Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, and Capacity Development

Dr. Mohammad Israr Khan
Assistant Professor, Department of Applied and Regional Economics, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University, Bareilly.
Email: drmisrarkhan@gmail.com. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1116-9448

Abstract

Mainstream economic analysis assumes that economic opportunity and outcome are equally and evenly distributed across social segments, including the gender. The reality is, however, not so. There are various factors which inhibit equality oriented outcomes e.g. patriarchy and masculinity engender gender discrimination and injustice and, thereby, inhibit growth of women capacity building and empowerment, including entrepreneurship. Gender inequality, in turn, remains a serious limitation of economic growth and development and keeps women powerless and backward. Women own only a little of economic assets, have less consumption entitlements, lack access to economic opportunities, and lag far behind in social and political arena. The issue of gender equality can be solved to a great extent through considerate policy regimes favoring women empowerment and entrepreneurship.

The paper, while discussing the issue from various angles like entrepreneurship, empowerment, and feminism, ends with policy suggestions aimed at development of mass level women entrepreneurship in the developing societies like ours.

Key Words:
Women Empowerment; Women Entrepreneurship; Rural Entrepreneurship, Productive and Self-Help Capacity Building.

1. Introduction

Gender development makes an important component of human development as an end product of economic development and growth. In the absence of gender equality, the desirable tasks of social and economic equity, justice, and distribution remain unfulfilled. The goal of gender equality, in turn, depends upon women empowerment expressed mainly by the trinity of education, employment, and entrepreneurship. Women, as a group, have historically been discriminated against and denied much of the critical entitlements. The denial has resulted into perpetual powerlessness - social, political, and economic – constituting the vicious circle of discrimination, marginalization, and ghettoization. Within a social context like that of India, women’s subjugation accentuates along many economic and non-economic identities like caste, communal, and asset ownership trajectories etc.

A very important contribution for gender empowerment can be made through entrepreneurship and business ownership. Given the contemporary context of social, political, economic, and policy environment the task is, no doubt, a difficult one. However, there are various national and international factors, especially the global economic order based upon the philosophy of neo-liberalism, which can have critical impact over the efforts to ensure a more enabling environment. Though it has an
inherent tendency towards the creation and sharpening of economic inequalities across regions and persons, yet, also, the market mechanism brings forth a broad spectrum of opportunities for economic diversification, mobility, and modernization. A framework of gender sensitive policies and a faithful implementation of the same can do much for the causes of women empowerment and entrepreneurship. The paper is aimed, intuitively, at the same target.

2. Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is a powerful step towards removing gender inequalities and creating conditions for ‘gender equality’ which is usually described as “the absence of obvious or hidden disparities among individuals based on gender in terms of opportunities, resources, services, benefits, decision-making power and influence” (OECD, 2011: 26) in all walks of life. “Gender equality”, in turn, “is not just about economic empowerment. It is a moral imperative, it is about fairness and equity, and includes many political, social and cultural dimensions” (ibid: 2) Moreover, gender equality “is also a key factor in self-reported well-being and happiness across the world” (ibid: 2).

The conceptualization of women’s empowerment “touches on women’s sense of self-worth and social identity; their willingness and ability to question their subordinate status and identity; their capacity to exercise strategic control over their own lives and to renegotiate their relationships with others who matter to them; and their ability to participate on equal terms with men in reshaping the societies in which they live in ways that contribute to a more just and democratic distribution of power and possibilities” (Kabeer, 2012: 6).

Female empowerment is best captured by and revolves around Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI), the two broad indicators of gender empowerment and equality (HDR: 1995). In a generalized way, women’s empowerment is summed up as the cumulative impact of three Es: education, employment, and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2011). ‘The idea of power’ is at the root of the term empowerment (Oxaal & Baden, 1997: iii). The “concept of empowerment has been tied to the range of activities undertaken by and for women in different areas” (Anonuevo, 1995: 4). Feminist experiences are culture and place specific existential realities and to have a grasp of the diversities “one should not gloss over the differences of the conditions of women as a result of specific economic, political or socio-cultural factors” (ibid:4).

In terms of redistributive justice and affirmative action, empowerment is a long-term process of giving power to those who have historically been deprived of it. It is about the change in favor of those who exercised little control over their lives and other factors. It is to give them control over resources like financial, physical and human, and control over ideology as beliefs, values, and attitudes (Sen, 1998). Also, empowerment is “a moving state; it is a continuum that varies in degree of power. It is relative. … One can move from an extreme state of absolute lack of power to the other extreme of having extreme power” (Lazo, 1995: 27), depicted as [Powerlessness <-----≈------> Powerfulness].

Powerlessness is the cause of female victimization in the market, society, and body politic. Victims of economic exploitation are “mostly women who work under subcontracting or putting out arrangements” (ibid: 23). There are multiple factors which carve out the environment of discrimination and decide the size and shape of gender inequality and oppression. To Lazo (1995:
women’s “state of powerlessness is born by a combination and interaction of environmental and personal factors” like illiteracy, lack of awareness, information, knowledge, self-esteem, self-consideration, money, job, network, connections, etc. The maximization path for empowerment of women is through ‘collectivization’ of action, and raising the critical consciousness of women as an oppressed group (Freire, 1970). Lazo also frames an empowerment equation whereby women empowerment becomes a dependent function of personal capacity (self-esteem, technical skills, management skills etc.) multiplied by physical powerfulness (capital, facilities, human resource etc.).

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\text{Women Empowerment} = \text{Personal Capacity} \times \text{Powerfulness} \quad (\text{ibid: 35}).
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A conscious approach of women empowerment requires designing of “gender mainstream interventions” (Faltholm et al., 2010: 51) without reproducing ghettos and stereotypes by moving “back and forth between liberal feminist and social constructionist approaches” (ibid: 51). Naila Kabeer (2012: 7), on the lines of United Nations guidelines on women’s empowerment (UN, 2001), mentions women empowerment in terms of five components:

i. Women’s sense of self-worth;
ii. Their right to have and determine choices;
iii. Their right to have access to opportunities and resources;
iv. Their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and
v. Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

3. Feminist Critique and Quest

The feminist approach revolves around two propositions i.e. (a) the women are subordinated and discriminated against because they are women and happen to be women, and (b) to be there in discriminatory subordination is not their choice but a chance factor. Martha Nussbaum (1999: 54), for example, laments that “[W]omen belong to culture. But they do not chose to be born into any particular culture … The contingencies of where one is born, whose power one is afraid of, and what habits shape one’s daily thought are chance events that should not be permitted to play the role they now play in pervasively shaping women’s life chance. Beneath all these chance events are human powers, powers of choice and intelligent self-formation. Women in much of the world lack support for most central human function, and this denial of support is frequently caused by their being women.” The remedy, therefore, lies in ‘equality of treatment’ as well as removal of ‘inequity of realities’ (ibid: 4).

Feminists question the established social constructs and institutions as the products of patriarchy and male domination. Patriarchy, literally defined as the rule of the father, is a symbol of mothers’ negation which rises to every realm of life (Adams, 2005). Feminism is a powerful critique not only of feudal conservatism and conventional idealization. It is also a severe rebuttal and rejection of a discriminatory capitalism which is upheld by its adherers and admirers like W. J. Baumol (1990) as the messenger of prosperity and virtue.

When one says, for instance, that “[M]any women in India have attained prominent or leadership positions, rising to the highest echelons in every walk of life - for example as entrepreneurs, industrialists, civil servants, police officers, airline pilots, scientists, engineers” (Shah, 2013) she uses to express a deep psychology of social inability and inequality ascribed to women
and girls. These sorts of acclamation of women achievement denote something which lies beneath. This is a sigh of a sorrow that goes without expression, and which remains inherently embedded in a long tradition of an indoctrinated and discriminatory social confirmation. “Many women” cannot represent all women or fairly all those women who could have done, yet could not do, but for the norms and values of Indian society. This fallacy as well as the ‘confirmation bias’ haunts a great part of socially dominated and state-controlled ‘gender discourses’. Women, often, fall prey to such self-deceptive and self-incriminatory narrations.

“Imagine” asks Michelle Chen (2013: editorial) “being asked to work seven days a week, without breaks or even a thank you” to have any idea of (unpaid) female labor in most part of the world, and it will be quite comfortable to understand the “gendered division of household labor as a stronghold of gender inequality” (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010: 447) in cultural specificities.

Naila Kabeer (2012) found a ‘mixed’ and the ‘least’ evidence in support of the proposition that “economic growth promotes gender equality” (ibid: 4) in capitalist market economies. She opined that as far as the question of equity is concerned “[W]omen did not form homogenous group. Gender inequality intersected with the forms of socio-economic inequality, including class, caste, race, ethnicity, location and so on, frequently exacerbating the injustices associated with them” (ibid: 5).

Kabeer (2012) precisely observed that the assumption of efficient markets provides three plausible reasons for gender discrimination in labor market i.e. (a) gender differential in investments and biological factors, (b) the ‘taste’ for discrimination (Becker, 1971), and (c) the ‘statistical discrimination’ by the employers to use aggregate characteristics to make judgments. Kabeer’s analysis of market functioning, therefore, led her to support Arrow’s (1973) group discrimination hypothesis meaning that “individuals belonging to different social groups could be treated very differently even if they were identical in every other way” (Kabeer, 2002: 10). Reiterating that gender inequality is “structured into market forces by discriminatory practices” (ibid: 11), she concludes that “the overall view that women’s enterprise grow more slowly and generate lower profits than men’s enterprise is largely accurate” (ibid: 31).

4. Women Entrepreneurship

Women’s entrepreneurship needs to be studied separately for two main reasons: (a) “a market failure discriminating against women’s possibility to become entrepreneurs and their possibility to become successful entrepreneurs”, and (b) “the specific needs of women entrepreneurs and would-be women entrepreneurs” (Delman & Holmquist, 2004: 9).

Discourses on women entrepreneurship are closely related to women employment and empowerment and make a quest for equity, equality, liberty, emancipation, fullest personhood etc. for women across cultural and national frontiers. For instance, Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE) applauds women entrepreneurs as the “women who have broken away from the beaten track where demands at home, family oppositions & cultural inhibitions, have led to lack of support, resources and opportunities, are now exploring new vistas of economic participation with all new vigour … to do something positive” (Agrawal, 2015).

Viewed in this perspective, women entrepreneurship is a corollary of feminism and gender emancipation movement. This is also a part of feminist revolt against the
established patriarchy and that all pervasive male biology that exclusively tends to extend itself to all social, economic, and political spheres of life including physical control over the female persona. Women entrepreneurship is a powerful response process to end the ‘internalized subordination’ of women (Malhotra et al., 2002: 1).

According to Falthom et al. (2010: 53) traditional discussion on entrepreneurship assumes universal and non-gendered economic rationality (Bruni et al., 2004) and focusses on men-women differences (Ahl, 2004; 2006) and on obstacles (Marlow and Patton, 2005). Women are advised to partner with men (Godwin et al., 2006) or have access to business networks and mentors (McGregor and Tweed, 2002). Additionally, the studies make depressing images of ‘women entrepreneurs’ (Ahl. 2004; 2006) as against the victorious images of male successful entrepreneurs rising as lonely heroes, taking risks, fighting against difficult rules, but winning against all odds, or as highly technical problem solvers and inventor entrepreneurs (Ogbor, 2000; Pettersson, 2007). Policies, too, do the same (Ahl, 2004). These types of symbolic connections between entrepreneurship and masculinity put ‘women entrepreneurship’ into a stigmatized identity (Lewis, 2006).

There is great evidence of entrepreneurial attributes as well as the evidence that a battery of dominant motivations inspires or compels women to opt for entrepreneurial actions (Ikpe et al., 2011). The need hierarchy paradigm of Abraham Maslow (1986) provides us a motivational framework whereby women decisions can be seen as requirement motivated. The needs, however, may range from simple biological survival needs to self-esteem and self-actualization ones. There might be the factors like unemployment, redundancy, recession, financial inadequacy, job dissatisfaction, work-home non-adjustment etc. which give a push-up thrust for an entrepreneurial role. On the other hand, a quest for doing better than others, self-fulfillment, personal development, status, and power etc. work as pull factors (Kuzilwa, 2005). Also, education, age, and experience are major determinants of women entrepreneurship (Kavita et al., 2008).

Orhan & Scott (2001: 232) observed greater role of ‘antecedents to the generalized ‘push’ and ‘pull’ and environmental motives.” Decisional factors that motivate women to start their own business ranged from dynastic entrepreneurship, natural succession, entrepreneurship by chance, forced entrepreneurship, informed entrepreneurship, pure entrepreneurship to no other choice entrepreneurship (ibid). It is also said that “entrepreneurship is not simply about starting a new business, but that, employability and entrepreneurship have increasingly become inseparable pair” (Bergman, 2015: 17).

In the debate over women entrepreneurship, the role of small and medium size business is largely highlighted as women oriented and small firms are said to provide more encouragement to enterprising women (Orhan & Scott, 2001) where women entrepreneurs can enjoy and exercise their enterprising propensity (Longowitz & Minniti, 2007; BABALOLA, 2009). According to Delman and Holmquist (2004: 5) “it is important to incorporate a women entrepreneurial dimension in considering all SMEs and growth policies (e.g. meeting women’s financing needs at all stages of the business continuum; take-up of business development and support services; access to corporate, government and international markets; technology access and utilization; R&D and innovation; etc.)”.

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Drucker also signified a shift from a managerial to an entrepreneurial economy via small enterprises and the production decentralization (Drucker, 1985).

5. Need for Women’s Capacity Building

In the context of poor societies and economies women entrepreneurship, especially the rural women’s social entrepreneurship, is considered as a dependable strategy for poverty alleviation and socio-economic inclusion of women and their families. Instead of remaining unemployed or majorly unemployed, self-employment is a better alternative to get productively engaged, albeit at a survivalist footing. Instead of directly subsidized consumption assistance, productive capacity building of the needy persons is a better policy option (UNIDO, 2003). It is widely held that “the emergence of entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors can propel population into self-sustaining individuals, who in turn can catalyse the development of economy” (Kaur & Singh, 2013: 64). Women’s participation in economic activities is necessary both for growth and for inclusiveness of growth because “resources in women’s hands have a range of positive outcomes for human capital and capabilities within the household” (World Bank: 2012) and “because women’s access to economic resources improves distributional dynamics within the household” (Kabeer, 2012: 4).

Afrin et al. (2008) supposed women entrepreneurship as a positive step for self-help, self-employment, home business, and so on. While applauding the micro-credit assistance for rural women borrowers in helping them to ‘survive’ and learn financial, managerial, and team skills they opined that “financial management skills and group identity have significant relationship with the development of rural women enterprise” (ibid: 169). However, women enterprises, being mainly home based, are typically found engaged in contracted works with low levels of earning. (Abbas, 2012; Ullah et al., 2013)

The emergence of women entrepreneurship in a society depends mainly on economic, social, religious, cultural, and psychological factors (Habib et al., 2005). To develop entrepreneurship in a developing country stimulatory, supporting and sustaining activities are beneficially required (Rahman, 1999). According to United Nations Industrial Development Organization “the policy and institutional framework needs to be conducive to encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives. Human capabilities and the right institutional framework are necessary conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish” (UNIDO, 2003: 12).

In OECD countries, the proportion of women-owned business is around 30% of the total (OECD, 2012: 6). Contrastingly, in India, women-owned medium, small and micro enterprise (MSME) unit constitute a mere 13.7% of total and a lion’ share i.e. 86.3% goes to male ownership. In rural areas, the ratios are 15.3% and 84.7% respectively while for urban areas these are female 12.5% and male 87.5%. Out of women’s enterprises, 98% are micro units (MoMSME, 2012). Urban women’s ownership participation at 12.5% is surprisingly low when compared to urban males at 87.5%, as well as when juxtaposed to rural women at 15.3%. Add to this dichotomy a large number of really male owned but female designate enterprises for the purpose of regulatory and other benefits. The situation indicates towards a deep-rooted pattern of inequity not amenable to economic prosperity and educational progress.

6. How to Develop Women Entrepreneurship in the Developing Countries
With the meaningful recognition and encouragement of women’s capacities, there is a lot to be gained in terms of economic growth and development. Being, largely, an untapped or underutilized resource, women’s participation has the potential to add much to the process of output expansion. Accordingly, aiming upon the same and drawing upon UNIDO’s Rural and Women Development Program (RWE) (ibid: 11-16), the following sections (6.1 – 6.4) provide major determinants and components of baseline woman entrepreneurship development like objectives, methodology, approaches, principles etc.

6.1. Objective of Women Entrepreneurship Development Strategy

The baseline aim of any female entrepreneurship strategy may be manifold like social and economic empowerment, gender equality, equity and inclusion, inclusive growth, capacity building, abolition of patriarchy etc. etc. However, the basic aim of the UNIDO’s Rural and Women Entrepreneurship (RWE) Program, is to contribute to poverty reduction through entrepreneurship development—with a focus on rural development and gender equality.

The essential elements in this Program are to create a business environment that encourages the initiatives of rural and women entrepreneurs and to enhance the human and institutional capacities required to foster entrepreneurial dynamism and enhance productivity.

6.2. Approach: Institutional Framework Development

Business opportunities are not created by external intervention—they arise from markets and entrepreneurial capabilities. The issue is to enable rural and women entrepreneurs to take advantage of market opportunities. Micro- and small-scale enterprises (MSE) are affordable and manageable by rural people. They create a large number of non-farm employment and income opportunities in relatively poorly developed areas and require small capital and little sophisticated managerial and technical skills. MSEs are also the seedbeds for a broad development of the productive sector throughout the country, forming the foundation for the national economy and social development at the grassroots.

Individual entrepreneurs are a driving force for competitive MSEs as a growth base. However, the policy and institutional framework needs to be conducive to encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives. Human capabilities and the right institutional framework are necessary conditions for entrepreneurship to flourish, particularly in rural areas.

6.2.1. Focus

The RWE Program therefore focuses on:

- Strengthening the public administration to make the regulatory and administrative environment more conducive for rural and women entrepreneurs.
- Human resource development for increased competitive entrepreneurship, technology absorbing capacities and women’s control over asset management.
- Development of the policy advocacy and the collective self-help capacities of rural and women entrepreneurs.

6.2.2. Expected Impact

The RWE Program aims at the following:
Improved business performance of MSEs owned by rural and women entrepreneurs;
Increased transformation of MSEs from the informal to the formal sector; and
Increased number of start-ups; and thereby attaining
Increased income and employment opportunities in rural areas, particularly for women.

6.2.3. Main Services and Methodologies
A. Business and regulatory environment for women and rural entrepreneurs.
B. Compliance with complex regulatory requirements and dealing with bureaucratic webs are relatively more expensive for rural entrepreneurs than for urban and larger enterprises. Cumbersome and centralized bureaucracies often lead to lengthy licensing processes and costly operations of rural businesses. They may thus discourage entrepreneurial activity. The public administration in rural areas has relatively weak capacities to implement policies and to maintain conducive framework conditions for entrepreneurial initiatives. The action of local authorities is often based on a vague understanding of what to regulate and how to regulate. It can result in arbitrary exercise of regulations.
C. Rural and women entrepreneurs’ understanding of regulations as well as their capacity to identify unjustified application of the regulations are weak. Institutions and agents to arbitrate disputes are scarce in rural areas. For women entrepreneurs, the constraints are often exacerbated by laws and regulations that explicitly discriminate against them. Furthermore, the gender-sensitivity of many officials in rural areas tends to be more heavily influenced by the local tradition than in urban areas.

The RWE Program supports strongly committed national and local leaders that want to address the above issues of the regulatory business environment. Depending on the analysis of the constraints emanating from the regulatory and administrative framework, there are typically two main issues to be addressed:
   a. The need to improve legal texts;
   b. The need to improve the implementation of existing regulations.

6.3. Methodologies and Tools
For the diagnostic study of the regulatory and administrative constraints, UNIDO projects carry out surveys among the business community and conduct studies to analyze the impact of regulations and their implementation on MSEs in areas such as business licensing, allocation of business land, taxation, inspections or trade regulations.

The findings result in a participatory process to develop remedial action plans by the national and local partners to address the identified issues. They may for example include proposals for streamlining procedures, establishing one-stop-shops to reduce the number of institutions to be contacted by entrepreneurs seeking business licenses, the development of databases that facilitate and speed up licensing processes, institutionalized dissemination of information on regulations, etc. To facilitate the implementation of the proposed measures, UNIDO provides technical advice, customized methodologies and training programs for public administrators.
To complement these measures, the RWE Program includes entrepreneurial awareness programs for rural and women entrepreneurs on their rights and obligations by using information seminars, leaflets, radio programs, etc.

6.4. Business Development Services for Rural and Women Entrepreneurs

Specialized business development institutions are often not available or their services are not affordable for rural entrepreneurs. For women entrepreneurs, specialized support institutions hardly exist to cater to their specific needs. Thus, entrepreneurial and technical training, advisory and information programs often have to be carried out within a non-conventional set-up. As a guiding principle, the RWE Program seeks to work with existing organizations on the basis of an assessment of their absorptive capacities and initiatives. Through training of trainers, advisors and managerial staff as well as the development of practical and effective methodologies and tools, projects strengthen the technical and managerial capabilities of the partner institutions to deliver specialized services to women and rural entrepreneurs.

The programs for entrepreneurship training, small industry advisory services, women entrepreneurship development and technical skills upgrading are developed by carefully tailoring UNIDO’s methodologies to fit to the needs and the absorption capacity of the entrepreneurs and the support institutions. These services will help entrepreneurs to improve their production processes and management techniques and support their initiatives to start up new enterprises. The capacity building also addresses institutional management improvements to help the partner institutions in the continuous development of appropriate service programs, their delivery and financial strategies to sustain the services, e.g. by charging fees or reducing costs of service delivery. Operations manuals and institutional business plans are developed jointly with the partner institutions. Building networks of cooperating institutions is an important strategy for developing service institutions in rural settings.

For entrepreneurship training, existing UNIDO methodologies and materials—such as trainer’s guides, handouts for participants or software programs—are adapted to the specific project conditions. Topics can include marketing surveys, production process management, business plans, costing and pricing strategies or organizing handicraft production for export markets. Methods range from business opportunity seminars to full entrepreneurship training courses. Entrepreneurship development curricula in secondary and vocational schools are also used.

Specific methodologies and manuals for women entrepreneurship development (WED) have been prepared such as a training program for women entrepreneurs in food processing, training modules on teamwork, negotiating or the monitoring and evaluation of WED projects. Women entrepreneurship training programs also emphasize confidence building for managing own assets.

Small industry advisory services are developed through capacity building on such subjects as industrial extension methods, organizing collective self-help groups or community based projects, village outsourcing or the development of entrepreneur-to-entrepreneur advisory services.

Technical skills upgrading modules in specific subsectors are applied in cooperation with UNIDO’s subsector and environmental specialists and address topics...
such as food and fish processing, textile and wood industries or waste management.

6.5. Collective Self-Help Capacities and Advocacy Roles

Supporting the initiatives of groups, private sector associations and communities to develop their self-help programs is important in view of scarce service institutions in rural areas and weak advocacy capacity of rural and women entrepreneurs. Self-help groups empower micro- and small entrepreneurs to identify their needs, plan and implement their own projects, share the benefits of their collective efforts and evaluate their programs and projects.

Rural and women entrepreneurs can establish common projects such as:
- Collective marketing;
- Bulk purchasing;
- Common facilities, e.g. to share machinery and equipment, a warehouse or a vehicle or office facilities;
- Group-owned enterprises;
- Group lending.

6.6. Training programs.

UNIDO has developed a series of capacity building programs to promote advocacy roles and collective self-help initiatives, which have been implemented in a number of countries. A training program on the methodologies for organizing, facilitating and assisting self-help entrepreneurial groups helps business advisers, MSI development workers and staff of associations to promote and implement this approach. The training program consists of a Trainer’s Guide and reference materials in three modules: (a) organizing self-help entrepreneurial groups, (b) developing group projects and (c) motivating and strengthening entrepreneurial groups. For associations, these materials are complemented by a specific training program on managing an association.

In many village settings, reducing both time and energy use for staple-food processing is of high concern to the rural women. UNIDO has developed together with IFAD and UNDP the concept of a Multipurpose Village Workshop (MVW), which connects a multiple set of equipment for milling, de-hulling, oil pressing, etc., to one motor in order to optimize the use of available equipment and energy. It is managed by a self-help community group and local small business circles. The MVW thus helps women to increase and diversify their food production as well as to improve the quality of their products and their productivity.

Community-Production Centers (CPCs) are a combination of an organized apprenticeship scheme and a small-scale industrial village workshop. The basic merit is to share production facilities such as premises, equipment, storage room, tools, power, communication, management, etc. A CPC could combine the production with a service function whereby the CPC would organize the procurement of raw material and the collective sale of the products. An important element for the sustaining success of CPCs is a strong traditional and local leadership, supported by the community members.

By organizing themselves in groups and associations, rural and women entrepreneurs can effectively voice their specific concerns and advocate changes through formal policy making processes. This is important since their capacity to participate in local and national policy making is often limited, and their interests are often insufficiently represented by urban and male dominated lobbying groups. Getting started as a group or an association, planning
and implementing common projects and keeping the motivation going are the critical issues for building capacities of the entrepreneurial groups and their advisors. In communities with a strong traditional leadership and organization, collective projects can be undertaken by community structures and organizations.

6.7. Program Principles
Following are the specific principles of the program for women entrepreneurship and capacity development in the targeted context.

Strategic focus
The focus is on countries with special needs, such as post-crisis zones or countries with high inequality leading to pockets of poverty.

People-centered
The approach is people-centered and therefore starts with the characterization of the disadvantaged target population groups: women, rural population, youth, ethnic groups and refugees and displaced people. The factors impeding their inclusion into economic mainstream and growth activities are analyzed with participatory approaches to identify the entry points of the technical assistance.

Root-cause analysis
A comprehensive analysis of the specific root causes of poverty, inequality and conflicts forms the basis for developing technical cooperation projects in support of “bottom-up growth strategies”.

Gender sensitive
A specific analysis is required to understand the causes of gender inequalities and possible discriminatory effects. The program uses both a targeting as well as a mainstreaming approach, depending on the analysis.

Locally specific
It needs to be understood that no blueprint design for rural and women entrepreneurship development projects is possible. Existing methodologies have to be carefully selected and adjusted according to local conditions and complexities.

Asset-based
Rather than pursuing a needs-based approach, the program tries to build on existing assets, abilities and initiatives of the poor and aims to strengthen them.

Analysis of absorptive capacities
Projects are designed on the basis of the capacity of partner institutions to absorb the technical assistance. Factors to be assessed include: visions of the leadership on development objectives and their commitment to self-improvement, track record of management, technical capabilities of the staff, financial sources and fund raising capabilities for recurrent expenditures and capital investment, existing facilities, track record of client satisfaction.

Sustainability
The technical assistance aims at building up lasting capabilities of the institutions to operate sustainable service delivery on their own after the project assistance is over. Dimensions of sustainability are of financial, technical and managerial nature.

Open architecture
Strategic alliances for project formulation and implementation are being sought in order to integrate the projects with Government programs as well as other operators of similar projects at the local level, and to create synergies for greater impact.

Impact measurement
Performance and impact are analyzed periodically with the stakeholders and, to the extent possible, quantitative impact indicators are applied.
Learning lessons

The continuous monitoring of experiences of UNIDO and others and the feeding back of lessons learned into the project design and implementation in the field of rural and women entrepreneurship development is being undertaken to ensure high quality of the technical assistance projects and to contribute to global forum debates.

7. Conclusion

The paper attempted at raising some of the issues relating to gender equality e.g. women entrepreneurship and empowerment. It provided a brief discussion as well as literature survey covering these important aspects of economic empowerment, including a feminist perspective as how the women themselves look at the problem of discrimination and the fact of entrepreneurial subordination. UNIDO’s framework approach for development of women entrepreneurship, especially, the rural women entrepreneurship, in the developing economies like India was also described. The discussion derives an important conclusion that women’s empowerment, entrepreneurship, and capacity building are significantly akin to public good characteristics. Hence, women and, therefore, the public good metaphor in their case, deserve the necessary and sufficient social and policy attention, action, and efforts.

8. Bibliography


