



# Technology in Action: Good Practices in Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for Women in South Asia



UNCTAD CURRENT STUDIES ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION. N°12



UNITED NATIONS



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Pursuant to the mandate of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2011/17, this new series of publications elaborated by the CSTD aims to provide a forum, in collaboration with its Gender Advisory Board (GAB), to share good practice examples and lessons learned in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation policymaking and implementation.

The term country as used in this study also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas. The designations of country groups are intended solely for statistical or analytical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgement about the stage of development reached by a particular country or area in the development process. Mention of any firm, organization or policy does not imply endorsement by the United Nations.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	gross domestic product
GII	gender inequality index
ICT	Information and communications technology
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
IER	Information Economy Report
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMR	maternal mortality ratio
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RMFSP	Rural Microfinance Support Project
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SGs	Solidarity groups
SIGI	social institutions and gender index
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STI	science, technology and innovation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

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## 1. Introduction

Women do not enjoy the same opportunities in any society (UNESCO, 2003). They work longer hours and are paid less; and girls' life choices are more restricted than boys' (UNESCO, 2003:3). This discrimination spans the world and affects not only access to resources but also related social institutions such as family codes, civil liberties and ownership rights (OECD, 2010). As mentioned by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), empowerment and informed choice are critical for gender equality and human development (UNCTAD, 2011a). Indeed, gender equality and women's empowerment constitute a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) themselves and are also important in terms of reaching the rest of the MDGs (UNCTAD, 2011a and UNDP, 2005). In addition, gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and the progress of countries (World Bank, 2012a and WEF, 2012) and for achieving an inclusive and people-centred development, which is a priority of the post-2015 development agenda (UNDESA, 2012 and United Nations, 2013a).<sup>1</sup>

Gender equality can also provide a range of economic and social multiplier effects (UN-Women, 2009). For instance, some of the outcomes of increasing gender equality are the enhancement of women's ability to increase the productivity of their livelihoods and allocate the saved time and energy to invest in their own personal development

the gender divide in access and control of resources strengthens the pool of labour and talent of economies and increases national productivity (UN-Women, 2009). Studies considering long-term periods have found that women's access to resources such as education, paid work, credit, land technology and other productive assets has strong positive effects on child survival, welfare and education than resources in men's hands (Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2000).

Improving women's absolute and relative status also contributes to other development outcomes, including those of their children. In addition, providing equal access to opportunities for women and men to become socially and politically active may contribute to more representative institutions and policy choices and thus to a better development path (World Bank, 2012a).

In the last decades, the world has achieved significant progress in enhancing gender equality in several areas. For instance, in many countries there have been important advances in reducing the gender gap in education not only at primary but also at secondary and tertiary levels. Indeed, in many countries, the gender divide is actually reversing at tertiary levels, with young men at a relative disadvantage (World Bank, 2012a). There have also been advances in terms of women's participation in the labour force, whose growth has expanded women's economic

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