

# GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

*The key to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) is to unleash the economic potential of women and in that context, entrepreneurship is critical. The renewed attention on gender equality through more effective poverty reduction, tackling inequality and injustice, and ensuring women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship in developing countries has increased with improved availability of data on the positive impact of such activities on poverty alleviation, and an appreciation of the potential of unused skills of women, particularly from marginalized sections. Linking development policies, activities for employment generation and access to credit amongst women's social groups to the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship and social business is equally essential. An understanding of these issues would help to frame policy recommendations to strengthen entrepreneurship both as economically rewarding activity but also as one that can foster much needed social change*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender equality; sustainable entrepreneurship; social business; corporate social responsibility

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the seminar conducted on topic Gender In Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Social Business in Gender park ,Department of Women and Child Development , Government of Kerala. UN Women has equal partners in the Gender Park initiative. Gender equality is a state in which one's gender doesn't determine one's opportunities , freedom, or importance. Through gender equality allocating resources and power evenly between all without considering their gender. And the sustainable entrepreneurship means referring to the Brudtland report (1987) as "the development that's meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs". According to Weidinger "without sustainable organization there is no sustainable development thus no future. (2014 page 289). Promoting women's entrepreneurship for economic empowerment remains a key concern for policy makers and practitioners in India and particularly in Kerala. Gender gaps in labour force participation lead to huge losses in income and economic development. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data shows declining trends in rate of female labour force participation, concentration of women in vulnerable employment, and growing in formalization of not only labour force but entrepreneurship itself. While the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey ( the new annual labour force data series substituting the quinquennial Rounds of NSSO) for 2018-19 shows an increase in female workforce participation from 16.5%(usual principal and subsidiary status) in 2017-18to 17.6% for all India and more substantially in Kerala from 16.4% to 20.4%, the levels are still very low and the increase has primarily in self – employment and casual work. Hence, laying a stress on economic empowerment and agency development remains crucial for achieving SDGs. Entrepreneurship has been a focus area for policy makers at the centre and the state (Economic survey 2019-2020). The 13<sup>th</sup> five year plan of the Government of Kerala stresses on skill development, employment generation and sustainable livelihoods with an emphasis on women entrepreneurship which has grown rapidly in recent years but has not been mapped.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### GENDER EQUALITY

In developing countries such as India, women's access to entrepreneurship and scope for innovations remains a complex issue as women are predominantly involved in unpaid work, including domestic duties. Much of their contribution remains invisible in the national accounting systems .Usual Principal Activity Status (UPS) data reveals

that the workers in usual status about 52% were self employed. Amongst women workers, 56% were self employed. Combining paid activities with the domestic duties self employment is currently a more likely choice than taking up entrepreneurship for employment generation and innovation. This concentration of women in self employment and informal own account enterprise raises many questions on their access to other forms of economic opportunities and resources. In order to have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits ( Golla et al.,2011). Feminist economist hold that individuals and groups make choices and exercise agency, but do so within limits imposed by structural distributions of rules, norms, assets across identities between different sections of the society. Gender disadvantages in labour market is a product of these constraints- structures (Folbre, 1994,as cited Kabeer ,2012). Scholars have written the potential for power over resources to improve people's lives, especially women and that running business that however small, enables women to have more power over resources.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2015 published by Women Economic Forum, India ranks 139<sup>th</sup> in economic participation and opportunity among 145 countries, which lead to questions of access to economic resources and labour market participation. Women are not much better in this sphere, Kerala too. The disturbing fact is the low female labour force participation in the country and the state predominance of informalization in the economy. The census 2011 gives the information that of the 23 million female headed households in rural India, 10.11 % earn less than Rs. 5000 a month and only 0.89% earns more than Rs 10000 a month. 41% of all households where women are primarily breadwinners own no land and work as daily wage manual labourers according to the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC, 2011). This factor coupled with the problems of unemployment provides impetus to create opportunities in the entrepreneurship space enabling women to work independently and respectably to earn a dignified wage. Women always face the brunt of rampant poverty, and the supposed middle- class income, that is barely enough to run a family of four (and more, in some cases). Women from SC and ST communities bear the burden of both gender and caste. On an average these communities are poorer with lower education with lower education with fewer assets, and weaker networks (Despande and Sharma, 2013). Further, there is a trade-off inherent in the gender caste overlap in that Dalit and Adivasi women are subjected to greater material and social deprivation. In this context, it would be important to analyze the type and sizes of enterprises in which women from different social groups are engaged and their access to credit. These factors are critical to understand whether entrepreneurship is survival- driven or preference- driven amongst the different social groups. Such analysis is necessary to inform government policy and to promote entrepreneurship and mobility among women belonging to the deprived sections of society. Transgender individuals in these case seen even worse condition compounded by gender statistics in the country failing to capture data on transgender persons conclusively. As per the National Human Right Commission in 2018, about 92% of all trans people are deprived of the right to participate in economic activity, and only 2% continue living with their families after identifying themselves as transgender persons. 96% of them are forced into taking up low paying jobs, including begging or social events. At least 23% of the entire population is forced in to sex-work with high health and safety risks associated with it, given India's laws.

Despite the challenges, years of civil society action and multiples states inventions have resulted in women and trans persons cutting across obstacles and leaving a mark in the realm aof sustainable entrepreneurship and social business. The journey of women and trans persons from being beneficiaries of social enterprise to now leading the way in this space is worth documenting. From the point of view of sustainable development, social enterprises and social business can go a long in empowering communities if we work towards making the process more gender inclusive

#### **SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Sustainable entrepreneurship refers to the discovery, creation, and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities that contribute to sustainability by generating social and environmental gains for others in society (Hockerts and wilstenhagen,2010). Both sustainability and entrepreneurship need innovation, which, applied to both fields, imply a creative new combination of existing resources (Nicholls-Nixon et al, 2000). Similar to main stream entrepreneurship, start-ups are an important cluster of the sustainable entrepreneurship. The Kerala government has announced 12 starts up projects under the State Poverty Eradication Mission's Kudumbashree programme. It will help evaluate the viability of entrepreneurial ventures, especially in rural areas. Also, Kerala Startups Mission (KSUM) supports women startups with a soft loans scheme for an amount limited to Rs 15 Lakhs as working capital for implementation works and projects received from the government departments and public sectors undertaking in Kerala. At an all India level," the state of women in tech entrepreneurship in India 2020" report indicated that many women led startups scaled down their operations or pivoted their business models to stay afloat amid the pandemic. The report is based on in-depth interviews with 100 women tech entrepreneurs across sectors and cities in India, independent research and analysis of data for the period between January 2018 and June 2020. Women behind some apparel startups branched out to manufacturing protective face masks and PPE kits Amid COVID-19, funding for women- founded and co funded startups in India fell 24% to \$280 million in the first half of this year. Increasing inequalities is a concern in the

country. As per the Rangarajan Committee (cited in Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy report) in 2015, 29.5% of India's total population was below poverty line – this considering that the base purchasing power parity is at INR 32 for the rural poor and INR 47 for urban poor. As of 2020 that number has been brought down to 12.4%. While the statistics may seem promising, it needs to be noted that we are still addressing 170 million adults who are of working age, and that many of the 300 million whom were since 2015 brought into the bracket of middle class, still make dismally low incomes to sustain families. Thus encouraging social entrepreneurship is a way of addressing the needs and problems facing the poor. Although the situation is better in Kerala, which tops NITI AYOGE's SDG India Index, there is a lot that need to be done. India 's demographic bulge is a big economic asset and at the same time the most daunting challenge; 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of India's 1.2 billion people are below 35 years of age. Therefore it is imperative to develop policies that will help to convert this demographic bulge in to an opportunity through supportive policies that will ensure a sustainable living for the youth. Failing this, the demographic divided might become a demographic disaster. In Kerala where 1<sup>st</sup> generation issues of health and education have been achieved, it is important to find effective solutions to tackle the more complex 2<sup>nd</sup> generation gender issues dealing with economic empowerment and proportionate representation of all genders. Given Kerala's unique development experiences and the state government commitment to back sustainable entrepreneurs and social business at the grass root. Women workers in the informal economy often choose to come together through cooperatives to improves their livelihoods, enhances their access to goods, markets and services (like insurances) and improves their collectives voice and negotiation power. In the context of Kerala in particular there was a need to gather and share more information about best practices and lessons learned and track equality indicators such as women's participation in governance, management, membership, asset ownership and income parity. While we tends to understand the gendered economy in a narrow sense, there is need to define economic empowerment in broader terms to include poverty, economic exploitation, denial of resources, access and opportunity for innovations and sustainable solutions. Therefore the attempt is to look at sustainable entrepreneurship and social business as agents that employ entrepreneurial means for providing systemic solutions to gender inequality. Through this exercise, the aim is to throw light on the relevance of sustainable entrepreneurship in economic development and social business.

There is an urgent need to look beyond models of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which often tend to be an afterthought and instead, look towards proactively integrating measures for sustainable development into core business operations. In other words, businesses need to recognize their role in the community and take equal responsibility to contribute to a just society that is sensitive to changing environment needs. Incidentally, it is only those businesses that are sensitive to the unprecedented need for a humane and a secure future. With the global and local citizenry, institutions, and government expressly demanding accountability from the private sector, it is in the benefit of business players to be a part of the solution leaping ahead of the business –as-usual paradigm.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The sustainable entrepreneurship and social business aims to enhance development effectiveness of social enterprises by mainstreaming gender and inclusion into different stages of business operation. The policy framework will include a plan to measure the extent to which businesses align with SDG targets. The framework can be used to regulate, assess and certify social enterprises. It is also important to look at sustainable entrepreneurship and social business as an opportunity in a situation of heightened unemployment, loss of jobs, effect on daily life and work, and deteriorated economic growth. It is becoming increasingly critical to look at sustainable entrepreneurship and social business as alternatives that contribute to economic development.

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