



## Successful Services Export

*20 businesswomen from 13 countries  
share their experiences*

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*Sponsored by the International Trade Centre (Geneva)  
For the promotion of Service Exports!*

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**International Trade Centre**  
UNCTAD/WTO



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## Acknowledgements

This publication was written by the businesswomen who participated in the International Business Services Forum which took place in Toronto in May 2007. The content was collected by Diane Girard, Global Links Network on behalf of the International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva. via video interviews, email exchanges and post-mission follow-up. It was prepared under the guidance of Doreen Conrad, Chief, ITC Trade in Services Section, and Jenny Lofbom, Associate Expert, ITC Trade in Services Section.

# Introduction

*For me, the ITC International Business Services Forum actualized what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said: 'Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.'*

*My experiences at the Forum will be shared with all those associated with my business in an effort to help them learn and grow in an increasingly globalized business environment. And I remain committed to the ideals of cross-border exchanges and to building understanding amongst people and cultures through trade and business.*

*Yasmin Hyder, Pakistan*

## Sectors

Accounting  
Advertising and PR  
Education and Training  
Graphic Design  
Legal  
Management  
Consulting  
Business Process Outsourcing  
Film and Video  
Market Research  
Publications and Publishing  
Local Representation  
Translation Services  
Event Management

## Participating Countries

Ethiopia  
Ghana  
Kenya  
Lesotho  
Malawi  
Nigeria  
Pakistan  
South Africa  
Sri Lanka  
Swaziland  
Uganda  
Uruguay  
Zambia

In May 2007, selected businesswomen from around the world had the opportunity to explore a new market for their business and professional services.

Twenty businesswomen from thirteen countries were carefully selected to participate in a 3-day International Business Services Mission to Toronto, Canada. The *Bridges Across Borders* event was organized by the International Trade Centre in Geneva to provide an opportunity for these service sector firms to pursue new markets for their business and professional services.

In addition to pursuing business opportunities, the participants stated that one of the most positive outcomes of the mission was the opportunity to learn about doing business in Canada and networking with potential partners and collaborators.

This publication summarizes their perspectives on challenges and opportunities and more importantly what they learned through the process. It is hoped that by sharing their findings, businesswomen around the world will be encouraged to explore international business opportunities, particularly in the export of their services, a sector which is a high growth area for businesswomen worldwide.

For more information on the businesswomen highlighted in this publication, please visit [www.global-links-network.com/bridges](http://www.global-links-network.com/bridges). For more information on exporting services, go to [www.intracen.org/serviceexport](http://www.intracen.org/serviceexport).

Doreen Conrad  
Chief, Trade in Services Section  
International Trade Centre

## What We Learned



In the words of one of the participants, *"It was an inspiring, dynamic and confidence building experience."* One of the main objectives of the Bridges Across Borders event was to provide a learning opportunity for the participants. They learned from experts in the services sector, they learned from potential clients and partners, and most importantly, they learned from each other. Here are some of the highlights.



Oyinda Daramola  
Nigeria

**It's all about networking, building credibility, and being organized.**

The seminar was quite an eye-opener! I have been providing translation services to foreign organizations in Nigeria and abroad for many years but I don't think I actually saw myself as an exporter of services before then.

I now know better. I believe more and more women should export their services because, usually, they already have the basics. They merely need to own the skills that they possess already and grow their businesses. This will mean extending their contacts through the media, the internet, foreign embassies, national chambers of commerce, international professional associations, international federations of women's exporters etc. I intend to do the same. It's all about networking, building credibility, and being organized!

I don't believe I have even begun putting all I learnt into practice but I have shared the information with some of my colleagues and family, especially my cousins - one is an architect and the other is a fashion designer.

**The seminar was quite an eye-opener! I don't think I actually saw myself as an exporter of services before then.**

I was especially interested in learning first hand about the programs of the Trade in Services Section to be able to help to implement them in my country with my colleagues. I am eager to share what I have learned with other businesswomen in Uruguay. The majority of our translators do not realize they are exporting when they send their work via the Internet.



Milagros Giacosa  
Uruguay



Helena Teferra  
Ethiopia

After the interesting presentation about correspondences, I am more focused on making "the internet my friend" more than ever (as much as I can).

## What We Learned...



*Angelline Kambalame  
Malawi*

I enjoyed the “Who we are” part of the forum. It gave me the opportunity to learn what my colleagues in other countries are doing in their businesses. After making my presentation, I realized I could stand in any audience and make a good presentation. It gave me a renewed confidence to stand out there and make a difference!!

The Internet has made a big difference. Most of the services can be placed on a website. By doing that we can export competitively online. There is need for service providers to improve and render good services. Websites are important and are not only for the elite, anybody can develop one.



### **Now that I understand, I can enhance and expand my services... and take my business to the next level.**

As a result of my participation in the trade mission, I came to realize the Importance of trade in services and the possibilities for exporting my own skills and know-how to the rest of the world. This helped me to think in a different way and gain confidence in what I am doing.



*Dodoze Masoabi  
Lesotho*

I learned to take into account the basics of selling services such as business cards, time management, selling of oneself and services by word of mouth. To therefore begin to pursue business opportunities, we have begun to see modes in which we can export services. We have begun to work on strategies that will help us develop a profile and credibility in new markets.

Before going to Toronto, my perception was that only products can be exported, or certain services by big international firms, only to find out that even SMEs like myself (in my case accountancy services) can also be involved in exports.

Now that I understand, I can enhance and expand my services, continue partnering with regional counterparts in Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa and of course continue networking with my Canadian potential partners in taking my business to the next level.

### **I have perfected my ‘elevator speech’ and am now able to present our company in 25 words or less.**

After learning of the 'elevator speech', I have perfected my speech and am able to present our company in 25 words or less without losing focus on what our company does!



*Harriet Mucunguzi  
Uganda*

I benefited from learning how different the export market expectation is from the domestic one, the preparation needed before one tries to enter the export market, and creating networks and building relationships in the export market before one actually goes there.

## What We Learned...



*Kuena Mophethe  
Lesotho*

**Marketing is everything, and you never know who might give you a referral.**

The programme in Toronto was helpful in that I regarded it as 'a tools of trade box'. I now know that I can export my services anywhere so I do not have to be confined to my country, but the trick is in getting my services known to those who might need them.

It was as if I was realizing for the first time that the client is not so much interested in what I know, but how I can help their business. Now when clients ask me to do work for them, I never forget to ask them to tell me more about their businesses, their aspirations and challenges.

I liked also knowing that marketing is everything and that you may never know who may give you a referral. This has changed my outlook towards working with other businesses. I also continue to work on my elevator speech, emphasizing benefits, not features.

I have had to take a good look at the way I was doing business. I now know that it is not a positive to charge less and use that as a reason for not doing as well as the best. I now value my work and charge what I feel is right and let the prospect decide on who to go to.

One thing that I have learned is to make a client feel very special without belittling myself, I have learned that it is okay to disagree in a respectful manner with a prospect, and to not be tempted to take business if I am not completely comfortable.

**I have learned to be patient knowing that business is a marathon, not a sprint.**

Even though the main benefit was networking with the other women of Africa, I think the result was much better than if the meeting had been held in Africa. The contact with Canadian businesses took it to a whole other level. The caliber of people we met made such a difference!

*Jeri Gomonda, Malawi*



*Liz Whitehouse  
South Africa*

The event has made me very aware of the potential to export services and has also highlighted how often we all have the opportunity to market our services and potentially develop new markets.



*Duduzile Thabede  
South Africa*

International strategic partnerships are effective if both parties see value in partnering i.e. if there is going to be exchange in information and transference of skills on both sides. Most participants also found that they were engaged in businesses that complimented each other thus making it easy to look at areas of collaboration.

I picked up some useful business tips on the marketing of services including how to develop an effective "Elevator Pitch" and how to structure a sales presentation/pitch to a prospective client. I've now incorporated these learnings in the day-to-day running of my business.





1. **Always carry your business cards.** Always. I have been doing this since I came back, and am surprised at how often I have actually given out my card.
2. **Check email often and answer quickly.** 24-hour turn-around on answering email has become the outer limit - if you want to be seen as professional, you must answer in less than 24 hours.
3. **Technology rules!** Well, not rules, exactly - competence, courtesy, and efficiency also count big time, but email, websites, Skype and so forth are now standard. They are not exotic things used by the elite. You have to have them!
4. **Public speaking skills are necessary.** You have to be able to speak confidently to people, whether one person or hundreds. When you have competition, and we all do, the person who mumbles, rambles, talks too long, and appears shy is written off fairly quickly in favour of more eloquent people. It is a fact of life: We are all busy; no one is going out of their way to compensate for your weaknesses.
5. **Have collateral material and keep it up to date.** (Company profile, CV, bio statements, that sort of thing.)
6. **Have a one page bio ready.** It should have your photo, name and contact details, and a career summary. This is used to introduce you if you are speaking somewhere, and is also useful if your CV is long. Do not go over one page!
7. **There are amazing women in Africa!** The ladies we met were so energetic, lively, fun, and serious about their work. And to hear them describe what they do, I was fascinated! I would love to go work for some of them.
8. **Nobody does just one thing.** Everybody had a wide portfolio in their actual businesses, and quite a few also had a charitable activity on the side. Several of the 19 were involved in a women's association like The Women's Club.
9. **Businesspeople are the same, no matter where we were from.** Between the participants and the business community we met, and this included people from South America, North America, Asia, and Africa, we all have the same problems. In particular, we all struggle to get clients to pay in good time, to keep clients from stealing ideas from proposals and either doing the job themselves or hiring someone cheaper, and to balance home and work demands.
10. **Perfect your "elevator speech".** This is a 25 word description of what you do. People won't listen to a long story, they don't want your whole CV. Entice people with a brief, well worded mini-speech.
11. **Innovate constantly.** You might think your service is basic and cannot be changed, but you would be mistaken. You need to add new services to keep customers. Examples: If you run a clothing store, keep a client profile and call customers when something new comes in that is their size or favourite colour, or perfectly accessorizes the outfit bought last month. A printer could offer pick up and delivery, or jobs completed in 24 hours. There is always something more that customers want.
12. **Talk to everyone.** Don't write off anyone as not relevant to your needs. Sometimes that completely unrelated contact turns out to be just who you need, or who your boss needs. If you can link up a friend or colleagues with someone they would not have access to otherwise, you have done a good deed, and someone will do the same for you.
13. **Be on time.** This is a standard, not an extraordinary feat.
14. **Opportunity abounds!** There is plenty of unmet need in the world, and plenty of business to those who look for it and have the ability and willingness to provide it.
15. **Even in a little country like Malawi, it is possible to export services.** Sell a newsletter online; give training programs in another country; translate for external clients, organise conferences for associations from other countries, the list is endless. The phrase "exporting services" sounds more complex and unattainable than it is.

# A Great Networking Opportunity



Being able to succinctly describe your service business to potential clients and partners is one of the most important skills a service exporter needs to master.

The participants claimed that the networking opportunities were what they valued most about the event in Toronto. They learned networking skills that will continue to apply in years to come.

## I gained inspiration from the journeys of other women.

Networking more aggressively in my local market is something I need to focus on. I now have a stronger appreciation for the power of networks for business relationships but also for sharing information and learning.



*Dorothy Tuma  
Uganda*

The networking was useful from the perspective of borrowing ideas from activities conducted by other groups. I obtained ideas for the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd. (UWEAL) from the Company of Women's activities, e.g. Membership Directory, E-Newsletter and annual awards ceremony.



*Subhashini Abeysinghe  
Sri Lanka*

To me it was an eye opener not only of opportunities in the Canadian market, but gave me a whole new outlook about our friends in Africa. It is very rarely that we south-Asians get to meet people from Africa in programs like this.

I now know how to market my services as well as chamber services in a more professional manner:

- Creating awareness as to the importance of trade in services.
- Furnishing participants with the desired knowledge and networking among each other, prospective partners and supporting organizations.
- Paving the way for further advancement by way of forming a National association and International coalition of women exporters.



*Gracious Daka Muvombo  
Zambia*

What I appreciated most was meeting face to face with the possible partners as was arranged. Meeting with immigrants who had established SMEs in the Canadian market, acquiring an objective and reliable view about general issues such as racism, gender issues and facilities of the SMEs in the Canadian market.

The networking opportunities especially the Global Business reception, the exhibition and the one-to-one discussion were valuable. I learned much from the participants' experience sharing in relation to their respective countries, company profile and their objectives towards the trade mission.

## Some Powerful Businesswomen



*Yasmin Hyder  
Pakistan*

### **Exposure to new ideas is critical for the growth and success of an entrepreneur.**

I started “New World Concepts” in March 2002 with a clear vision of providing corporate marketing and promotion services to the private sector in Pakistan. I wanted to establish a one window marketing resource and provide quality output with speed of service.

Initially the challenges were finances. With slow and steady growth and focus on building credibility, relationships and quality control, turnover increased. This problem was also addressed through personal sacrifice by not drawing any money from the business for the first two years of operation. This allowed a level of financial stability and thereafter with growth in sales, profit margins improved.

Another problem was being female. Pakistan being a fairly conservative Islamic country, I was lucky to live and work in Karachi – the commercial center and a cosmopolitan city of 15 million people. But even in this trading hub, it took a long while for clients to accept that a businesswoman could deliver better and maybe quicker results than male competitors. The credibility was built by persevering and working against very challenging timelines.

Throughout this time the key ingredients for me have been a relentless pursuit of quality in all our services and the establishment of professional relationships with an eye to the long term. This has now evolved into strong business ties and goodwill with large multi-national corporations in the country.

“New World Concepts” has completed almost 5 years of operation. Working with different multinationals from diverse regions, we have developed a deep understanding of global guidelines and the need for service excellence in all fields. We have learned and partnered with the world's best in varied sectors.

We are also technology reliant and work towards paperless communication. Internet is greatly used and messaging is the norm for client communication. A considerable proportion of our existing business transactions require electronic communication (email, internet, messaging) and electronic banking – and we are also comfortable over time zones.

We are ready as a team, and I am ready as CEO to lead our services to a new global market starting from Canada in the next few years. Having traveled widely across four continents, studied in both Pakistan and the United Kingdom, worked with diverse groups of people especially women, fluent in the English language, I bring with me a global perspective, an understanding of different cultures and exposure and knowledge of western societies and practices.

With a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the top business school in Pakistan, plus a post graduate degree in International Business with distinction from Cardiff Business School, University of Wales, UK, and 16 years of professional work experience in the service sector, I feel I have the necessary credentials to contribute towards pioneering initiatives for bridging the gap between the developed and developing economies.

I strongly believe in ‘people to people’ contact to build peace in this world. I feel that being an educated and enlightened Muslim woman, I have a special role to play in fostering partnerships between businesses especially from the west and Asian subcontinent. And through this work, to create networks especially for women, that contribute to greater understanding of cultures and societies.

Through the Forum, I acquired new concepts in trade and business and a greater understanding of global issues. In addition, I also realized that exposure to new ideas and enhancement of knowledge is critical for the growth and success of an entrepreneur. Taking time out from business to participate in seminars and workshops is now a priority for me. The cumulative experience was in a word, phenomenal.

## Some Powerful Businesswomen

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Yes. It has greatly impacted my strategy:

1. Global vision instead of country mindset.
2. Greater use of technology in business
3. Networking for business development

All the above, plus taking out more time to explore, and develop international contacts for business development; reorganizing my business to function without my direct day-to-day involvement; greater emphasis on relationships and networking; training key members of my team for greater responsibilities and providing them a platform to learn and grow; delegating more and managing less!

Because of my experience at the Forum I now have greater confidence in the ability to establish business relationships at an international level. In fact, it helped bring to the fore my long cherished ambition to engage in trans-national business. I might add that this awakening was in no small measure motivated by observing women entrepreneurs from Africa—their tenacious determination to be accepted as equal business partners was a source of inspiration. I have had similar aspirations for women of Asia and the rest of the developing world; the experience at the Forum helped give renewed impetus to the determination to attain these goals.

I was truly enlightened by the knowledge and experience of those I met, and deeply impressed by their stamina and capacity for work. I made valuable gains from the training sessions attended, especially the mentoring received (even during bus rides).

I discovered that women entrepreneurs from every part of the world face similar challenges. To pursue their ambitions they must find workable solutions to conflicting demands on their time and devote proportionate attention to both home and business. Also I was greatly encouraged by the respect and regard I received, more so because I was representing educated Muslim businesswomen from a developing country like Pakistan.

My professional gains at the Forum went beyond theoretical learning, international exposure and business networking. Truly significant as these benefits were, I was doubly fortunate to have had the opportunity to explore real possibilities of trade during substantive one-on-one business meetings with Canadian investors and potential JV partners, including very productive meetings with the Ministry of Trade (Ontario), Pakistan-Canada Business Council, IFC etc. All this helped position my company as a promising business associate in Pakistan and enabled me to promote the market potential of my country.

The access to Canadian and other international businesses, and the personal associations developed over a week of interactions were made possible by the Forum which otherwise would have taken years to develop. I now have renewed optimism, and a vision of exploring business possibilities not restricted by the national boundaries of my country.

In a wider discussion of the mission, I observed that participants essentially belonged to two broad categories: one comprised of those who had just started or were about to start a business and thus needed greater individual guidance, while the second category comprised of entrepreneurs like myself who could immediately benefit from the exposure and support that a platform like the ITC Forum offered. Without doubt, women entrepreneurs from developing countries with adequate experience, business skills and an ability to persevere have much to learn from trade opportunities which forums like these provide.

My experiences at the Forum will be shared with all those associated with my business in an effort to help them learn and grow in an increasingly globalized business environment. And I remain committed to the ideals of cross-border exchanges and to building understanding amongst people and cultures through trade and business.

For me, the ITC International Business Services Forum actualized what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said: *'Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.'*

## A Selection of Powerful Businesswomen...

I was doing my Masters in Business Administration in the United Kingdom and working in call centers at the same time. Whilst working in the UK Call Centre industry, I felt that there was an opportunity for Kenya to benefit as an outsourcing destination, where call centers can provide services to UK and North American companies. At the time, there were no call centers in Kenya.

I felt that this was an area that could create jobs, skills transfer, and entrepreneurial development in our country. Upon my return to Kenya in 2004, I set up Cascade Global, to provide consultancy services to local entrepreneurs who want to set up Call Centers and Back Office Operations, to serve the UK and North American market. Today, our company is the leading provider of outsourcing advisory and call centre-planning services, in Kenya. We have specialist expertise, experience, and dedicated resources to enable companies to move their back office operations and call centers to Kenya. We provide an end-to-end solution to our clients.

Last year I organized Kenya's participation at Call Centre Expo, in Birmingham, United Kingdom. This is the largest call centre exhibition in Europe and this was the first time that Kenya participated at the event. I have assisted a number of my clients to set up Back Office operations that provide Business Process Outsourcing to clients in the UK and North America. The Back Office firms that I have set up so far have a capacity to employ up to 500 people. The main services provided by our Kenya client firms are: Transcription, Editing, Data Processing, and Web Design, among others.

**I wrote articles that were published in Kenya's leading newspapers and business magazines, and this raised some awareness regarding the BPO industry.**

**I felt there was an opportunity for Kenya to benefit as an outsourcing destination.**



*Peres Were  
Kenya*

We faced a number of challenges when we were starting up. These included poor infrastructure, lack of local awareness of the call centre and BPO industry, and we were also undercapitalized. The Government of Kenya has made tremendous progress in developing the infrastructure that can support the call centre and BPO industry, including the laying of a fibre optic cable that will improve the quality of Internet service, and reduce the cost of Internet Bandwidth.

I wrote articles about the BPO industry, that were published in Kenya's leading newspapers and business magazines, and this raised some awareness regarding the BPO industry. We also work closely with the Kenya Government to market Kenya as an outsourcing destination.

**We have already completed an outsourcing deal between a Canadian company and on one of our clients in Kenya.**

The mission to Toronto was extremely beneficial to us. We have already completed an outsourcing deal between a Canadian company and one of my clients in Kenya. I am also corresponding with a Canadian company with regards to providing them with consultancy services. I am sharing the literature and some of the information from the training, with businesswomen in the services industry and in particular women in the Business Process Outsourcing industry. The International Business Services Forum to Toronto was an excellent programme and it would be beneficial to have a similar program for Europe. We need more training on trading in services.

I am indeed planning to seriously market my services to Canada and plan to build alliances and partnerships. We are now strategically looking at the world as our marketplace and not just our region. We are developing a new marketing strategy with the aim of doing business across borders!

## Positive Outcomes



The pursuit of business opportunities, formation of partnerships, launching of new service sector groups and spreading the word to other businesswomen in their countries. These are only some of the positive outcomes from the mission.

Following the example set by Nigeria, we are in the process of forming an Ethiopian Network of Women Exporters of Services. We have a long list of potential members. Our first meeting will be in November, where we will assemble potential members for a discussion regarding the benefits of forming the network. We will also at that time, try to determine what type of services can be offered. It is clear that there is much to learn from networks in other countries.

*Helena Teferra, Teigist Lemma, Melika Bedri  
Ethiopia*

**We are eager to share what we have learned about exporting our services.**



*Aoko Midiwo-Odemba  
Kenya*

I felt refreshed. The event was a wonderful networking opportunity. There is potential for a publishing partnership with a woman I met at the Company of Women event in Oakville. She is an established book publisher. The partnership, if it comes to fruition will involve joint writing and publishing books on culture for children. The negotiations are almost complete. There is also a chance of doing joint projects with the participant from Swaziland on organic foods and publishing African recipes. I have shared information and material with the women's group that I chair, Kenya Association of Women Business Owners (KAWBO).



*Subhashini Abeysinghe  
Sri Lanka*

We are interested not only in north-south trade but south-south trade. We have met a lot of people who are serious about doing business in Sri Lanka and will pass these contacts on to our members. We have also included a special feature on doing business in Canada in the Chamber's newsletter.

## Positive Outcomes...

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*Duduzile Thabede  
South Africa*

The participants' profile book as well as profiles on the Trade Mission's website was useful and served two key functions in that delegates knew prior to attending the event exactly who they wanted to speak to. As participants we also felt that we knew each other before we had even met and I had an opportunity to communicate with other delegates before arriving in Canada.

There are two business opportunities that I'm currently following up on from two delegates that I met in Canada, I've also had two client referrals in South Africa from one of the Trade Mission's delegates.

The program made me realize that South African businesses do have a potential to export their services and this has been a great confidence booster not only to me but to my other business associates who are now actively looking at opportunities on other continents. I have shared lessons learned in with some of my South African Business associates and have made a point of sharing the learnings with three of my mentees.



*Angelline Kambalame  
Malawi*

A management-consulting firm in Canada indicated willingness to assist us to establish an Association of Management Consultants in Malawi and we are in the process of discussing the logistical arrangements.

I shared what I learned from the mission with fellow businesswomen who are members of The Women's Club in our weekly e-newsletter. I have had several business women contacting me for advice on how to manage their businesses after learning of my profession through the local print media that covered our mission.



*Milagros Giacosa  
Uruguay*

I have wanted my fellow colleagues to realize that they are exporting their services when they send their translations abroad on the Internet or by courier, also when they go abroad to act as interpreters in a conference, they lack exporting knowledge. As not all of them could join us going to Toronto, we organized jointly with the Chamber a round table about Services. We aimed here at developing an interest in exporting services, and in a second stage we will be offering a training course to provide them with skills to better market their services.



*Gracious Daka Muvombo  
Zambia*

It has been beneficial in that even though services are intangible and harder to sell, we as Women from Women Entrepreneurs Development Association of Zambia (WEDAZ) engaged in the service market can make our presence felt. We are in the process of drawing up and revising our strategy and identifying partners to help WEDAZ resolve and implement.

## Key Challenges



Regardless of country, type of business, or sector of involvement, women pursuing international business opportunities face some common challenges and share the same information needs. A “talk show” with representatives from four continents enabled a worthwhile exchange on “Myths, Realities and Opportunities”.



*Treasure Maphanga  
Swaziland*

We are reviewing our pricing strategy with a focus on value. This is still an area where we have a challenge because international agencies pitch consulting rates for local consultants at a ridiculously low level. We are uncertain as to how to price for our services cross-border. We need more research and sharing of experiences in this area.

Running a small business is challenging because one will normally move from being a specialist in one area (e.g. marketing) to having to fulfill a number of roles that we are not properly equipped to deal with e.g. Human Resources, being a financial manager, etc.



*Dudzile Thabede  
South Africa*

The challenge of managing cash flow in an environment where late payments are often experienced is an area of greatest challenge. In our business cash is king and it does not matter that one has handled a million Rand project if that money is not in the bank to pay suppliers and running costs.

The challenge of having to compete with bigger companies for good staff sometimes means that one has to incentivise staff more to keep good talent. Being small can be an advantage in that one is able to give personalized service but it can also work against us because as a company owner, especially in the service sector, YOU are the business and sometimes other clients see it as being risky to give business to small companies and this limits ones growth.

My greatest challenge has been the difficulty in penetrating the male dominated consultancy market. It is a challenge to be able to be accepted by clients and prove to them that as a female, I can provide quality services.

*Angeline Kambalame, Malawi*

For women who try to stand on their own feet in a country like ours, where equal opportunity is not easy to get and lack of cultural transformation prevails, challenges are inevitable. Striving hard and piercing the Ethiopian market in a profession where women are not favoured has been my goal.

*Helina Teferra, Ethiopia*

A key challenge is in seeking how to grow. Identifying qualified, professional talent is an uphill task and bank loans are incredibly expensive (22 – 30% interest rates).

*Dorothy Tuma, Uganda*

My main challenge was internal - a lack of confidence, poor speaking skills, and a lack of belief that I was meant to be an entrepreneur.

*Jeri Gomonda, Malawi*

## Key Challenges...

Poor public service delivery was another major constraint, as I had to grapple with constant power failures, and very costly, extremely slow and erratic dial-up Internet connections. These problems required a heavy investment on telephones, an electricity generator, and simultaneous subscriptions with several Internet service providers... etc. High speed Internet is now available.

*Oyinda Daramola  
Nigeria*

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce has mainly focused on promoting export of products and investments; however, we strongly feel that CCC should get into promotion of services as well. Lack of statistics and a good database of potential service exporters is a large barrier to get into promotion of export of services.

*Subhashini Abeysinghe  
Sri Lanka*



*Harriet Mucunguzi  
Uganda*

I started out as an entrepreneur myself first in interior decor and fashion design and experienced first hand the challenges and difficulties of trying to make it in an environment where there was no support for small businesses.

I had no collateral to access bank loans. In general, banks were reluctant to deal with me as a new small business. I also had to deal with the dilemma of whether to use the profits earned from the business to support my extended family or to reinvest it into the business for growth.

I later felt a desire to empower small businesses, especially those owned by women through training and counseling, I felt this would bring about positive change in the environment we operate in and impact everyone positively.

I trained myself for this task and have since been training entrepreneurs and small businesses in areas of entrepreneurship and marketing.



I realized there was a market need for specialized consultancy services in labour relations and commercial and developmental legal issues. Locals are not involved here as the market is very much towards big male dominated and foreign firms.



*Kuena Mophethe  
Lesotho*

I was unknown in the market in my capacity as a consultant. Some could not believe a woman could be capable of tackling these issues. I had to overcome the skepticism. I had to prove myself and get prospects to relax and give me a chance. I focused on quality work, referrals and became a resource person in seminars to showcase my knowledge and expertise.

*Kuena Mophethe, Lesotho*

## Plans Going Forward



Whether it is following up on leads, designing new strategies or finding new ways of overcoming challenges, these businesswomen have now gained more confidence in taking the next steps towards becoming successful exporters of services.

Now back behind our desks, with a hope and courage to carry on in taking our business a step further, our minds are open of the possibilities presented to us in different ways on our visit to Canada.

Now that I understand the concept of exporting services, I can enhance and expand my services, develop my business website, continue partnering with regional counterparts in Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa and of course continue networking with my Canadian potential partners in taking my business to the next level.

*Dodoze Masoabi, Lesotho*

I feel more 'world class' as a result of the trip. I'm also standardizing and documenting procedures, which I used to think about but never did anything about.



*Jeri Gomonda  
Malawi*



Since my return home I have been in contact with other mission participants and we are working on an arrangement to work together on big assignments in the region. We are also working on giving presentations in our respective areas of expertise in each others' country as a way of profiling ourselves. I am also looking at other ways or organizations where I can give talks in my areas of expertise as part of the profile building. I am already applying most of what I have learned and I am now working on my website with the intention of attracting prospects from outside the country.

On 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, Women Unlimited (Pty) Ltd, a company of which I am one of the directors, will be hosting an inaugural women's networking and business event in Maseru. This will be the first of the many initiatives planned for the journey to capacitate and empower business women.

*Kuena Mophethe, Lesotho*



*Subhashini Abeysinghe  
Sri Lanka*

We already work with the Sri Lanka Canada Business Council, but will work harder to promote awareness of trade in services. We have published information about some of the seminar participants and their services in our Business Opportunities Bulletin.

We have included information about the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada (TFOC) to the business community in Sri Lanka through our Trade Newsletter and we are planning to explore more formal linkages with TFOC.

## Plans Going Forward...



Angeline Kambal  
Malawi

We are now comfortably applying for consulting assignments on the international market and have adopted the lessons I learned from the presentations as well as the literature on how to export services.

We never had a web site before, but have now created one and are awaiting hosting on the Web so that our clients and/or potential clients can reach us easily (after learning from the mission that a company that doesn't have a web site is basically non-existent!)

I met several management consultants who are Certified Management Consultants. I learned during our interaction that in order to compete better on the international market I need accreditation on my profession. We are now in the process of applying for membership to become a Certified Management Consultants.

Before, our company was more focused on servicing the local market but after participating in the mission, we have changed our strategy on our service provision. Our company profile is now more geared towards the international market.

The publicity that was gained by my participating in the event has helped me personally in many positive ways. A lot of people now know that I am a professional consultant and are willing to do business with me without doubting my credentials.

I shared the outcome of the mission with my colleagues and associates. We had a half-day session reflecting on our vision, mission and opportunities for our business.



Treasure Maphanga  
Swaziland

Following a recent visit to Kenya, we are consolidating our presence in the local market and prioritizing access to the following African markets in the next five years South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya and Uganda. This is due to contacts we have already and a desire to position ourselves in Eastern and Southern Africa.

We have discovered that since we are a female-centered consulting business, this is a unique selling point. Recently UNDP Swaziland held a workshop to launch their plans to procure services from female business owners. Almost all our in-house consultants are women professionals with young children. We are considering premises, which would be able to provide a child-friendly environment in Mbabane. Even at our current premises, we have room for children to drop in and play for short periods.

Treasure Maphanga, Swaziland



Oyinda Daramola  
Nigeria

I have a long to-do list but here is the top three:

1. Attend meetings of the Nigerian Network of Women Exporters of Services regularly.
2. Register my business (when fully revamped and renamed) with the Canadian High Commission and also join international organizations of women service providers.
3. Become an active mentor for young upcoming translators, and encourage other senior translators and interpreters to do likewise.

## Summary of Main Challenges



The following represents the main challenges expressed by the businesswomen who participated in the mission. We have summarized them under seven major categories. The challenges faced by business women are very similar, regardless of country, continent or type of business.

### Personal

- Lack of confidence
- Poor speaking skills
- Lack of belief I was meant to be an entrepreneur
- Need to fulfill a number of roles within the business, without proper training
- We need extended training sessions. The presentations were extremely useful (only they were too short).
- Instead of workshops, need specific coaching.

### Financial

- Managing cash flow and being under-capitalized
- Bank loans incredibly expensive (22-30% interest rates)
- No collateral against bank loans
- Banks do not want to deal with a new small business

### Managing Growth

- Seeking how to grow
- Dilemma of whether to use profits to support my extended family or to reinvest into the business
- Identifying qualified professional talent
- Having to compete with bigger companies for good staff
- YOU are the business, clients see this as risky

### Gender Issues

- Difficulty in penetrating the male dominated consultancy market
- Equal opportunity is not easy to get and lack of cultural transformation prevails
- Local consultants not involved as the market is very much towards big male dominated and foreign firms
- Some could not believe a woman could be capable of tackling these issues, had to overcome the skepticism
- It took a long while for clients to accept that a businesswoman could deliver better and maybe quicker results than male competitors

### Information Needs

- More mentoring instead of only training
- The type of services that are in demand
- The regulations that govern services imports
- Confidence from foreign partners in our capability to deliver
- The organizations that can assist in finding business partners and other relevant information
- Promotion mixes usually used
- Pattern of buyers' behaviour and customers' reaction to price and perception of quality
- Demographic characteristics of the population
- Import/export regulations and tax obligations
- The challenges faced by the Canadian business person
- The type of industries which regularly outsource i.e. financial services, publishing etc

### Infrastructure

- Poor public service delivery is a major constraint
- Constant power failures, very costly, extremely erratic Internet connections
- Requirement for heavy investment in telecommunications, generator, and simultaneous subscriptions with several Internet service providers

### Service Sector-related

- How to price services cross-border – international agencies pay seriously below market rates
- Lack of statistics
- Lack of a good database of potential service exporters is a large barrier to get into the promotion of export of services
- Lack of awareness of the call centre and BPO industry

## Resources

Bridges Across Borders – International Business Services Forum – Toronto, May 2007  
[www.global-links-network.com/bridges](http://www.global-links-network.com/bridges)

International Trade Centre – Trade in Services Section  
[www.intracen.org/servicexport](http://www.intracen.org/servicexport)

### Canada

Trade Facilitation Office Canada  
<http://www.tfoc.ca/register.php>

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada  
<http://www.infoexport.gc.ca/ie-en/MarketReportsAndServices.jsp>

Canadian Businesswomen in Trade website [www.businesswomenintrade.gc.ca](http://www.businesswomenintrade.gc.ca)

### Businesswomen's Organizations

The following is a list of selected international businesswomen's organizations:

Business and Professional Women International <http://www.bpwintl.com/>

FCEM - Réseau mondial des femmes chefs d'entreprises <http://www.fcem.org>

Organization of Women in International Trade <http://www.owit.org>

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

For additional organizations, the following database can be searched by country, region or organization name:

The Global Directory of Women's Business Associations, prepared by the World Bank/IFC.  
<http://rru.worldbank.org/internal/psd-gender/>