

PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY IN THE AMERICAS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS CONFERENCE



“Pathways to Prosperity can and will help spread the benefits of economic engagement and trade to women, rural farmers and small businesses, Afro-descendents, indigenous communities, and others too often left on the sidelines of progress.”

— Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

In May 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the United States would host a conference on women and entrepreneurship as part of the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas initiative. The Pathways initiative links together countries in the Americas to identify policies and programs that ensure all citizens share in the benefits of economic integration and globalization.

Launching Women Entrepreneurs

The Women Entrepreneurs Conference, held October 7-9, 2009 in Washington, D.C., launched a network of entrepreneurs who will promote access to markets, finance and training for women throughout the region, thereby stimulating economic growth. Early career entrepreneurs were linked with seasoned women entrepreneurs, from the United States and the region, to develop mentoring relationships. Early career entrepreneurs were chosen based on their readiness to expand their businesses into new markets.

Supporting these businesswomen provides a multiplier effect for not only those businesses, but also for their communities and the entire region. The conference offered:

- Networking opportunities for entrepreneurs and mentors;
- Discussions on finance, marketing, trade, technology, and leadership;
- A “How To” seminar to address issues such as financial backing, branding, logistics of importing, and identifying relevant resources;
- Field visits to local women-led businesses; and



- An expo for entrepreneurs to display their wares and meet representatives from companies interested in buying new lines of products and services from Latin America.

Continuing Mentorship

Following the conference, some of the entrepreneurs from the region traveled to other cities in the United States to observe successful businesses run by women. Additionally, all mentor-mentee relationships are facilitated for one year, during which time mentors will visit mentees in their home countries to provide further support. A Pathways website, <http://pathways-caminos.org.dnnmax.com/>, where entrepreneurs can interact online also facilitates the mentoring relationship.

The long-term goal of the conference is to support the development of a robust businesswomen’s network throughout the Pathways countries.

Partners

Collaborating with the U.S. Department of State in this endeavor are Agora Partnership, Apple, Business Council for International Understanding, Coca Cola, Count Me In, Endeavor, Ernst & Young, FedEx, Goldman Sachs, Inter-American Development Bank, Organization of American States, and Vital Voices.

Pathways Countries

Pathways countries include Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, El Salvador, and the United States. Other countries including Uruguay, Brazil, and Ecuador have attended Pathways meetings as observers.