



PRESS RELEASE

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New Research Reveals Path to ‘Diaspora Dividend’ for Commonwealth Women Entrepreneurs Amid Global Implementation Crisis

LONDON / NEW YORK / ISLAMABAD — April 2, 2026 — The [Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network \(CBWN\)](#), in collaboration with [OPEN \(Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs\)](#) and [OPEN London CIC](#), has released a landmark research report identifying a "Structural Implementation Crisis" that prevents women in the Global South from accessing capital, despite having legal rights "on the books".

Developed following a high-level roundtable at the **70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)** in New York, the report, *Unlocking the Commonwealth Diaspora Dividend*, provides a strategic roadmap for leveraging digital innovation and professional diaspora networks to bypass traditional bureaucratic barriers.

CBWN with leaders from the Commonwealth and the World Bank addressed [the global implementation gap in the Commonwealth in women's entrepreneurship and legal rights](#), specifically highlighting the urgent findings of the Women, Business and Law 2026 report.

The "Implementation Gap": A Reality Check

The report draws on the **World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) 2026** diagnostic, which reveals that globally, women enjoy less than two-thirds of the legal rights afforded to men. In the Commonwealth—home to 44% of the world's poorest women—the gap between law and practice is even more severe.

Pakistan serves as a primary case study for this crisis. While its score for "Supportive Frameworks" is 50.68, its **Enforcement Perception** score plummets to a dismal **27.35**, highlighting a "lived reality" where protective laws fail to reach the ground.

"Gender equality is frequently sidelined or placed on the 'back burner' of international agendas due to geopolitical risk," warned Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, former Permanent Representative to the UN, in her message to the roundtable. She challenged leaders to move from "just words" to "action" by unlocking capital for women entrepreneurs.

Bypassing Barriers via the "Diaspora Dividend"

The research highlights how the **Commonwealth Diaspora Dividend**—the strategic redirection of wealth and expertise from the diaspora back to female-led firms—can serve as an economic engine. Key "bypass" strategies identified include:

- **Digital Financial Integration:** The recent expansion of the **Roshan Digital Account (RDA)** on March 27, 2026, allows foreign investors and companies to invest directly in Pakistan, providing a transparent mechanism to link global capital to local female-led startups.
- **The Freelance Revolution:** Pakistan now ranks **fifth globally** in the freelance economy. Digital inflows are projected to hit **\$42 billion** in the 2026 fiscal year, allowing women to bypass mobility constraints and workplace safety issues.
- **AI and Social Commerce:** Tools like AI-enabled mentorship portals and "Tradeverse" digital spaces are connecting women directly to global export markets independently of male-dominated formal infrastructure.
- **The Commonwealth Advantage:** Trade between Commonwealth member states is **21% less expensive** due to shared legal frameworks and common law, a massive structural advantage for the diaspora.

A Call for Facilitated Action

The report coincides with Pakistan's preparation to launch its first-ever **National Women Entrepreneurship Policy**. This landmark policy sets ambitious quantitative targets, including:

- **Allocating 15%** of SME Fund proceeds specifically to women entrepreneurs.
- **Boosting women exporters** to 50% of the total (up from the current ~2,500).
- **Targeting 20 million** unique active digital accounts for women through the "Banking on Equality" policy.

"The existence of a legal right does not guarantee its realization," the report concludes. By leveraging professional networks like **OPEN Global**, **OPEN London CIC**, and **OPEN Toronto**, the Commonwealth can ensure that a young woman's future is defined by her ambition rather than outdated enforcement gaps.

About the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN)

CBWN is an accredited organization focused on women's economic empowerment and leadership across 56 countries. Directly recognized by 56 governments, it provides a platform for building businesses and advancing women through strategic trade and professional ecosystems.

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