New Wave Of Mobile Growth To Be Driven By Women Entrepreneurs

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An in-depth study on the role of women in the mobile phone industry.

Study across 14 mobile operators in 11 emerging markets concludes that mobile retail channels present opportunity for the advancement of women entrepreneurs

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Increased collaboration between stakeholders can boost sales and bring tangible economic and social advantages to women

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Culturally determined roles need not be a barrier, regional pilot projects employing women demonstrate

An in-depth study on the role of women in the mobile phone industry has highlighted the social and economic advantages of including more women entrepreneurs into the mobile value chain.

Undertaken by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, leading partner STC and market research firm TNS, the niche study drew participation from several mobile network operators, distributors, vendors and other industry stakeholders across 11 markets including Bahrain, Cote dâ€™Ivoire, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Qatar, South Africa, Tanzania, the Philippines and Uganda.

According to the report, mobile retail sales present a flexible and relatively easy business opportunity for women entrepreneurs. The study also highlights the gains that mobile operators can make by having more women in their retail chains, including higher revenue potential through improved sales, stronger brand imaging and access to untapped markets.

The findings reveal regional variations in womenâ€™s participation in the mobile value chain. In India, Indonesia and the Middle East, it was found that the majority of participants in the mobile value chain were male, while in Africa and the Philippines most mobile vendors were found to be women, although the majority are working at the micro-level.

The study outlines recommendations for the mobile industry, NGOs and governments to address the challenge of integrating more women into the mobile value chain. Noting that statistics in this domain are hard to come by, the report urges mobile network operators and distributors to build a business case by collecting data on the performance of their retail agents from a gender perspective. Governments and NGOs are encouraged to work together to create targeted initiatives to drive female participation in the mobile value chain.

The report cites Vodafone Qatarâ€™s â€˜Al-Joharaâ€™ scheme as an example of the benefits of such collaboration. In the cont of Qatar, where cultural considerations may limit the participatory options of women in the nationâ€™s mobile value chain, â€˜Al Joharaâ€™ provides women with training, leading to increased skills for the women and increased sales for Vodafone Qatar.

Commenting on the findings of the study, Cherie Blair, Founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, added: â€œWomen entrepreneurs stand to gain a great deal from selling mobile products. Setting up a mobile sales business is relatively easy and has a flexibility that suits the way many women live their lives. But there is also a real business case for mobile operators to include women in mobile value chains, as they offer significant advantages such as better branding and access to new markets. I hope that mobile operators will read this report and recognise it's in their own interests as well as women's to increase opportunities for women entrepreneurs, particularly higher up the mobile value chain.â€•

As a follow up to this report, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women aims to partner with leaders in the mobile industry to develop sustainable programmes which allow women entrepreneurs to better capitalise on the growth of the mobile industry while minimising associated risks.

About the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women
The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women provides women with the skills, technology, networks and access to finance that they need to become successful small and growing business owners, so that they can contribute to their economies and have a stronger voice in their societies. www.cherieblairfoundation.org

About STC
The Saudi Telecommunication Group provides integrated mobile, fixed and broadband communications services to over 142 million subscribers in 10 markets including Saudi Arabia. Headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, STC is the largest telecommunications company by market capitalisation, total revenue and number of employees in the Arab State region. www.stc.com.sa Â

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