

Female friendly

Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay provide the best environments for female entrepreneurs in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the Women's



Business owner in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

Reducing trade barriers

While reducing trade barriers between the continent's countries, African governments should take vigorous measures to boost their private sectors, or gains from this streamlined trading system will benefit foreign firms more than African firms, says a new report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Economic Development in Africa Report 2013 notes that intraregional trade in Africa holds great promise if African firms can supply the goods.

In recent years, the share of intra-African trade in total African trade fell from 22.4 percent in 1997 to 11.3 percent in 2011. This statistic may be an underestimate, given the prevalence of informal cross-border trade on the continent, but it is nevertheless low when compared with

Entrepreneurial Venture Scope, a new index released by the Multilateral Investment Fund, a member of the Inter-American Development Bank Group, and developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The index examines and scores 20 countries in the five areas that most affect women's entrepreneurship: business operating risks; the entrepreneurial business environment; access to finance; capacity and skills; and social services, including the availability of family support programs, such as child care.

Chile received the region's highest overall ranking for its low macroeconomic risk, strong supplier diversity initiatives, and social service offerings. Peru, with robust business networks and technical support programs for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), ranked a close second. Colombia rounds out the top three for its well-developed SME training programs and broad access to university-level education for women.

other parts of the world. For example, during 2007–11, the average share of intraregional exports in total exports was 11 percent in Africa, compared with 50 percent in Asia and 70 percent in Europe.

The report argues that the elimination of trade barriers will not have the desired impact unless it is complemented by governments' efforts to increase the variety and sophistication of the goods that their economies produce—the process that economists call expanding productive capacity.



Kora workshop in Senegal.

Events in 2013

September 17–19, Dili, Timor-Leste
Harnessing Natural Resource Wealth Conference

September 17–30, New York
68th Session of the UN General Assembly

September 25–27, Sopot, Poland
European Forum for New Ideas

October 1–2, Kiel, Germany
Global Economic Symposium

October 11–13, Washington, D.C.
Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF

October 18–19, Panama City, Panama
Ibero-American Summit

November 7–8, Washington, D.C.
IMF Fourteenth Annual Jacques Polak Research Conference

November 13–14, Amsterdam, Netherlands
World Pension Summit

The 'missing middle'

Social protection systems in many fast-growing middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific are failing to support large numbers of poor and vulnerable people, leaving them exposed to risks and unexpected difficulties like unemployment, ill health, and natural disasters, says a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) study, *The Social Protection Index: Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific*.

The study, which analyzes government programs that provide social insurance, social assistance, and labor market support in 35 countries across Asia and the Pacific, shows varied spending patterns across income groups and subregions.

A few countries—Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan—have social protection indexes that are higher than 0.200, meaning that they are already investing 8 percent of their GDP in social protection programs. However, spending in most middle-income countries—including Armenia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Samoa—remains below 3 percent of GDP.

“Government social protection programs need to be expanded to cover this unprotected ‘missing middle,’” said Bart Édes, Director in the ADB's Regional and Sustainable Development Department.