



Women, Innovation and IP: Building Collaborative Ecosystems for Inclusive Growth

The Contribution of Public-Private Partnerships

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Three Models of Collaboration

Women are increasingly shaping the future of entrepreneurship and technological development. The systems that finance, protect and scale innovation must keep up to speed. Globally, women remain underrepresented in IP systems, STEM industries, venture capital networks and innovation leadership.

On 13 May 2026, WIPO's Women in IP Symposium Session on Public-Private Partnerships brought together representatives from Mexico, Nigeria and Japan, to explore how collaborative public-private initiatives are helping to close these gaps. While each initiative emerged from a different social and economic context, they all pointed towards one clear conclusion: no single institution can close the gender IP gap alone.

The session showcased three distinct public-private approaches to advancing women's participation in innovation and IP. While the initiatives presented at WIPO were rooted in local geographical contexts, they offer valuable insights and potential for a replication of these initiatives on an international scale.

The [Mexican Institute of Industrial Property \(IMPI\)](#) presented a support program designed to improve women's access to IP. The initiative identified three recurring barriers: lack of knowledge about IP, lack of financial and legal resources, and lack of professional support networks. Through partnerships with universities, associations and private-sector actors, the program provides targeted support for female inventors and creators while tracking measurable indicators such as trademark registrations and patent filings.

Nigeria's contribution focused on financing women-led innovation. Speakers from [WEAV Capital](#) and the Nigerian [Bank of Industry](#) described how women entrepreneurs remain highly active across African startup ecosystems, yet continue to face significant funding gaps. Their response

has been to build a “gender-smart” financing ecosystem combining venture capital, concessional debt, catalytic public funding and investment-readiness programs.

Meanwhile, Japan presented a unique trilateral collaboration between the [Japan Patent Office \(JPO\)](#), the [Japan Intellectual Property Association \(JIPA\)](#), and the [Japan Patent Attorney's Association \(JPAA\)](#). Beginning in 2024, the initiative focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) through three pillars: education, visibility and continuous engagement. Activities range from STEM outreach programs for girls to regular institutional dialogue between public and private actors within the IP ecosystem.

These three initiatives from three diverse contexts converge to tackle crucial questions. How can we make innovation systems more inclusive, resilient, and effective? Are there promising approaches that can be implemented and scaled in additional locations and contexts?

Faster Together: Coalitions for Progress

The chance of sustained success is bolstered when there is coordinated action across public and private sectors. Public institutions and private actors perform different yet complementary functions within innovation ecosystems. Public institutions provide reach, continuity, and legitimacy. They create policy frameworks, absorb costs and allow for programs to scale regionally or nationally. Private-sector actors contribute specialized expertise and closer proximity to entrepreneurs and investors.

This interconnectedness is visible across the three initiatives. In Mexico, public institutions partnered with universities and specialized organizations to tailor support programs accordingly and gather measurable data on IP registrations and participation. This model is designed to be adapted to different vulnerable communities and regional contexts, through its modular approach towards different target groups as well as flexible implementation partnerships. The core structure of the program remains the same, while the beneficiary group can be adjusted depending on local needs.

Nigerian speakers described how catalytic public financing can help attract private investment by reducing perceived risk and strengthening market confidence. They also emphasized the importance of collaboration around cost-effective IP protection and support for businesses seeking to commercialize their innovations internationally.

In Japan, trilateral cooperation between government institutions, industry groups and patent professionals created a platform through which “real voices from the field” could inform policymaking. Japanese participants further highlighted how institutional cooperation models could inform initiatives in other jurisdictions. These examples show that the future of inclusive innovation may depend less on isolated interventions and more on the ability to build durable partnerships across sectors and institutions.

Leveraging IP Produces Major Advantages

IP, as a strategic business asset, is closely intertwined with the resilience of a business: for technology-driven companies especially, it often constitutes the foundation of competitiveness and long-term value creation.

Investors from Nigeria described how IP due diligence forms an essential part of evaluating startups. In some cases, businesses encounter difficulties because IP remains attached to founders personally rather than to the company itself. Others face trademark disputes or enforcement challenges when entering international markets. Weak IP strategies can undermine otherwise promising businesses. Strong IP frameworks, by contrast, contribute to investment readiness, scalability and what participants described as “bankability.”

Participants also emphasized that effective IP protection should be viewed as an integral part of an innovation ecosystem that also includes access to finance, business support, education and professional networks. Public-private partnerships play a key role in connecting entrepreneurs with these complementary resources, combining public-sector reach and resources with private-sector expertise and market knowledge.

Against this backdrop, IP awareness can be boosted through both education and accessibility. Without support systems, many entrepreneurs, particularly first-time founders, may not fully understand how to protect or leverage their innovations. The initiatives presented at the WIPO event are designed to address persistent gender disparities in innovation ecosystems by improving women entrepreneurs’ access to and strategic use of IP tools. By doing so, they help to ensure that female-led enterprises can effectively protect and commercialize their innovations.

Success Factors in Common

Four indicators of successful initiatives that support women in accessing IP tools can be drawn out:

1. Successful initiatives are practical initiatives. They address concrete operational barriers, in addition to building awareness of IP strategy and management.
2. Measurable outcomes matter. Tracking indicators such as patent filings, access to funding, business growth and trademark registrations creates a way to demonstrate credibility to other participants, supporters and funders. Tracking also provides a basis for improving programs over time.
3. Visibility is part of closing the gender IP gap. Japanese organizations emphasized showcasing diverse professional pathways within the IP sector, as well as providing role models for female inventors and entrepreneurs. Nigerian investors highlighted the importance of demonstrating and signaling that women-led businesses are investable, scalable and capable of generating strong returns. Storytelling, in this context, became part of the ecosystem-building and inspires other actors that they too can take part.
4. Initiatives can work across borders. While legal systems and market conditions differ across regions, many of the structural barriers underlying the gender IP gap are highly similar. Collaborative frameworks can be replicated across contexts without necessarily requiring identical institutional models. WIPO action to build network for exchanging experiences and insights is invaluable for expanding programs to close gender IP and innovation gaps.

Innovation systems cannot operate at full capacity while one engine remains underpowered; leveraging the contribution of women's ingenuity and their inventions is key to economic growth as well as to increasing individual opportunity. The collaborative efforts emerging across these different contexts presented in the session suggest that more inclusive ecosystems are increasingly essential to the future of global innovation.