

Around 50% of our population is women but they are the most disadvantaged group in our society. Women are deprived when compared to men in virtually all aspects of life. Women around the world are more likely to live in poverty, simply because they are women. Their unequal position in our society means that they have less power, money, protection from violence, and access to resources and decent employment.

In Bangladesh the majority of working women still have not been able to impose a controlling authority in mainstream production. Women entrepreneurs are the new class who have accepted the challenges of life and have emerged as leaders in the socioeconomic development.

Women's economic empowerment is an inevitable part of development discourse. Excluding women from the mainstream development program, institutionalization of a sustainable development process is just unthinkable. People's long lasting thrust for a participatory democracy in Bangladesh also requires a sustainable economic growth. Nevertheless, this growth would always be untouchable without active and meaningful participation of the country's women folks. Considering the existing reality a study was conducted to explore the barriers of the women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh.

An entrepreneur is variably defined as one who assumes the financial risk of the initiation, operation and management of a business or undertaking; a person who assumes the risk to start a business with the idea of making a profit; an individual who organizes and manages labour, capital, and natural resources to produce goods and services to earn a profit, but who also runs the risk of failure; a business person who accepts both the risks and the opportunities involved in creating and operating a new business venture. In line with these different definitions, risk-taking and treading a fresh path are essential features of entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs do not operate in isolation. They work under the same macro, regulatory and institutional framework as their male counterparts. However, it is necessary to dig deeper in order to understand the gender biases embedded in society which limit women's mobility, interactions, active economic participation and access to business development services. The business environment for women also reflects the complex interplay of different factors that ultimately result in the disadvantaged status of women in society. Women in South Asia remain far behind men in enjoying basic human rights, let alone participating with men on an equal footing in economic activities. This study tried to focus the existing problems/constraints/ barriers of women entrepreneurs considering in all respects. The main issues covered by this study are social, political and cultural environment for business women in Bangladesh, types of women-owned enterprises, regulatory procedures including tax, VAT, company registration, training and capacity buildings and human resources. The study also focused women's access to finance, business management, product and design development, marketing and the issues related to business promotion. The study tried

to explore the social perspectives of women entrepreneurs, their conditions and position in family.

Overall perception of women entrepreneurs about existing business environment were also tried to discover through this study. This is a qualitative study. Five FGD in five divisional cities namely Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Chittagong was conducted among 75 no. of women entrepreneurs from different business sectors. KII was conducted with 10 women entrepreneurs from five divisions.

We have tried to find out the root causes of the existing problems of women entrepreneurs. 90% women entrepreneurs are facing financial problems to start or run their business. In reality, this is not the main problem because there are some opportunities (though it is so minimum) but due to the patriarchal mind set women entrepreneurs do not get the existing facilities. In spite of the circular of the Bangladesh Bank, women entrepreneurs did not get expected loan facilities from the bank. It is a miracle. On the other hand, the leader of this society is male, maximum cases they are not gender sensitive at all. So women entrepreneurs have no opportunity to appeal anywhere or any way

From this study it is clear that, Capacity building of women entrepreneurs is essential to do business. Due to ensure gender friendly business environment the positive mind set of male counterpart is essential. A long term community based program on gender and women rights is needed to change the societal mindset regarding women's rights. Thereafter women entrepreneurs will get positive environment to do their business and national development will be enhanced.

The positive attitude of our bureaucracy is rare to enhance women in business. So women entrepreneurs do not get their facilities from the duty bearers at central and field level.

Violence against women and sexual harassment is common for women entrepreneurs. Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) is biased to male counterpart because of bribe. In maximum cases women entrepreneurs did not get justice from LEA. As a result women entrepreneurs are severely vulnerable regarding justice, especially in local and rural level.

The core issues were identified by the women entrepreneurs like; marketing, capacity building and training, access to finance, design and product development, regulatory barriers regarding tax, VAT and company registration, promotional activities, ICT etc. but in maximum cases women were deprived due to negative attitude of our society & community.