Making Use of E-mentoring to support Innovative Entrepreneurs in Africa

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1. Entrepreneurship and endogenous development

Lesson from history: *Sustainable Economic Growth is based on Endogenous Development* (Paul Romer)

Assumptions:
- Technology always evolves to become a tool of Empowerment (*Joseph Schumpeter*)
- Education needs to be connected to opportunities
- Investing in people and connecting them is crucial

*It is a condition to participate in and benefit from trade*

> Relevant for Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade
Insights from our workshop ‘Development through Women Entrepreneurship’ (2008)

Challenges

> Informal Sector: No Growth through trade/innovation! Policies discourage transition from informal to formal

> Supporting entry into the formal sector / investing growth-oriented strategy > Business plan (know how?)

> Disincentives to become an entrepreneur:
  - Comfortable jobs in corporate/aid/public bureaucracy
  - Regulatory Burden/Discrimination of Entrepreneurs
  - Lack of supporting infrastructure
Opportunities

> Growth Potential (unserved needs, unused resources)
> Planned Special Economic Zones for Africa
> Local content requirements in China-Africa Deals
> Open innovation networks
  → lower search costs & better access to resources

Opportunities for female subsistence farmers

> Combining traditional knowledge with new technologies
  E.g. Tissue culture laboratories (CIAT Project)
  > instructions how to make use and tailor it for local needs, get access to finance and networks
3. E-Mentoring as Empowerment

> Overcoming Cultural and Political Constraints
> Supportive e-infrastructure for entrepreneurs
> Connecting an experienced aging society with youth
> Access to resources (finance, knowledge, technology)
> Connecting the informal sector to growth and trade

Using Semantic Web (SW) technology to enable match-making of mentors and mentees

Just a first step with many challenges
➢ To be addressed in our project with UNCTAD Swisscontact, and Credit Suisse
4. UNCTAD ATDF Matchmaking Platform

http://www.atdforum.org/

http://test-match.atdforum.org/
Welcome to the ATDF Matchmaking Platform!

This platform aims at bringing together ambitious and bright entrepreneurs with experienced and professional experts (mentors) who may be able to coach them in their efforts (a) to commercialise an innovative good or service they developed for their home market, (b) to solve a particular business or technical problem in their established business, or (c) to simply assess the quality of their business plan and help find potential investors.

In order to help the ‘seekers’ (entrepreneurs) find the most qualified ‘solvers’ (mentors), we have set up the ATDF Matchmaking Platform.

The platform will search for the mentors that match a particular entrepreneurship profile best. It will then show in which areas the two respective profiles coincide most. Initial contact between the potential partners can be established by sending a message via platform using e-mail or skype.

The link between the entrepreneur that seeks assistance and the mentor may initially be very weak.
Outlook (possible Link to Gender)

E-mentoring as a tool of empowerment for women:

- Organizational structure (overcome space/hierarchy)
- Individual & interpersonal factors (discrim./social skills)
- Flexible/alternative work arrangements (time barrier)