

## **REPORT OF THE WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO)**

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a UN specialized agency, has its mandate defined by the highly technical field of intellectual property (IP), which includes such areas as patents, trademarks, industrial designs and copyright, as well as the protection of traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. WIPO is not a funding organization nor does it specialize in major research and analytical studies. Given such an institutional framework, it is no surprise that we have encountered serious challenges in trying to introduce a gender perspective and gender mainstreaming into our work. That being said, WIPO has been making steady progress in recognizing and highlighting the valuable role women play in the intellectual property field, as is the case in Latin America and the Caribbean. WIPO is also gaining a better understanding of how a gender perspective can enrich and strengthen its technical assistance and development cooperation activities, especially within the context of its capacity building and awareness raising programs. We believe that these areas of our work offer some of the best opportunities for WIPO to contribute to the economic and social advancement of women.

WIPO considers intellectual property to be an effective tool for economic and social empowerment, both of women and men. Experience shows, however, that women have generally taken a significantly lesser advantage of the intellectual property system than men have. For this reason, WIPO has tried to increase women's participation in the various intellectual property courses offered by the WIPO Worldwide Academy. Today, we are proud to say that women constitute around 40% of those attending or taking distance learning courses offered by the Academy. We have also organized various IP capacity building and awareness raising activities that target primarily women entrepreneurs and rural and indigenous women in the handicraft sector in developing countries and countries in transition.

For example, in Latin America, we are currently developing a pilot project, in cooperation with the government of Panama and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), to raise awareness and develop capacities among rural and indigenous women in the handicraft sector in Panama about how they can use intellectual property tools that are available to them in order to increase their revenues and thus gain greater economic autonomy. If this project proves successful, we hope to replicate it in other Latin American countries and possibly elsewhere.

In conclusion, WIPO has faced serious challenges and obstacles in introducing a gender perspective into its programs and activities. We have made important inroads, however, which we hope will serve as a platform for further progress in ensuring that women take better and greater advantage of the intellectual property system and thus enhance their economic and social advancement.

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