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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

**Prospects and Potential In Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan,
the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan**

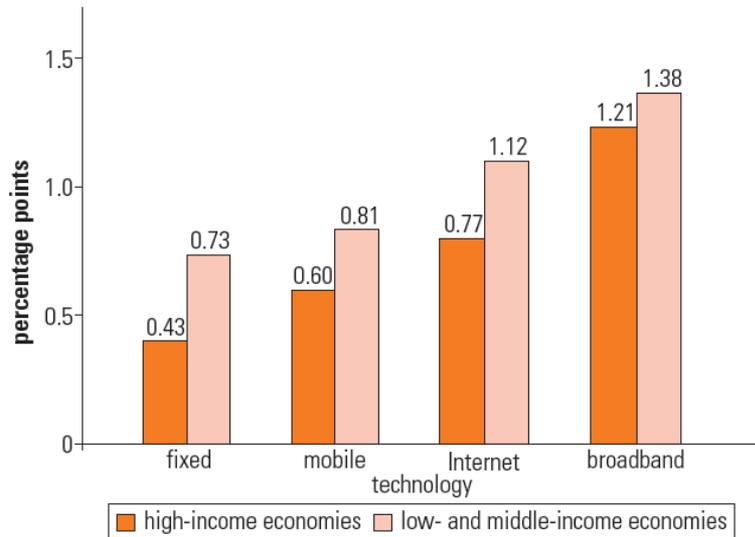
Objectives

- To assess the current environment for ICTs for Women's Entrepreneurship Development
- To explore the potential for leveraging ICT to support women's entrepreneurship
- To identify women entrepreneurs' ICT access, usage, ownership, needs and preferences for support, highlighting urban/peri-urban/rural differences
- To provide recommendations for leveraging appropriate ICT tools for women's entrepreneurship development.

Context: ICT Access = Growth

GDP growth

- Increased broadband access leads to accelerated economic growth (World Bank, 2009)



- If broadband access across CAREC increases to 50% by 2020, it could increase GDP by **\$500B**

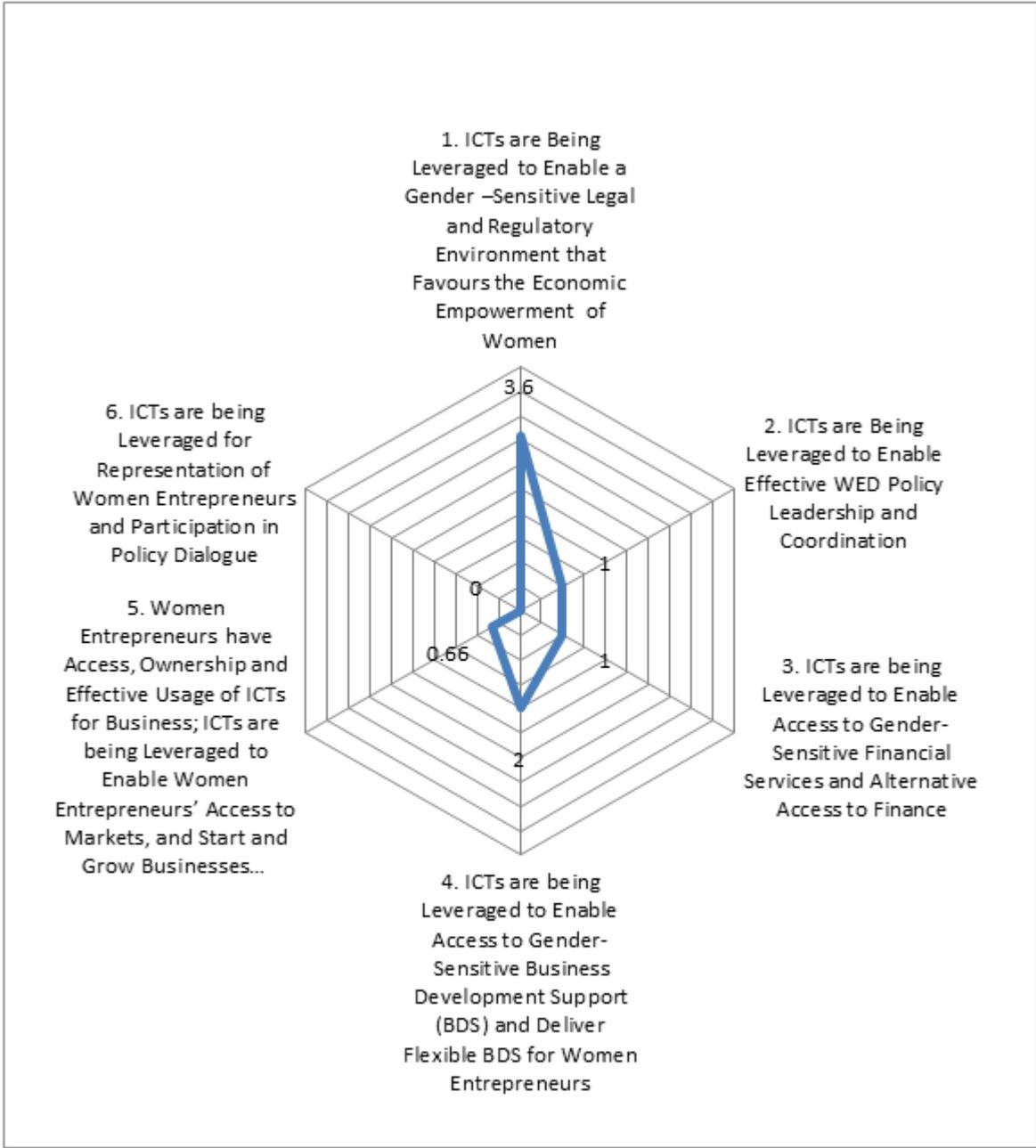
Job creation

- World Economic Forum (2013)
 - Digitization created **6 million jobs** globally and provided a US\$193 billion boost to world economic output in 2011
- McKinsey Global Institute (2012)
 - The Internet helped SMEs in eight developing countries create **3.2 jobs** for every job lost
- 20% of all jobs will be contracted online by 2020 (World Bank 2013)



Assessment of:

- Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory environment that favors the economic empowerment of women
- Effective WED policy, leadership and coordination
- Access to gender-sensitive financial services
- Access to gender-sensitive business development support services
- Access to markets, and access, ownership and use of technology; and
- Representation of women entrepreneurs and participation in policy dialog.



KAZAKHSTAN INITIAL ICT4WED SCORING

There are 200 million fewer women internet users than men worldwide and women are 21% less likely to own a mobile phone than men

Across the countries being studied, women trailed behind men in economic empowerment indicators such as business bank account ownership, labor force participation rates, and savings at a financial institution

While 41% of women entrepreneurs surveyed had internet-capable mobile phones, only 16% had activated internet services on their phones, and only 6% used those services for business activities

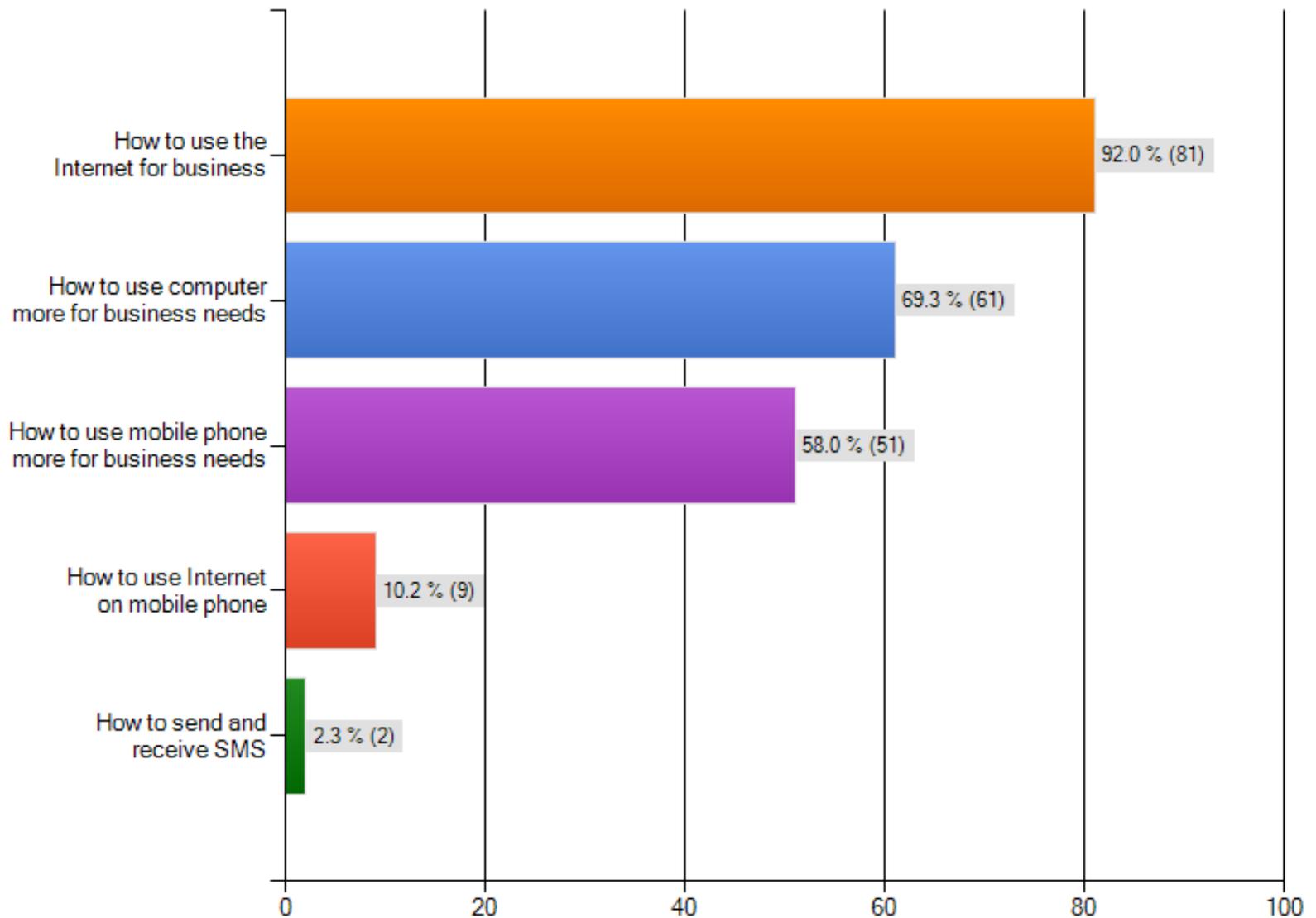


At the end of 2010, entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan totaled 161,000, of whom only 38.3% were women

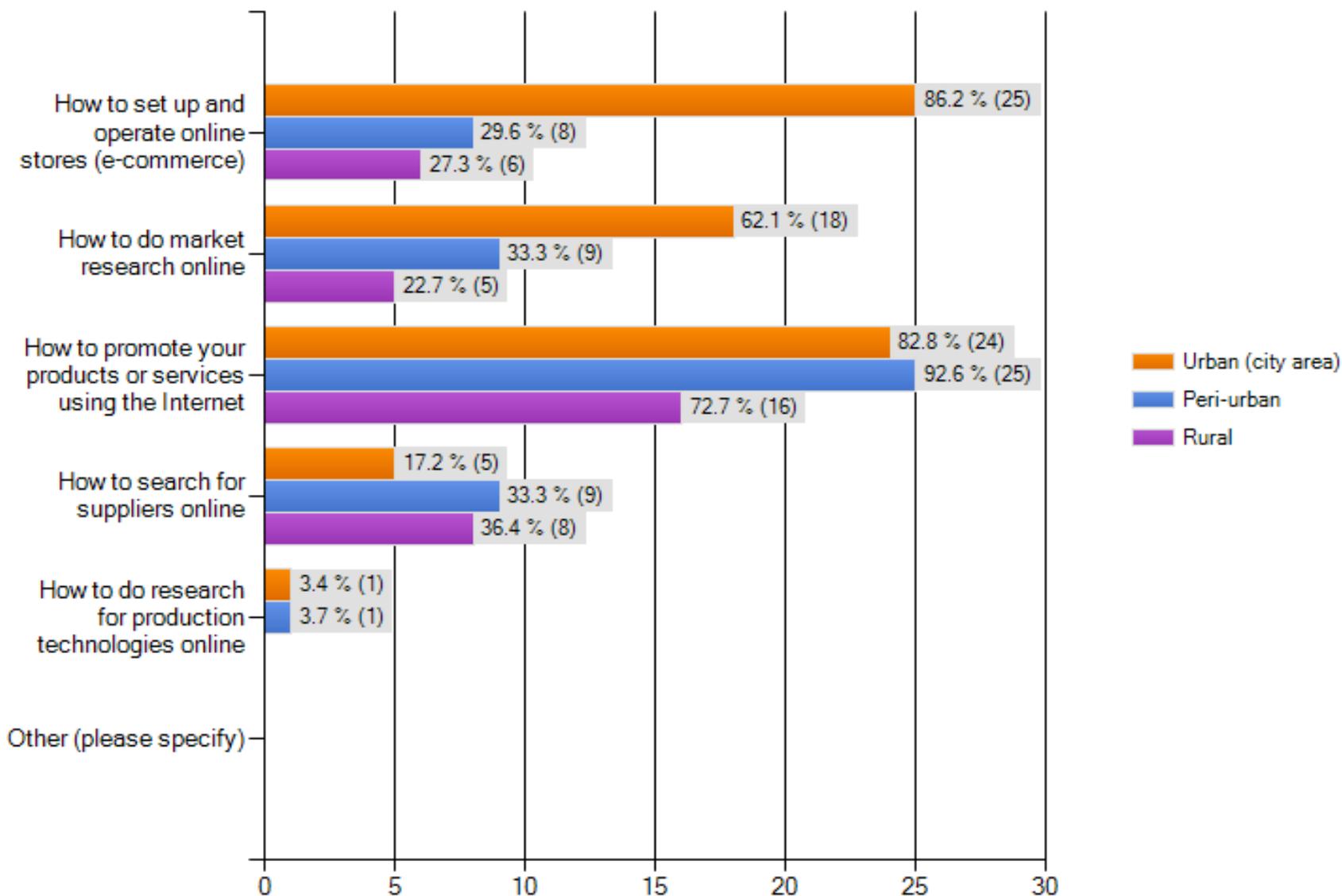
In Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan, women entrepreneurs are missing out on the opportunities presented by information and communication technologies

The mobile phone is the favorite tool of women entrepreneurs in the Kyrgyz Republic—most own a regular mobile phone and about one-third own internet-capable devices

Which specific computer/ICT skill training topics are you interested in?



Which specific topics on using computers, mobile phones, Internet for business are you interested in?



Recommendations

- Campaigns to raise awareness of new ICT-enabled business opportunities for WEs
- E-commerce for WEs to start and grow businesses, esp. in industries with growth potential such as ICT or tourism
- ICT-enabled mentoring programs
- SMS-based information alert services for WEs
- Loan programs for WEs to enable them to set up businesses in the ICT service industry and online businesses
- ICT capacity-building skills and support for WEs
- Maximizing ICTs specifically for BDS in conjunction with access to finance initiatives for WEs
- Creating WED focal points in govt, WE associations and NGOs that work with WEs to leverage ICTs in crease effectiveness
- Leveraging ICTs to enable access to gender sensitive financial services and alternative access to finance esp. for women in rural and peri-urban areas
- Improving infrastructure through, eg, affordable broadband with 100% coverage, electronic payment systems, and mobile money.

Good Practice Examples

Box 1 Online Outsourcing Service: Business Opportunities for Women on Elance.com

Online outsourcing sites like Elance.com present unprecedented opportunities for women in developing countries to work from home, reaching domestic and international clients with a wide range of professional services, ranging from those that require basic training, such as data entry, to highly specialized training like IT programming and law.

Philippines-based university librarian Sheila Ortencio used to earn \$1.50/hour and struggled to pay for food and child care. Within 4 years of working as a freelancer on Elance, cataloguing e-books online and earning \$8.50/hour, she was able to save enough money to buy properties, including a condominium in the capital, Manila.^a

Opportunities like those Sheila has access to are available to women in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan, and could be especially suited to them given their literacy rate and educational achievements. A search on Elance.com shows a small group of women in these countries already taking advantage of these opportunities. They have access to jobs posted locally by companies based in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Research undertaken in October 2013 showed a total of 6,491 jobs posted by Russian companies with an average budget of \$1,822. For those who speak English, there were 2,018,565 jobs posted by companies based in the United States with an average budget of \$2,008. Even in Uzbekistan, where it is harder to find jobs posted by companies in the country, a search returned 312 Uzbekistan-based freelancers with earnings of up to \$55/hour for information technology and programming jobs.

Box 2 The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women: Mentoring Women in Business Programme

The Mentoring Women in Business Programme of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women uses an online platform to match women entrepreneurs in developing countries with male or female mentors in developed countries. This allows them to work together for 12 months to achieve specific business goals including one-on-one coaching and attending webinars and using the knowledge base support provided by the online platform. The platform was designed and developed by Google, and the ongoing administration of the program is done by the foundation. According to the foundation, an independent evaluation of the program by the mentoring experts found that the mentoring program resulted in benefits for both mentors and mentees.

Box 5 Leveraging Mobile Phones to Build Membership and Provide Information to Farmers in Fiji

The Fiji Crop and Livestock Council (FCLC) represents farmers in Fiji, and has a mission to be Fiji's voice for efficient agriculture. Although it has only four staff members, the organization aims to reach out to all farmers in Fiji, including those in the remote islands. As the council is based in Lautoka, which many farmers may not visit, and it has limited resources, it was decided early on to leverage ICTs extensively for its membership outreach activities. Its farmers tend to have access only to mobile phones rather than the internet so the organization decided to extensively leverage mobile-based applications. As a technical assistance project funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Trade Center, a mobile-based membership application has been developed for the FCLC: any farmer in Fiji can dial *605# to send a request to the FCLC to become a member. The request then goes to a web-based customer relationship management system that the FCLC uses to manage its membership and send out targeted SMS alerts to specific member groups depending on its communication needs. The mobile-based membership registration system and the short code number are operated for free by Vodafone Fiji under the company's corporate social responsibility program. The FCLC purchased bulk SMS from an online service provider at a discounted cost. The customer relationship management system allows the FCLC to send an SMS to a large group of hundreds of members at a time allowing it to communicate with members in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Box 3 The Women's Information Centre at the Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The Women's Information Centre (WIC) was set up in 1997 at the Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania with the technical assistance of the Italian Association of Women for Development (AIDOS). The center provides women with updated information on economic, educational/scholarship, health, and credit opportunities and enables women to report gender-based violence. The center has recently opened new branches in four different regions of the country to extend its reach in providing women with information.

Box 4 Working in Partnership to Provide Information and Communication Technology Skills Training for Women Entrepreneurs

The Union of Kazakhstani Women Entrepreneurs and the mobile phone company JSK Kcell, within the framework of the Republican School of Women Leadership project has provided training on the different ways that mobile phones can be used for women's business activities. The union organized the women, and Kcell provided the training. In 2013, about 250 women entrepreneurs were coached in the cities of Taraz, Aksu (Akmola region), and Karaganda. According to Kcell, the women found it very useful and the company itself regards the program as a success, which they plan to scale up in 2014.

To reach the rural population in the Kyrgyz Republic, SMS-based programs would be most suitable for now and most likely to have the widest reach

Information and communication technologies can make a direct difference to the perceived constraints on business growth—accessing finance, taxation issues, finding information on new markets, and accessing those markets

Pilot: Kyrgyzstan

Women entrepreneurs' high interest levels, moderate awareness, and low confidence in their skill level indicate that they would likely be receptive to skills training programs designed specifically for them



