

Issues and Challenges in Women Entrepreneur's Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Women Entrepreneurship, Startup India is engaging in multiple activities to support early stage women startups and aspiring entrepreneurs. There is no force more powerful than a woman who is determined to rise. Glass ceilings, patriarchy, gender pay gap, sexist workplace policies, and just male privilege — a lot of challenges dot a woman's path to success, but many have taken on the mantle to power through them all and succeed against all odds. Women entrepreneur" is any women who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk. In a country where historically most women run businesses have been small, local ventures there is a small but perceptible shift underway. A handful of entrepreneurs are stepping up to show they have the appetite, skills and vision to take a shot at scaling their young ventures.

INTRODUCTION

Women entrepreneurs are key players in any developing country particularly in terms of their contribution to economic development. Women entrepreneurs empowerment face a series of problems right from the beginning till the enterprise functions. Being a woman itself poses various problems to a woman entrepreneur, the problems of Indian women pertains to her responsibility towards family, society and lion work. The tradition, customs, socio cultural values, ethics, motherhood subordinates to her husband and men, physically weak, hard work areas, feeling of insecurity, cannot be tough etc are some peculiar problems that the Indian women are coming across while they jump into entrepreneurship.

Women in rural areas have to suffer still further. They face tough resistance from men. They are considered as helpers. The attitude of society towards her and constraints in which she has to live and work are not very conducive. Women entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also provide society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems. However, they still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs empowerment often face gender-based barriers to starting and growing their businesses, like discriminatory property, matrimonial and inheritance laws and/or cultural practices; lack of access to formal finance mechanisms; limited mobility and access to information and networks, etc.

Women's entrepreneurship can make a particularly strong contribution to the economic well-being of the family and communities, poverty reduction and women's empowerment, thus contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, governments across the world as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotional measures. Besides the above basic problems the other problems faced by women entrepreneurs empowerment are as follows:

1. Family ties:

Women in India are very emotionally attached to their families. They are supposed to attend to all the domestic work, to look after the children and other members of the family. They are overburden with family responsibilities like extra attention to husband, children and in laws which take away a lots of their time and energy. In such situation, it will be very difficult to concentrate and run the enterprise successfully.

2. Male dominated society:

Even though our constitution speaks of equality between sexes, male chauvinism is still the order of the day. Women are not treated equal to men. Their entry to business requires the approval of the head of the family. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male preserve. All these puts a break in the growth of women entrepreneurs.

3. Lack of education:

Women in India are lagging far behind in the field of education. Most of the women (around sixty per cent of total women) are illiterate. Those who are educated are provided either less or inadequate education than their male counterpart partly due to early marriage, partly due to son's higher education and partly due to poverty. Due to lack of proper education, women entrepreneurs remain in dark about the development of new technology, new methods of production, marketing and other governmental support which will encourage them to flourish.

4. Social barriers:

The traditions and customs prevailed in Indian societies towards women sometimes stand as an obstacle before them to grow and prosper. Castes and religions dominate with one another and hinders women entrepreneurs too. In rural areas, they face more social barriers. They are always seen with suspicious eyes.

5. Shortage of raw materials:

The scarcity of raw materials, sometimes nor, availability of proper and adequate raw materials sounds the death-knell of the enterprises run by women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs really face a tough task in getting the required raw material and other necessary inputs for the enterprises when the prices are very high.

6. Problem of finance:

Women entrepreneurs suffer a lot in raising and meeting the financial needs of the business. Bankers, creditors and financial institutes are not coming forward to provide financial assistance to women borrowers on the ground of their less credit worthiness and more chances of business failure. They also face financial problem due to blockage of funds in raw materials, work-in-progress finished goods and non-receipt of payment from customers in time.

7. Tough competition:

Usually women entrepreneurs employ low technology in the process of production. In a market where the competition is too high, they have to fight hard to survive in the market against the organised sector and their male counterpart who have vast experience and capacity to adopt advanced technology in managing enterprises

8. High cost of production:

Several factors including inefficient management contribute to the high cost of production which stands as a stumbling block before women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs face technology obsolescence due to non-adoption or slow adoption to changing technology which is a major factor of high cost of production.

9. Low risk-bearing capacity:

Women in India are by nature weak, shy and mild. They cannot bear the amount risk which is essential for running an enterprise. Lack of education, training and financial support from outsiders also reduce their ability to bear the risk involved in an enterprises.

10. Limited mobility:

Women mobility in India is highly limited and has become a problem due to traditional values and inability to drive vehicles. Moving alone and asking for a room to stay out in the night for business purposes are still looked upon with suspicious eyes. Sometimes, younger women feel uncomfortable in dealing with men who show extra interest in them than work related aspects.

11. Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude:

Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude is a matter of concern for women entrepreneurs. They have no entrepreneurial bent of mind. Even after attending various training programmes on entrepreneurship women entrepreneurs fail to tide over the risks and troubles that may come up in an organisational working.

12. Limited managerial ability:

Management has become a specialised job which only efficient managers perform. Women entrepreneurs are not efficient in managerial functions like planning, organising, controlling, coordinating, staffing, directing, motivating etc. of an enterprise. Therefore, less and limited managerial ability of women has become a problem for them to run the enterprise successfully.

13. Legal formalities:

Fulfilling the legal formalities required for running an enterprise becomes an upheaval task on the part of an women entrepreneur because of the prevalence of corrupt practices in government offices and procedural delays for various licenses, electricity, water and shed allotments. In such situations women entrepreneurs find it hard to concentrate on the smooth working of the enterprise.

14. Exploitation by middle men:

Since women cannot run around for marketing, distribution and money collection, they have to depend on middle men for the above activities. Middle men tend to exploit them in the guise of helping. They add their own profit margin which result in less sales and lesser profit.

15. Lack of self confidence:

Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature, lack of self-confidence which is essentially a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They have to strive hard to strike a balance between managing a family and managing an enterprise.

Conclusion

For women empowerment in entrepreneurs ,they should ensure that business plans are prepared in a professional manner to fulfill the requirements of banks and funding agencies. They should expect to be treated on an equal footing with men and to seek explanations for rejection, if any. Women must use networks to further their business objectives.SME support agencies and training providers must allow for women-specific needs when designing enterprise programmes. In short Women returning to the labour market after raising a family may be unsure of their potential and need encouragement. Women tutors and advisors can act as role models. Working with the local business community will promote a more positive and supportive attitude towards women entrepreneurs.

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