTAD together with the Alianza para el Emprendimiento e Innovación (AEI), launched on October 12 a *Regional Virtual Forum on Good Practices on Inclusive and Sustainable Entrepreneurship in the Andean region*. The objective was to showcase good practices that have solved challenges of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and that have supported the development of migrant and refugee entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the forum sought to showcase regional collaborative initiatives that have forged the inclusion of migrant and refugee entrepreneurs in the different countries of the region. One of the most relevant aspects of the forum, attended by around 260 people was the diversity in the composition of participants who virtually connected from various continents and regions such as Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Switzerland, Italy, the United States of America and Panama.

National Entrepreneurship Strategy in Seychelles

In an effort to formulate a National Entrepreneurship Strategy and promote MSME sector, the Government of Seychelles, assisted by UNCTAD and other stakeholders, organized a workshop on 11 November 2021 to obtain ideas and suggestions on upscaling entrepreneurship in Seychelles. Information on field experiences, good practices and lessons learned were shared during the workshop and will be used as inputs in the eventual elaboration of the National Entrepreneurship Strategy (NES).



Participants in the Seychelles National Entrepreneurship Strategy workshop, 11 November 2021.

UNCTAD and UNITAR launch e-learning courses on entrepreneurship policy for sustainable development in French and Spanish

UNCTAD and UNITAR jointly launched the e-learning course on entrepreneurship policy for sustainable development in French on 13 October 2021. The virtual launch of the e-learning course was attended by about 140 online participants, and was co-organized by representatives of Cameroon, Mali, Senegal and Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Similar Spanish version of the e-learning course on entrepreneurship policy for sustainable development was launched on 29 November 2021. The Zoom and Facebook "live" event was co-organized by representatives of Ecuador and Columbia and was attended by about 200 participants. The participants of both events benefited from learning about new ways of integrating sustainability concepts into the entrepreneurship policy.

UNCTAD organizes Empretec training-of-trainers workshop for Spanish speakers

With a view to support Spanish-speaking Empretec centers and raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable businesses under the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNCTAD organized, in coordination with the Empretec center of Argentina, four days of online training-of-trainers (TOT) workshops aimed at Spanish-speaking Empretec trainers from Latin America.

The workshops were held virtually from 30 to 31 August and 6 to 7 September 2021, by international trainers from Argentina and Brazil on the topics of sustainable businesses and SDGs.

More than sixty trainees learned and shared their views in small group discussions containing 4-5 persons and participated in 8 separate Zoom "rooms". They searched for opportunities in resolving urgent problems linked to the community and the environment "acting before it's too late," and debated the new paradigm of the entrepreneur which is: "he or she who generates impact on the community."

After the TOT, all participants were asked to complete a survey of their satisfaction with the workshop and the feasibility of applying the sustainability perspective to the future similar workshops as well as on their needs for additional training and updates to the training materials. In total, 22 responses were received and 90% of participants stated that they have learned new things, especially on integrating sustainability into Empretec workshops, and would like to see more of such training opportunities in the future.

Financial Education Workshop for MSMEs from Seychelles

The Financial Education Workshop for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from Seychelles took place from 7 to 9 September 2021 via Virtual MS Teams. The workshop was designed to bridge the financial knowledge gap of MSME entrepreneurs in Seychelles. The participants learned about business

Innovation and E-commerce, budgeting and forecasting, QuickBooks, entrepreneurship and marketing, cyber security, keeping safe digitally and online, credit facilities for MSMEs and other introductory topics on entrepreneurship. The workshop was open to all small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs from Seychelles.

UNCTAD Webinars on Design Thinking and Business Model Canvas

The UNCTAD Webinar on Design Thinking was held on 15 September 2021 and featured more than seventy participants from Ethiopia, Jordan, South Africa, Zimbabwe and other countries.

The Business Model Canvas webinar was held on 22 September 2021 with more than sixty participants from Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The goal of these two events was to offer Empretec Trainers a learning and improvement opportunity on delivering the modernized version of ETW.

Animated training videos on PECs

UNCTAD has produced a set of 2-minute animated videos, illustrating Empretec's ten Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECs). The purpose of the videos is to use them as a didactic tool in Empretec workshops for groups of entrepreneurs in vulnerable conditions (such as low-literacy groups as well as migrants and refugees). The videos can also be used as promotional tools to introduce Empretec's ten personal entrepreneurial competencies that are found among successful entrepreneurs, as well as to inspire potential candidates to attend Empretec training workshops.

NEWS FROM THE CENTERS: (REPORTING THE NEWS AS SENT BY THE CENTERS)

ARGENTINA

In the second half of 2021, Empretec Argentina continued its training program consisting of 100% virtual activities with the aim of assisting Argentine entrepreneurs and SMEs during the post-Covid scenario.

From July to November, more than 300 entrepreneurs from all over the country participated in a series of free virtual trainings to provide specific tools to Argentine companies and enterprises. Furthermore, Empretec Argentina developed a 3rd edition of its program in Foreign Trade to train Argentine companies on how to better access foreign markets through strategies and tools for internationalization. This program was specifically designed for the knowledge-based and publishing sectors. In 2021, the program trained more than 150 companies.

In July, Empretec Argentina and the Association of Metallurgical Industries of the Argentine Republic (ADIMRA) launched their first edition of the Industry 4.0 Contest for SMEs and Entrepreneurship, aimed at promoting projects that develop

applied Industry 4.0 solutions. Satellite technology, nanotechnology, laboratory equipment and software systems were some of the six finalist projects that will compete in the final instance of the contest.

BENIN

In 2021, forty new Empretec's were trained using Empretec's new E6DM methodology by the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Centre (CePEPE) in Benin. There were two training sessions on developing the entrepreneurial mindset organized using the new methodology between 20 and 25 September and 16 and 20 October 2021. The workshops trained in total twenty-two men and seventeen women entrepreneurs from Benin.

The training sessions were the first in Francophone Africa to be implemented using the new E6DM methodology. They follow the updating of the teaching material and additional training provided to Empretec trainers.

The participants benefited from gaining insight into their entrepreneurial potential as well as strengthening their self-confidence and motivation. They will also benefit from the continuing support of CePEPE.



Participants in Africa's first francophone E6DM workshop in Cotonou, Benin, 20-25 September 2021.

INDIA

Empretec India Foundation (EIF) launched in 2021 its HiEERA-Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP!), with 60 post-graduate students pursuing a study in International Business.



Iram Maimuna established E-Waste Social (<https://ewastesocial.com/>), as a state-of-the-art electronic waste aggregator, associating organizations with e-waste recyclers. The company aims to promote eco-friendly reuse and recycling of electronics.

Empretec-HiEERA (High-Impact Entrepreneurs from Emerging Regions for Action) is a specialized Technical Assistance Programme developed by UNCTAD and Empretec India Foundation in keeping with the principles of Empretec to identify, hone and leverage the social and economic contributions of high-impact entrepreneurs with growth mindsets across various levels in industrial value chains, based on the overall HiEERA philosophy.

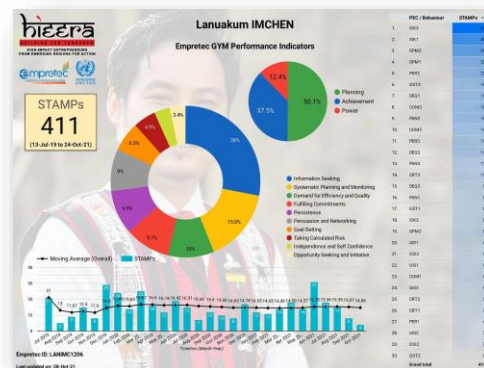
YEP! is a 2-year Fellowship Programme that comprises a 1-year Internship with a HiEERA entrepreneur followed by a 1-year Apprenticeship supervised by a HiEERA entrepreneur during which the participants set up their own enterprise and/or become part of the business value chain.

The Programme contributes towards facilitating sustainable post-COVID-19 resurgence among youths in India, especially around the entrepreneurial characteristics of resilience and competitiveness.

In 2021, EIF also developed a consortium of strategic, finance, knowledge, and media partners including Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), UN Women, Ernst & Young, PwC, and Zee Media Corporation Limited to support its Business Development Services (BDS).

In addition, to further strengthen its BDS, EIF engaged with Ernst & Young to conduct an external audit of the Post Covid-19 Impact on the entrepreneurial indicators of its top-performing HiEERAs. The survey revealed that Covid-19 has most impacted entrepreneurs' Decision-Making Ability (83%) and Collaboration & Networking (80%) indicators. Surprisingly, the least impacted were the Sales & Turnover (55%) and capacity building programs in rural areas (47%).

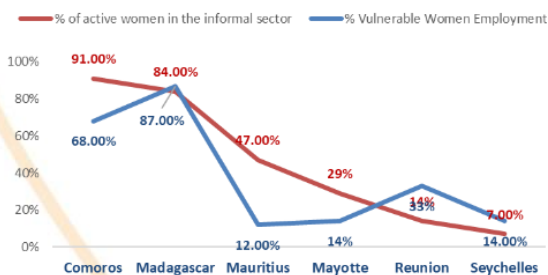
Finally, in 2021, EIF developed a *HiEERA Mirror* online platform that provides an overview of HiEERA entrepreneurs' STAMPing efforts and contains a detailed presentation of their Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies and behaviors demonstrated by them.



MAURITIUS

In the past two years, Empretec Mauritius (EM) completed a few significant projects over and above the ETW which allowed the organization to overcome a couple of lockdowns and sanitary restrictions in 2020 and 2021. Among its achievements in 2021 was the completion of a study entitled 'Mapping the Economic Participation of Women in the SouthWest of the Indian Ocean Islands' (Commissioned by the Indian Ocean Chambers of Commerce Union). The study showed that women's economic participation is estimated to range from low to very low in the target countries. On the average, 4 out of 10 women of working age are economically active. However, their participation in the region's economy is still very small compared to that of men, especially in terms of income. Female employment strongly depends on the level of education and the economic structure of each of the islands. Most women hold jobs in low value-added sectors such as agriculture, fishing, commerce or personal services, that often pay minimum wages.

Informal Sector and Vulnerable Employment



Women often find themselves in the most vulnerable conditions in the informal economy, such as domestic staff, home workers, vendors, or unpaid employees of family businesses and farm workers.

Empretec Mauritius also supported in 2021, the creation of the first licensed Peer-to-Peer lending platform in Mauritius (www.FinClub.mu). Peer to Peer lending (P2P) is a practice of matching Lenders (investors) and Borrowers through an online platform. It is a way for Borrowers to get funding without going to the traditional sources of finance, such as banks and microfinance institutions.



The platform targets creditworthy individuals, SMEs and aspiring entrepreneurs in Mauritius who need money and lenders who want to invest their money to get higher returns than interest from savings accounts. Borrowers' risk and repayment capacity are assessed prior to calculation of a fixed interest rate applicable on the loan for a period of up to 24 months. The platform is working on the

integration of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to develop alternative Credit Scoring for Borrowers, thus broadening target market of the platform and integrating more underbanked and unbanked individuals and SMEs from the informal sector. The initiative has excellent expansion potential to other east African countries.

Finally, in 2021, Empretec Mauritius worked together with Benin's CePEPE on translating the new Empretec E6DM training materials and participants' manual into French. The two Empretec centers and UNCTAD also organized an online E6DM training-of-trainers workshop in French.

Empretec's new lead

The Enterprise Development Section of UNCTAD has a new chief, Ms. Arlette Verploegh, who joined the Empretec team in December 2021. She brings to her role senior United Nations management experience and in-depth knowledge of strategy programme development; social and economic sustainability; new technologies and entrepreneurship; executive positioning; influencer management and corporate brand management and communications.



"I am excited to embark on a new journey in promoting and strengthening a conducive MSME and start-up entrepreneurial ecosystem. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, entrepreneurs have been hit hard and at the same time have shown a remarkable innovative mindset and resilience," Ms. Verploegh said. "I look forward to continuing build upon the Empretec programme's creative excellence and innovation and work together with the global Empretec centres towards inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship."

Ms. Verploegh was formerly heading UNCTAD's Communications and External Relations and was Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Secretary-General where she managed events at executive level and pioneered innovative initiatives, including in the digital economy and youth engagement with the United Nations. Earlier in her career, she developed and led international programmes in the area of entrepreneurship.

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