

Committee on Development and Intellectual Property (CDIP)

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SUMMARY OF THE STUDY ON “POLICY APPROACHES TO CLOSE THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY GENDER GAP – PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY SYSTEM FOR FEMALE INVENTORS, CREATORS AND ENTREPRENEURS”

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1. The Annex to this document contains a Summary of the Study on “Policy Approaches to Close the Intellectual Property Gender Gap – Practices to Support Access to the Intellectual Property System for Female Inventors, Creators and Entrepreneurs”. This study has been undertaken in the context of the Development Agenda Project on “Increasing the Role of Women in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Encouraging Women in Developing Countries to Use the Intellectual Property System”.

2. *The CDIP is invited to take note of the information contained in the Annex to the present document.*

[Annex follows]

POLICY APPROACHES TO CLOSE THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY GENDER GAP – PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY SYSTEM FOR FEMALE INVENTORS, CREATORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

Executive Summary¹

Research indicates that women are not participating in the IP system at the same rates as men, and that the relative deficit in access to the intellectual property (IP) system by women is present across all forms of IP rights. Solving this problem has the potential to greatly benefit individual women and businesses, as well as societies at large. At the individual level, increasing women's access to the IP system can have such benefits as increased pay, better professional opportunities, and increased visibility within their fields. In terms of the societal level, one study has estimated that closing the gender gap with regard to patents could increase a nation's GDP by 2.7 per cent.

Though the initial goal of this report was to identify "best practices", in terms of policies and other initiatives that can enhance access to the IP system by women, the authors found that there are not yet proven best practices as such. Rather, there are a number of promising programs for the advancement of women in terms of their engagement with the IP system. Certain of these programs are described in the paper, along with possible next steps that governments can take to surmount the barriers.

This report identifies five challenges contributing to the IP gender gap, and proposes solutions and policies targeted at each of them. The five challenges identified are:

1. A lack of data needed to understand the scope and nature of the gender gap;
2. The fact that women are less likely to be encouraged and trained to enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, as well as less likely to receive the resources they need to succeed in business;
3. The fact that women are less likely to enter careers in IP law and administration;
4. A general lack of understanding of the value of IP rights and of how the IP system works; and
5. The fact that women are less likely to receive mentoring and opportunities for advancement in IP-sensitive fields.

Among the corresponding possible solutions – emerging best practices - are, respectively:

1. Determining with greater certainty what data is being collected, as well as what challenges stand in the way of data collection;
2. Promoting programs for girls, adult women, and educators that encourage female engagement with IP, as well as STEM grants and scholarships, internships and mentoring, academic research funding, investment capital for female entrepreneurs, and fundamental capacity building;

¹ The full study is available at: https://www.wipo.int/ip-development/en/agenda/work_undertaken.html

3. Increasing the number of female IP law and administration professionals indirectly by focusing on increasing the number of female STEM professionals, as well as creating targeted programs for the training of women for IP law and administration careers;
4. Promoting awareness-raising and targeted capacity-building programs; and
5. Providing networking and mentoring opportunities, supporting women's ability to both succeed and remain in IP-intensive careers, and encouraging women to commercialize their inventions.

[End of Annex and of document]