

## **EBRD Women Access to Finance (A2F) Programme Building Internal Capacity with Partner Banks**

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the “Bank”) is committed to addressing gender issues and implementing specific actions in its investment and technical co-operation projects to increase the positive impact of the Bank on gender equality and opportunities for women, such as by increasing the economic participation of women in the private sector. Micro, Small and Medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) play a central role in contributing to employment generation and economic growth and it is a sector in which women have an active and growing role. Nevertheless, they are often not seen as equal players and/or given equal access to credit. This lack of status often makes it more difficult for them to establish their businesses and gain acceptance in the business community.

EBRD has been working with its partner banks to enhance their internal capacity so as to better target this under-served market by promoting opportunities for access to finance for women owned or managed MSMEs. On 16 April 2013, the Board approved the Strategic Gender Initiative which sets out the orientation for the EBRD’s work in promoting and strengthening its approach to leveraging the untapped potential of women in its countries of operation.

The objective of EBRD’s “Women Access to Finance (A2F) Programme” is to enhance our partner banks internal capacity to finance women entrepreneurs and to support them in the design of non-financial services for their women-owned and managed SMEs.

Through the provision of targeted Technical Assistance the Bank can support its partner institutions to:

- Profile the demand and supply factors relevant to women entrepreneurs seeking finance
- Gain an understanding of their pattern of lending to female entrepreneurs
- Document specific non-financial challenges that new entrants and established entrepreneurs encounter in accessing; and
- Provide operationally relevant recommendations.

For each eligible project, the Bank will work with the client to design a programme that would be most beneficial and useful for them.

### **The Process**

The process generally involves the following:

- Establishing a gender disaggregated baseline for SMEs (this can be tailored to specific sectors or regions as required) in order to establish realistic targets and efficient tools to monitor progress;
- Conducting a needs assessment of women-owned and managed SMEs, including an analysis of rejected applications and an analysis identifying how these potential clients can become more bankable;

- Providing a detailed implementation plan which includes the expected budget with prioritised and costed recommendations and a set of indicators both to monitor progress and to assess the impact of the recommended measures;
- Devising a training programme to be delivered to bank lending and management staff on gender awareness and adopting gender informed marketing and communication techniques;
- In partnership with the partner bank hosting training events for women entrepreneurs to improve entrepreneurial capacity of women-managed and owned SMEs; and
- Supporting the partner bank with the creation of a website specifically for women-managed and owned SMEs including a learning platform for sharing experiences, etc.

Potential recommendations may include suggestions for amendments to current lending practices with respect to ensuring non-discrimination and some proactive support measures that might be adopted, in line with international standards. The support measures would ensure that the partner bank efficiently targets the underserved market. Training and capacity needs would also be identified as well as a set of indicators so that any progress can be measured.