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ITU, UN Women recognize outstanding contributions to women's empowerment through technology**Finalists announced in second-annual GEM-TECH Awards (<https://youtu.be/mowMPUGJuNY>)**

Geneva, 1 December 2015 – ITU and UN Women have announced the twelve finalists for the second annual GEM-TECH Awards, which recognize outstanding work to leverage the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote the empowerment of women and girls.

This year's awards attracted close to 150 nominations from government, the private sector, academia and civil society from 55 countries. Online nominations were open from 28 May to 31 July, and attracted a wide range of projects and advocacy work linked to harnessing ICTs for women's empowerment.

The winners will be selected by a committee of experts from ITU and UN Women with input from last year's winners. They will be announced at a special awards ceremony on 14 December 2015 held at Civic Hall in New York, co-hosted by the New York Mayor's Office.

Jointly organized by ITU and UN Women, the awards were launched in 2014 in recognition of the tremendous power of ICTs to transform women's lives by providing them with better access to education, information, support networks, employment opportunities, avenues for political participation, and devices and apps that can improve personal safety. The awards aim to recognize the diversity and scope of work being done around the world.

This year's awards focus on three categories:

Promoting women in the technology sector

Finalists: Cisco Networking Academy, USA; Technovation Challenge, USA; Roxana Rugina, CEO and Founder of Simplon Romania, Romania; Women in Technology Uganda, Uganda.

Applying technology for women's empowerment

Finalists: the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, UK; Community Development Association (CDA), Georgia; the Research Center of Communication and Development Knowledge Management (CCDKM), Thailand; and Ooredoo, Qatar.

Developing gender responsive ICT governance, policy and access

Finalists: Hanane Boujemi, Senior Manager of Internet Governance Programme, MENA Region, the Netherlands; the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Senegal; Mujeres Digitales, Colombia; the National Network to End Domestic Violence's (NNEDV) Safety Net Project, USA.

ITU and UN Women have recognized the work of three GEM-TECH Global Achievers, who are this year H.E. Anusha Rehman Khan, Minister of State for IT and Telecommunications, Pakistan; H.E. Pamela Hamamoto, Ambassador, US Mission in Geneva; and Dr Nancy Hafkin, Senior Associate, Women in Global Science and Technology, USA.

"ICTs are a powerful tool for development, but women and girls do not have equitable access to this transformative technology," said ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao. "ITU estimates that there are some 200 million fewer women online than men, and that women are coming online later and more slowly. The projects and individuals announced as finalists today demonstrate the positive impact that ICTs have on women's empowerment."

The 2015 GEM-TECH Awards are being celebrated as part of the 20 year commemoration of the Beijing Platform for Action. "This has been a signal year for women's empowerment," said UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. "We have decisive commitments from Heads of State and Government to prioritize gender equality, and evidence of where this must make most impact. Through the new Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, we have explicit targets for increased engagement in enabling technologies for women and girls and commitment to closing the gender gap in technology by 2030. The GEM-TECH projects allow us to see what that looks like in practice and show what we can achieve through digital inclusion."

The inaugural GEM-TECH Awards were presented at ITU's 2014 Plenipotentiary Conference held in Busan

(<http://www.itu.int/en/action/women/gem/Documents/GEM-TECH-Winners-Brochure.pdf>), Republic of Korea. There, seven individuals and organizations from around the world won awards for promoting gender equality and mainstreaming through ICTs.

ITU is already engaged in promoting women's empowerment through ICTs. ITU's Girls in ICT Day, which takes place annually on the fourth Thursday in April, encourages young women and girls to pursue a career in ICT, and has to date reached over 7,000 girls through more than 5,300 events in over 150 countries. ITU's Special Envoy on Women and Girls in ICT is award winning actor and advocate, Geena Davis.

View the video profiling this year's finalists **here** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mowMPUGJuNY&feature=youtu.be>).

See last year's winners **here** (<http://www.itu.int/en/action/women/gem/Documents/GEM-TECH-Winners-Brochure.pdf>).

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