

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



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Women and Sustainable Development?

What is sustainable development ?

Economic growth with equitable distribution of benefits, regenerating rather than destroying the environment, empowering rather than marginalizing the poor (UNDP)

How do women contribute to sustainable development ?

- Women share a major proportion of agriculture labor
- Women are primary care givers to children and elderly
- Women are mainly responsible for the family's nutrition

But here are some facts

- Majority of world's poor are women. Since the 1970s number of rural women below poverty line has gone up by 50% vs 30% for men
- Women accrue less income over their lifetime:
 - Paid less than men for same work
 - Less paid work- responsibility of child/elder care, home chores. Do 2.6X unpaid work compared to men
 - Discrimination in access to family assets and other social biases

Women in sustainable development

Therefore: (i) lower social security and higher vulnerability to poverty, esp in old age (ii) lower access to credit/loans

.....**some more facts** (demonstrating impact of inequality on eco dev)

- Loss of income worldwide attributed to gender-based discrimination at \$6 trillion or 7.5 % of the *global* GDP* (*OECD SIGI 2019 Global Report*)
- Higher Economic losses in countries where women are absent from productive employment = 30% (IMF)
- 0.1% reduction in gender inequality as measured by the UN gender inequality index leads to 1% higher economic growth (IMF study). Advancing women's equality could add \$4.5 trillion to annual GDP in 2025 for Asia Pacific (McKinsey Global Institute)

Access to Finance and Women's Empowerment

Access to finance for basic needs and livelihoods:

Various impact studies have shown a correlation between access to finance and economic and social empowerment of poor women

(i) In Africa 250,000 women in 1600 SHGs pooled \$2.8 mill. 182,000 benefited from ownership/control over the land they tend.

(ii) In Andhra Pradesh, 215 SHG members were more empowered (mobility, involvement family and community decisions, participating in public and political campaigns). Improvements observed were as much due to the training and workshops on financial and legal matters as due to the loans received by them.

(iii) In rural Gujarat, study done on 384 SHG members showed an increase in political, social and economic empowerment pre and post joining group by 9, 14 and 11% respectively with every progressive year of membership.

Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs

In countries with higher female participation in business ownership such as 69% in the Philippines, 64% in Thailand and 51% in Viet Nam

Benefits:

- significant income boost. E.g. in Nepal, women earn approximately 40 % less than men, while in the Philippines, the trend is reversed
- women entrepreneurs hire 7% more women employees. 90% earning is spent on their families, compared to 30-40% by men.

However...

proportion of women-owned MSMEs with access to finance averages only 5 - 6% per for microenterprises and 12 -15 % for small firms - a significant reason for not scaling. Studies suggest that closing the global credit gap for women-owned MSMEs could increase average per capita incomes by approximately 12% in a decade across the BRICS countries and the ASEAN sub-region.

(source: study spanning developing and emerging economies)

Women in the Corporate Sector

Women are under-represented in senior management and on corporate boards

20 developing Asian economies showed that women made up 40% of the workforce but only 14.4% of corporate boardroom members and senior managers (2015 data)

Challenge

despite laws mandating minimum representation of women, boards cite lack of qualified candidates; proportion of women in workforce declines up the pyramid

Solutions

- Gender neutral benefits such as parental leaves, childcare benefits, pay parity
- Gender balanced staffing across the organization (including in unions)
- Gender balanced hiring and promotions
- Safe working environment devoid of harassment; transportation to and from workplace where required

Empowering Women

What is needed?

- participation in decision making in home and community
- no discrimination in the family in access to education, healthcare and share in family wealth and assets
- social protection: cash transfers, maternity leave, etc.
- shared responsibilities within the household
- access to education and awareness of rights
- jobs and livelihoods opportunities, reform discriminatory labour policies and establish gender-inclusive workplaces
- Access to credit and opportunity to enhance incomes

The need for action is NOW

If current trends continue it will take 108 years to close the overall gender inequality gap (World Economic Forum 2018 report)and we know what that means in terms of lost opportunities for sustainable economic development

Thank You