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Gender Equality: Innovation and Productivity

In Phase Two of its life cycle, Compete Caribbean is committed to ensuring gender equality.

To this end, a high-level consultation was held in Barbados on January 24 to discuss ***"The Role of Gender Equality in Promoting Innovation and Productivity"*** with the objective of:

- Identifying measurable gender indicators that relate to enhancing productivity, innovation and competitiveness in the Caribbean
- Identifying activities within the Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility's objectives that could be undertaken to impact those measurable gender indicators
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation strategy for assessing gender indicators at the project level

Senior representatives from Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Harvard University, UN Women, University of the West Indies (UWI), Department for International Development (DFID), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and Compete Caribbean made up an intensive think tank which explored gender in the Caribbean and practical responses to the gender disparity.

A paper on ***"The Gender Gap in the Caribbean: The Performance of Women Led Firms"*** which investigates the existence of a gender gap in firm productivity was the basis for the workshop. The study provides evidence that women-managed firms in the Caribbean are less productive than similar firms. The study also suggests that some firm characteristics with a significant gender gap - such as size, age and access to finance - impact productivity.

Additionally, Compete Caribbean donors have indicated a keen interest in women's empowerment in the Caribbean thus also contributing to the conception of the gender workshop.

Presentations were made by **Sylvia Dohnert**, Executive Director, Compete Caribbean; **Ariel Zaltsman**, Sector Lead Specialist, IDB; **Jeni Klugman**, fellow at the Kennedy School of Government's Women in Public Policy Program at Harvard University and **Kayla Grant**, IDB Development Operations Contractor on behalf of **Matteo Grazzi**, Specialist in the Competitiveness and Innovation Division, IDB.

Klugman's presentation provided a global context for the evidence on the relationship between women's economic empowerment and economic development/competitiveness. The presentation focused on the following drivers, which align to the theory of change of the Compete Caribbean program:

- Building Assets – digital, financial and property (broadband access to reduce digital gender gap, digital financial solutions such as crowdsourcing, etc.)
- Strengthening Visibility, collective voice and representation (touches on value chains)
- Ensuring Legal Protection and Reforming Discriminatory Laws and Regulations (focus on formalization)

A lively and intense Q&A followed which delved into the definition of a gender-related productivity and/or innovation problem in the region that Compete Caribbean can address. Four areas were raised:

- Women and their ability to build business assets?
- Women and their ability to participate in value chains?
- Women and their ability to have voice in policy making, particularly with regards to private sector development
- Women and formality?

The discussion eventually led to formulation of a theory of change and supporting logical framework that includes indicators on gender at the program level; and the following propositions were tabled for active consideration:

- Support for the development and implementation of cluster and value chain projects; support for scale-up of firms
- Support for individual firms to implement innovative projects; support for technology extension services
- Support for dynamic entrepreneurship mechanisms
- Support for innovation funds that surmount the market failures associated with financing innovation

- Support for legal and policy reforms that can enhance the business climate
- Support for institutional strengthening and implementation of policy reforms
- Support for mechanisms of public-private dialogue. Support for data collection and research on private sector development