



PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Women's empowerment has been an important achievement in the global women's movement. Women of the modern era take control of their lives to stand on an equal footing in employment, education and other areas of development. The benefits are many - From greater social development to changes that improve the world- when nations empower ambitious women through entrepreneurship. As key contributors to global economies, rural women make up a great source of power of development in both the developed and developing nations.

Empowering rural women not only gives them greater dignity and welfare through entrepreneurship, also aids to improve livelihood. The dynamic changes soar high to the path of growth. Enterprise led by women can generate high productivity without compromising on the quality standards. Although, educational barrier, cultural inhibitions have always been a major barrier for women to pursue entrepreneurship, access to finance is also a major crisis plaguing these women led enterprises. Nevertheless, society is benefited with different solutions to management, organization and business problems through the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. "When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations" Women entrepreneurs' especially economically and socially become agents of change.

Key Words- *Empowerment, Entrepreneurship.*

Introduction

Women can and should have a fundamental role in the development of sustainable livelihoods. Women are the main victims of worldwide poverty, thus preventing societies from fully achieving their development potential. By creating and supporting entrepreneurial opportunities for women, I believe that women can be lifted out of poverty, which will have a positive effect on the economy while promoting social growth and advancing towards gender equality.

While on the surface poverty is often defined as a lack of income or assets, in the day-to-day lives of the very poor, poverty becomes a network of disadvantages, each one exacerbating the others. The result is generation after generation of people who lack access to education, health care, adequate housing, proper sanitation and good nutrition. They are the most vulnerable to disasters, armed conflict and systems of political and economic oppression and they are powerless to improve their circumstances. These conditions often carry with them dysfunctional family and societal relationships, paralyzing low self-esteem, and spiritual darkness. It's clear that handouts and traditional aid are not enough to solve the problem of poverty and its many entanglements. The following facts reveal the necessity of empowering the rural women through entrepreneurship.

- 1.4 billion people in developing countries live on \$1.25 a day or less.
- Rural areas account for three out of every four people living on less than \$1.25 a day.
- 22,000 children die each day due to conditions of poverty.
- 60 percent of the world's hungry are women.
- 50 percent of pregnant women in developing countries lack proper maternal care, resulting in over 300,000 maternal deaths annually from childbirth.
- 1 out of 6 infants are born with a low birth weight in developing countries.
- Malnutrition is the key factor contributing to more than one-third of all global child deaths resulting in 2.6 million deaths per year.
- Every five seconds, a child dies from hunger-related diseases.

India therefore urgently needs to formulate an anti-poverty strategy that is fiscally sustainable and more finely targeted to those who truly cannot benefit from the opportunities offered by growth. To increase their cost effectiveness and extend their outreach to the very poor, safety nets need to be targeted to those who either cannot participate in the growth process or face continuing exposure to risks, which are outside of their control. Rural households are largely uninsured against agricultural yield shocks, for example. Such as the following



Effective safety nets that insure the rural poor against income fluctuations — such as public works programs — are essential in overcoming an important market failures.

Entrepreneurship development programmes as one of the leading programmes for the empowerment of women. Empowerment believes that People's choices have to be enlarged and they must have economic opportunities to make use of their capabilities. The government of India is taking lot of measures for the empowerment of women. Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship makes all the women to take care of herself and her household. It also upholds gender equity in the society.

Empowering women through entrepreneurship creates a sustainable form of livelihood for rural women while enabling the participation of more women in the process. Review shows that women and girls reinvest 90% of their income in their families and community. This statistic reinforces our belief that offering entrepreneurship training for women in developing countries will not only improve their own lives and their families' well-being, but also generate benefits at a larger economic and social development scale.

Review of Literature

An article by A. Mehta titled as "Rural women Entrepreneurs in India": opportunities highlights that most of the women live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, in developing countries like India. The gender disparities in economic power sharing are also one of the factors to the poverty of women. Due to circumstances, women contribute to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. When poverty affects households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities of household welfare, women bear a disproportionate burden, attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity.

Another article that featured in Economic Times about "Empowering Rural women Entrepreneurs" focuses that Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one's without power gain greater control over their lives. This means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. It involves power to, power with and power within.

Another article that featured in IPEDR regarding "Sustainable development of Rural women Entrepreneurs" as a process of awareness and conscientization, of capacity building leading to greater participation, effective decision-making power and control leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the millennium development goals. at the same time it is about rights and equitable societies.

Rationale

Self-sufficiency and quality of life are, of course, relative terms. The so called poverty line is described in many ways but at its most basic it identifies those persons who have such low income that they cannot exist without regularly calling upon the rest of the community for assistance to acquire the most basic things in life - food, clothing, shelter, education and good health. In some instances whole communities are below the poverty line and assistance is not immediately available.

Human resources are the single most important factor in the economic development of a country. People at or below the poverty line have a negative effect on the total disposable wealth of a country. Income Generating Programme seek to redress this imbalance by equipping these people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values such that they become positive contributors to their nation's economy, through entrepreneurship. Income-Generating Programme and activities, therefore, need to be promoted and implemented in the context of overall national development, in the context of community development and in relation to individual needs. Income generating programme through entrepreneurship help in the following manner.

- More equitable access to assets and services – land, water, technology, innovation and credit, banking and financial services – will strengthen women's rights, increase agricultural productivity, reduce hunger and promote economic growth.
- Infrastructure programme should be designed to maximise poor rural women's access to the benefits of roads, transportation services, telecommunications, energy and water.
- Employment opportunities need to be improved, at the same time women perform the bulk of unpaid care work. This is an area for greater attention by development factors through increased recognition and valuing of the ways in which care work supports thriving economies, as women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work



- Innovative approaches and partnerships are needed to scale up women's economic empowerment
- The aim to improve living standards and to increase the capacity of people to produce goods and services — that is to generate income.

To explore the relationship in the path of connectivity should evaluate entrepreneurial activities in terms of

(a) Poverty Alleviation

A great majority of people in many developing countries are living below the poverty line. In addition the economic conditions of some sections of society even in developed countries need to be improved. This calls for preparing the people with technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills aimed at income generation in order to solve the problems associated with acute poverty.

(b) Growing levels of literacy

Levels of literacy vary from State to State and group to group ranging from as low as 10 per cent in some instances to almost 100 per cent in others. The overall situation, however, is gradually improving as more and more effort is being made to eradicate illiteracy, through formal, non-formal and other modes of education.

As a result, the number of people requiring, and indeed demanding, continuing education is rapidly increasing. In particular there is a high demand for those continuing education activities which focus on improving the capacity to increase income. There is a growing realization that as literacy skills improve so the capability of generating income improves.

(c) Urban Migration

Many people residing in rural and semi-urban areas are migrating to nearby cities. This is because increased industrialization has restricted opportunities for gainful employment in rural areas. Many social and economic problems arise from this trend. In order to minimize such problems people should be encouraged to stay in rural areas by helping them develop appropriate skills and abilities for improving their income generating capacity through agriculture related businesses and enterprises.

(d) Increasing Aspirations

With increasing literacy and access to information on global development, the aspirations of the people are growing to improve their living conditions and quality of life. The urge for higher levels of income is constantly on the increase. This has resulted in more and more people seeking opportunities to engage in economic activities through acquisition of relevant productive skills and abilities.

(e) Equity and Social Justice

Several kinds of disparities exist in the living conditions among the different sections of society. This is mainly due to differing capacities and opportunities for income-generation. Groups especially disadvantaged in this regard include rural women, unemployed youth, the aged and certain ethnic minorities. In order to minimize disparities and provide social justice, adequate opportunities need to be provided to equip less fortunate people with competencies to raise their levels of income.

(f) Changing Employment Patterns

Due to rapid changes taking place in technological, industrial and economic spheres, the world of work is undergoing rapid transformation. Some jobs and businesses are becoming obsolescent giving place to new ones. The scope for paid employment is not in keeping with the growing demand. Self-employment and co-employment (with partner or cooperative) are on the rise. More and more women are entering the work force. To cope with these trends and changes, people need to be trained and retrained to continually sustain their earning power.

(g) Economic Prosperity

To be less dependent on other nations and obtain maximum advantages from the changing complex interdependent world economy. This is only possible when a great majority of the people are in a position to richly and effectively contribute to the national economy. Hence there is need for involving maximum numbers of people in income generating activities. Prosperity through improved income, investment, saving with reduction in poverty as shown below.

Entrepreneurial infrastructure, as the term is used here, represents a subset of the more general entrepreneurial activities concept. Hence, entrepreneurial infrastructure represents the facilities and services present within a given geographic area that encourages the birth of new ventures and the growth and development of small businesses. To explore the relationship



between entrepreneurial infrastructure and new business development, five research questions related to entrepreneurial infrastructure:

1. Do entrepreneurial companies and entrepreneurs recognize a need for assistance?
2. Is the new business or the individual entrepreneur aware of the existence of resources for assistance?
3. How urgent is the new business need for assistance?.
4. Are resources perceived to be adequate in terms of capacity?
5. Are the resources perceived to be effective?

Business owners and small firms often require facilitative resources in order to function effectively. For instance, with regard to business creation, potential business owners require adequate capital and physical accommodations. To the extent that physical facilities and installations exist, and are able to accommodate aspiring business owners (e.g., incubators) and growth-oriented businesses (e.g., industrial parks), or that capital sources are adequate (e.g., venture capital firms), the infrastructure support network is effective. Some useful information is useful in making effective decisions, could include economic, market, legal, technical, and other environmentally related data. This information and data could be made available from facilities established within the entrepreneurial infrastructure Opportunity recognition is the cornerstone of the entrepreneurship process. opportunity entrepreneurs are risk-tolerant and have an internal locus of control, have a higher preference for self-employment.

To carry out their work effectively, new business owners, and small and growing businesses require information. For instance, information is needed regarding the environment. Such helpful information, which can assist business owners. Generally, what the new business owner performs within the operating domain of the business, can be called internal tasks. Such internal tasks include planning, directing, and organizing various functional activities of an enterprise. Likewise, one could consider tasks performed by others, in various functional areas within the boundary of the enterprise, as internal tasks. Using these perspectives pertaining to internal task processes, the decisions of individual entrepreneurs or representatives of businesses to seek assistance in performing their tasks from entities outside the business, can be viewed as decisions to form boundaries with external individuals or organizations). This is explained through the following criteria's. Financial Support (availability of financial resources and equity for new and growing firms, including grants and subsidies)

Government Policies (the extent to which government policies concerning taxes, regulations, and their application are size neutral and/or whether these policies discourage or encourage new and growing firms)

1. Government Programmes (the presence of direct programmes to assist new and growing firms at all levels of government— national, regional, and municipal)
2. Education and Training (the extent to which training in starting or managing small, new, or growing business features in the educational and training system, and the quality, relevance and depth of such education and training in creating or managing small, new or growing business)
3. Research and Development Transfer (the extent to which national research and development leads to new commercial opportunities, and whether or not R&D is available for new, small, and growing firms)
4. Commercial and Professional. Infrastructure (the influence of commercial, accounting, and other legal services and institutions that allow or promote new, small, or growing businesses)
5. Market Openness/Barriers to Entry (the extent to which commercial arrangements are prevented from undergoing constant change and re-deployment, preventing new and growing firms from competing and replacing existing suppliers, subcontractors, and consultants)
6. Access to Physical Infrastructure (access to physical resources— communication, utilities, land space, transportation—at a price that does not discriminate against new, small, or growing firms.

For potential entrepreneurs, the decision whether to start a business is influenced by additional characteristics within the existing business environment. These are referred to as entrepreneurial infrastructures. In order to describe the relationship between entrepreneurial infrastructures and new business development, a conceptual framework constructed provides a comprehensive approach that considered the contributions of entrepreneurial infrastructures for the development of new enterprises. Specifically to recognises that new business development is the result of two parallel sets of activities:

- (a) those entrepreneurs associated with opportunity- motivated
- (b) those entrepreneurs related directly to necessity-motivated

For most entrepreneurs, the motivation to develop a new firm is influenced by the entrepreneurial infrastructures offered by government and non-governmental institutes or organizations. Necessity-motivated entrepreneurs tend to be unable to



participate in entrepreneurial infrastructures. The opportunity-motivated entrepreneurs are those who have choices regarding their participation in entrepreneurial infrastructures.

Conclusion

Interventions through planning aspects- policy support, information systems, mobilization of resources could make it effective. Varying characteristics of target groups in terms of socio-economic conditions have to be focused. Emphasis to do learning – by- doing approaches, workshops, along with creating awareness and motivation is also key to eradicate poverty

through diverse organizations and implementation process. From the programming aspects, rural women are in need of income as they live below the subsistence level seeking opportunities. Basic skills, Trade skills, money-saving skills, book-keeping skills, marketing skills ,enterprise skills could allow optimum utilization of resources facilitating the income generating capability among the downtrodden and weaker sections of the society. The likelihood of participation in entrepreneurial infrastructure will be high as long as government supports and schemes are approached in a clear manner.