Barriers of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh

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Acronyms:

ADP	**Annual Development Program**
BB	**Bangladesh Bank**
BBS	**Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics**
CEDAW	**Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women**
FGD	**Focus Group Discussion**
ICT	**Information Communication Technology**
KII	**Key Informants Interview**
LFA	**Law Enforcement Agency**
MDG	**Millennium Development Goal**
MoWCA	**Ministry of Women and Children Affairs**
PRSP	**Poverty Reduction Strategy Program**
SME	**Small and Medium Enterprise**
VAT	**Value Added Tax**
WEA	**Women Entrepreneurs Association**

Abstract

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 any where 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. There after 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 bias 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.

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I. Introduction:

Poverty remains an enveloping feature of Bangladesh. Despite variation in statistic of poverty from various sources, it can be said that about 45% of the total population still lives below poverty line and the existing poverty situation is directly associated with the underdeveloped conditions in the social, political and economic sectors. For a sustainable democratic society, with individual freedom and prosperity, poverty reduction is essential and this can only be obtained by engaging the entire population in economic and productive activity and ensuring an enabling environment for smooth growth of private sectors and entrepreneurial activities.

Despite innumerable efforts to advocate gender equality, women everywhere are denied many of the rights and privileges afforded men due to cultural taboos and societal prejudice. This has been particularly apparent in the case in Bangladesh, where many women find themselves subject to discrimination in the workforce, domestic violence, and poverty though the article 10 states the equal rights of women, Article 11 states that the Republic shall be a democracy with guaranteed human rights (Ref. The Constitution of Bangladesh)

Given that women comprise 50% of the population, the issue of participation of women in the business and industry sector in Bangladesh is imperative. Despite this demographic structure, the level of participation of women in the mainstream economy remains insufficient and the percentage of women in the mainstream economy is still well below than that of their male counterparts. The principles barriers excluding women from participating in the mainstream economy include traditional social structures and values, limitation of current policy framework, lack of institutional support, poor implementation of current policies and the lack of a women-friendly socio-cultural and economic environment.

One primary challenge we all face in this tasks arise from the heterogeneity of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. These entrepreneurs essentially fall in three economic strata of our society. There are the women entrepreneurs who are born into economic come industrial privilege: these are typically highly qualified women, with supportive family -based patrons for embarking on entrepreneurial careers. Then there are women entrepreneurs who started down the negatively of social stereotyping but still chose entrepreneurship as their mantle. Some, among them have done well, even without the tail wind of supportive families and their "socio-economic clout". Many others in this category are still struggling while the entrepreneurial fire in their inner recesses still burn brightly. And finally there are those women entrepreneurs who had to step up to the plate due to calamity in the family (Like; death of husband or the father etc.).

Despite existence of a historically inherited suppressed situation, one of the positive things could be mentioned here is that a good number of women all over Bangladesh have started entering into the mainstream economy as small and medium entrepreneurs. Over the last ten years, women mobility in the formal economic sector has become more visible. They have already proved their potentialities as entrepreneurs and are contributing to the national growth despite different types of socio-cultural and economic barriers, that are still hindering the development of women, particularly women SME, in economy. Women entrepreneurs face a myriad of obstacles including limited access to finance, market, business network, training as well as the double burden of raising a family and running a business simultaneously. The national budgetary allocation for women entrepreneurs over the last few years has not been sufficient. We believe, politically and economically empowered women will make a great difference in future Bangladesh

II. Literature review:

II.a) Entrepreneurship:

Schumpeter the father of entrepreneurship offered an epic vision of the entrepreneur as someone motivated by the 'dream and the will to found a private kingdom,' the will to conquer;

the impulse to fight, to prove oneself superiors to others; and the "joy of creating." To become an entrepreneur it comes with lots of risks. The entrepreneurs must have some kind of big hearts to accept the risks that will come along. People with faint hearts are not advisable to venture into entrepreneurship.

Until today there are no exact definitions of entrepreneurship. MacMilland (1988) suggest that entrepreneurship be defined as the "creation of new enterprises." Another study by McMulland and Long (1990, pp.142-144) also refer to entrepreneurship as venture creation in their strategic-creativity theory of entrepreneurship.

Women's entrepreneurship has a tremendous potential in empowering women and transforming society. Yet this potential remains largely untapped, with less than 10 per cent of the entrepreneurs in South Asian countries being women.

In one study in India (Kaur and Bawa, 1992), 54 per cent of women entrepreneurs had started their business with their own personal savings and some financial assistance from their spouse, 23 per cent received finances from their parents, 13 per cent from relatives and friends and only 10 per cent from government agency and nationalized banks. Many other studies in South Asia have substantiated these findings.

A host of barriers prevent women from realizing their full potential as entrepreneurs, where they could make significant contribution to society. Entrepreneurship by definition implies being in control of one's life and activities. It is precisely this independence that many societies have denied women (Vishwanathan, 2001). Women's family obligations often bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. As Seymour puts it, "Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business" (Seymour, 2001)

II. b) Government Policy for Women Entrepreneurship Development

Women Entrepreneurship Development in the Constitution of the country:

The Articles 26, 27 & 28 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh have distinctly mentioned the issue of emancipation and development of the women folk of the country. The Articles 26 and 27 provide for cultural, social and political development of the women folk. The Article 28 on the other hand mentions the issue of equal economic right and opportunities and development of women entrepreneurs.

II.c) Government's strategies for women entrepreneurship development

Government has set distinct strategies in its National Action Plan (NAP) for the development of the women entrepreneurship, which are:

- Adoption of a comprehensive sustainable industrial policy that will promote equity for women and men;
- Increase the number of women entrepreneurs;
- Ensure women's easy access to markets;
- Develop entrepreneurial skills of the women;
- Provide infrastructure facilities for women entrepreneurs;
- Upgrade technical "know-how" of women and develop technology suitable for women;
- Enable MOI and other related ministries and agencies to address and implement WID issues in comprehensive and coordinated way for effective implementation of the Industrial Policy;
- Support research, evaluation and action oriented programs of industry particularly for women engaged in the industrial sector.

The Fifth-Five-Year Plan of the country clearly reflect objectives of the development policies and National Action Plan (NAP), which commit:

- Ensure equal rights of women in all spheres of development, including access to information, skills, resources and opportunities;
- Enhance the participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life;
- Promote economic self-reliance for women, and generate economic policies that have positive impact on employment and income of women workers in both formal and informal sectors;
- Create appropriate institutional arrangements with necessary financial and human resources and authorities at all levels to mainstream women's concerns in all aspects and sectors of development
- Mainstream women's concern in agriculture and rural development, industry and commerce besides services;
- Ensure the visibility and recognition of women's work and contributions to the economy

II.d) Existing Situation

Women entrepreneurs are a small but steadily growing minority in the realm of Bangladeshis trade and manufacturing, which is a describe trend in conformity with the national strategy of empowerment and utilization of the productive or economic potential of women. Greater participation of women in economic activities will surely add to its GDP, raise family income, create employment opportunities and hence raise living standards. Few activities in life are more challenging and rewarding than building a business or developing a new technology. Matching a product or services with a market in an effective and timely manner demands creativity, persistence, talent, passion and skill. Therefore, women deserve to encourage accelerating their entrepreneurship initiatives.

The following data indicates the devastating situation of the women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh. The actual situation of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is not good. Lack of proper training (86%), lack of raw materials (75%), lack of capital (90%), social barriers (95%) Unsecured communication system (81%), lack of efficient workers (60%), sexual harassments (65%) religious believe and social customs (71%), family restriction (45%) [Source: A situation analysis of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry]

In Bangladesh gender discrimination is deeply imbedded in the social structure. Women are discriminated everywhere in family, society, workplace and political arena. At present percentage of women representative in parliament is 2 % (Source: BBS, Statistical pocket Book)

In reality the lack of political and social will to support women is the cause of their low participation. Major problems/constraints regarding Women's participation in political arena are wrong Social and Cultural values, lack of education and awareness, patriarchal values and norms, lack of family support, lack of institutional support, economic dependency. Again problems behind low participation in civil service is multidimensional like; family responsibilities, lack of child care facilities, no cooperation of male counterpart and family members, absence of appropriate and supportive environment in workplace, Superiority complexes and negative attitudes of the male colleagues, lack of security, societal backwardness. A massive influx of women in decision-making ranks of the civil services results in empowerment of women.(Gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh civil service : prospects and constraints, Momtaz Jahan)

Although two women prime ministers have headed the government during the last 15 years but it does not reflect the gender composition of participation and decision making at the highest policy level. At ministerial level women's participation has never risen above 3%. Women's participation in public sector /government in 2002 is 7.9% (Source: Statistical Profile of Women in Bangladesh MWCA and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics)

In Bangladesh, Women constitute half of the total population and half of its potential. Women are deprived when compared to men in virtually all aspects of life. Therefore, socioeconomic development cannot be truly achieved without the active participation of women at the decision making level in society. Equal opportunity of employment of the sate is the constitutional rights of women (Article- 29) in Bangladesh. Political participation matters a great deal for women as group and as individuals. Political participation is influence on decision making to make public policies sensitive to protest gender-based injustice. It builds social trust and capital, and provides a form of democratic apprenticeship. So it is essential to work on increasing women's participation in public and political spheres of life.

II.e) Situation of Women Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh[1]. Women in Bangladesh are a significant entrepreneurial force, contributing to the development of local, national and global economies. Women-run businesses –mostly micro and small enterprises[2]– are found in the production and marketing of agricultural and consumer goods, as well as the provision of services for local, national and multinational markets. The enterprises owned by women feature some interesting characteristics regarding ownership, management, sources of capital, technology, market orientation. More specifically:

- ***Ownership***. Most of the enterprises are on individual proprietorship and some are partnerships. Partners are mainly from among family members and friends. Larger undertakings requiring capital from banks are formed into company mostly through the synergy of family members. Available gender-desegregated data suggest that only a very small percentage of the total number of enterprises are owned by women entrepreneurs or jointly owned by men and women. Women's partnerships are often established to protect family property without having meaningful involvement or control over the assets. Very few companies have female board members. A small percentage of women borrowers take or access loans from a selected number of banks and that too jointly with husbands or fathers unless there is a specific program to lend to women for business purposes.

- ***Decision Making and Management*:** Decisions related to choice of enterprise and market, borrowing are mostly done by the owner. For large endeavors maintaining family control is also practiced. In many cases the decisions are taken by the male family members or according to their guidance. Two management styles are visible: (i) the owner is the manager and all the major decisions in all areas are taken by the owner; (ii) the owner is the manager but market and bank related activities are supported, virtually influenced by male relatives. The owner-manager is the source of all information and skills including finance, market, and technology. For large undertakings, management and production technology may be hired externally.
- ***Market.*** Most of women-owned enterprises produce or provide services for domestic market directly to the consumers or retail sellers. Often the production

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1. Source: Women *Entrepreneurs in SME: Bangladesh reality*, by Ferdousi Sultana, unpublished, Dhaka: 2009: ii-iii.
2. The Industrial Policy (1999) defines SMEs as enterprises employing up to 99 workers and/or with fixed assets of up to TK 300 million. Small industries (10 workers or thereabout) are defined as those engaged in manufacturing, processing or service activities whose total fixed investment is limited to Tk. 30 mn. ($0.5 million), while micro (cottage) industries are those generally run by family members with a total investment limited to Tk. 0.5 mn. ($ 8,000) only.

and market are seasonal. Large enterprises sell to wholesalers and depending on the product aim for foreign markets. Export is mostly in the area of handicrafts. Quality and price of raw materials are often uncertain and due to small purchase high prices are paid. Imported items are purchased through importers and as such the importers get benefits of any incentive in the tariff structure or protection. Most of the enterprises do not have any backward or forward linkages or are not in any sub-contracting arrangements.

III. ***Women's entrepreneurship's contribution to poverty reduction.*** It is recognized that women's entrepreneurship can reduce women's income poverty and thus contribute to poverty reduction. As women engage in business activities, they face different constraints and opportunities compared to their male counterparts. In Bangladesh, recent consultations carried out by the Asian Development Bank –in consultation with the *Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry* (BWCCI) and the *Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh* (WEAB)– identified a set of barriers to women entrepreneurship development. In addition to persistent gender biases and gender-based discriminatory laws and regulations, the consultations identified three critical impediments to women entrepreneurship, which form the rationale for the proposed Project. These relate to women entrepreneurs' limited access to skills and technology; financial resources and services; and market information and business services. These circumstances are further affected by women organizations' limited ability to advocate for change.

IV. ***Limited access to skills and technology.*** In Bangladesh due to gender biases and stereotypes, girls and women have low educational attainments and –when access to education is granted- are mostly relegated into traditional areas of education (social sciences and humanities) with limited involvement in non-traditional disciplines such as science, technology and business. Rural women are engaged in hobby- and household-based businesses as women's entrepreneurship is still considered a 'secondary activity'. Women's business is still considered from self-employment more than entrepreneurial perspectives. These factors combined with women's limited access to vocational training and technologies result in women entrepreneurs' limited ability to start and manage a business and –as a result– the continuous perception as less likely to succeed.

V. ***Limited access to financial resources and services.*** SMEs, which contribute 40% of manufacturing output and about 80% of the industrial work force, are hampered by limited access to medium- to long-term credit. Banks and other financial institutions generally prefer large enterprise clients because of the lower transaction costs, and greater availability of collateral. SMEs also fall outside the reach of microfinance schemes, and are thus compelled to depend more on informal sources of funds at much higher interest rates. Access to credit for starting the business is a critical concern for women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses, due to their limited access to collateral, banks' unwillingness to accept household assets as collaterals and the lack of confidence of loan officers to women entrepreneurs[3]. Sometimes, credit may be available for women through several schemes but there are procedural bottlenecks and gaps, and the multiplicity of available schemes is often inadequately presented to women entrepreneurs. As a result of advocacy initiatives, the Government of Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bank) has recently enacted an amendment to the Refinance Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs of SME, raising the target for earmarked resources to women entrepreneurs from 10 to 15%, 40% of which will be dedicated to small women entrepreneurs. The content of this and other gender-sensitive laws and regulations are unknown by most of the commercial banks outside metropolitan Dhaka and Chittagong.

VI. ***Limited access to market information and business services.***

The limited access to market information and business support services constitute a further impediment to women's access to existing opportunities. Some woman-led enterprises have already reached export potential. Woman-led enterprises export agricultural produce, processed foods, handicrafts, and other items, and some are looking to order more products from self-employed, owner-operated enterprises. These links have the potential to be strengthened to build a critical mass, but they require very specific support. Many of the smaller producers are unaware of the market potential for their products as they have been isolated in their households. Programs run by and for women overcome these traditional attitudes more readily. Women who lack confidence often respond more quickly to ideas from women acting as role models. Woman-led enterprises also have the potential to be considered socially "suitable" employers for girls as they graduate from secondary school if other acceptable employment avenues are unable to absorb them.

VII. Women and Corruption[4]:

Women are always neglected and most vulnerable community in Bangladesh. When entrepreneurship is encouraged by the government, many women entrepreneurs became victims of corruption and compel to stop their enterprise. There is huge scope to promote women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh but corruption always hinder the way forward.

There are significant ways in which the effects of corruption are particularly harsh on women. Consider the position of women in society: since women often face social, cultural, political and institutional discrimination, it is likely that women will face even

3 Start up capital is often obtained by women through family savings, gifts from husband/father or loans from other non-institutional sources. Project-based, collateral-free lending is the major source of capital outside the relative circle. It is difficult to ascertain fixed and working capital. Institutional credit is accessed for large ventures mostly guaranteed/supported by the family. Capital deficiency is a recurrent phenomenon.

4 Source: A Research on "Impacts of corruption on women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh " conducted by BWCCI

more repression in a corruption-ridden society. In other words if access to such institutions is restricted by gender considerations, corruption compounds this by making it even more difficult for women to access public services.

Article 27 of the Bangladesh Constitution stipulates 'equality of all citizens in the eyes of law' but in reality, women are victims of corruption, discrimination, deprivation and various kinds of repression. Women are routinely denied their rights and opportunities. Since corruption leads to diversion of resources meant for social development, it affects women including the poorest and other disadvantaged sections of the society most severely. Because of its links with power, corruption has a natural bias against those who are outside the power structure of society. In that respect, women are most vulnerable and among the hardest hit due to corruption.

While entrepreneurship is considered as a driving force of a society for contributing excellence in production, discovering markets, human resources and skill development, social dynamics and behavioral change, women entrepreneurs are not receiving proper support to move forward their enterprises. It is generally understood and can safely said that women are less involved with corruption but are directly and indirectly victims of corruption. Women entrepreneurs, who started their efforts to contribute national growth through their spirit, innovation and hard work in an unfavorable environment, are being victims of corruption and cheating everyday to run their business.

III. Background and Problem Statement:

Bangladesh is one of the countries, which rectified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The constitution of Bangladesh also grants equal rights to women and men in all spheres of public life [Article 28(1), and 28(3)2]. The Constitution also keeps an obligation for the state to ensure women's active and meaningful participation in all spheres of public life (Article-10). In response to the international concern and constitutional commitment, the Government of Bangladesh has initiated some institutional measures for the enhancement of women's economic position and status in society. The major initiatives undertaken by the Government so far included establishment of a separate ministry on women's affairs, formulation of the National Policy for Advancement of Women-2008 and the National Action Plan, which was prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). The Bangladesh Government has also formed a National Women SME Forum under the SME Foundation of the Ministry of Industry to promote women's participation in formal economic sectors. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is now the main document for national development in Bangladesh, also incorporated some noteworthy issues to ensure women's participation in social and economic life. The industrial and SME policies 2005 of Bangladesh Government have emphasized women entrepreneurship development, particularly in SME sector. Despite various initiatives from different corner of the state, the level of participation of women in the mainstream economic activities, especially private sector, remains insufficient and the percentage of women in business and industry is still well below than that of their male counterpart.

IV. Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To explore the existing barriers of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh
- To explore the recommendations from the women entrepreneurs to overcome this problems

V. Target audience:

- Women Entrepreneurs, emphasizing the rural entrepreneurs
- Total participants – 75
- Territory covered : 5 divisions (Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Chittagong)
- 15 participants from different districts of the division selected for this study
- Divisional representatives of Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry was helped to select the participants from diversified sector from each division

VI. Methodology:

In order to collect the quality data Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted. The key research focus of this study was direct response from the women entrepreneurs as with Focus Group Discussion. This study was also applied Key Informant Interview at divisional level.

VII. Data Collection Tools:

An FGD guideline was prepared for conducting this study (Annex-01) A check list was also prepared to explore the real information from the FGDs. (Annex-2)

VIII. Limitations of the study:

- Time was limited
- Women entrepreneurs were very busy
- The findings may not be represents the overall sinarioe of the women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh
- Large working area

IX. Findings:

Women entrepreneurs involved in different business and income generating activities. major category of the business of Women entrepreneurs do their on hand stich, The participants of focus group discussions involved in Boutiques,Tailoring,Mango ketchup ,Sericulture (Reshom guti production),Fish culture,Beauty Parlors,Grocery shop,Cottage Industry (Bamboo and cane products), Handicrafts, Artificial Jewelry (Pottery, Jhinuk), Garments, Poultry and Live stock, Paper bag making, Vegetable Cultivation,Bio-gas, Mushroom, Spices (Msahla), Home made food, Confectionary, Net Making, Dry fish (Shutki), Floriculture,Fashion Design,Restaurant, Show-piece (Candle, wood, Cotton, muddy made materials),Pati Bunon, Cap Making,Leather goods, Interior design, Integrated farming. Knitting,Fast food,Improved Oven,Poultry feed and fish feed, Training (Tailoring, block- batik),Nursery,Shrimp Cultivation and Paposh Making

Women entrepreneurs' barriers at a glance:

- Lack of Capital (Financial problem):
    - Women have no land property though they have no documents on land
    - Bank wants a lot of particulars, but it is not possible to provide by WE
    - Lack of information regarding bank loan
    - Lack of cooperation of Bank officials
    - Complicated loan form
- Price discrimination (Pay less due to women):
- Lack of Knowledge and skill for Advocacy campaign,
- Lack of women leadership
    - Lack of education
    - Less confidence of women entrepreneurs
    - Lack of opportunity due to patriarchal mind set
    - Dependency on male
- Lack of professional skill
- Corruption
    - Pay bribe to different public and private institution
- Lack of Mass-Media Involvement,
- Social obstacles/Social mind set,
- Lack of Knowledge and skill for design and product development,
- Marketing,
- Violence against women
    - Have no access to decision making process in their family

    - Acid throwing
    - Physical and mental torture
    - Have to pay dowry for daughters weeding ceremony
    - Sexual harassment
- ICT (knowledge and skill)
    - Lack of information
    - Lack of knowledge how to use the information
- Capacity building and training
    - Lack of training of women entrepreneurs
    - Less quality training
    - Lack of quality trainer
    - Lack of post training facilities
    - Lack of need based training
    - Lack of need based technical training
    - Lack of skill on product design

- Lack of information,
- Lack of Modern technology,
- Bureaucracy,
- Difficulty in finding right contacts for business,
- Lack of knowledge on Taxation and registration,
- Domestic Violence and Negative attitude of the Society

Social Dynamics

The characteristics of women entrepreneurs in the low-income groups are significantly different from their counterparts in the medium and high-income groups, and one overall policy framework cannot be used to address their needs.

Problems

Traditions regarding what work are appropriate for women result in a gendered division of labor in productive work that limits the potential of women need to be successful. Often the activities most readily available to women are those most similar to their domestic tasks. This similarity between the productive and reproductive work women do tends to make their productive work undervalued. Women tend to face internal constraints resulting from their gender role socialization like no right to use their own earned money, other members pressurize for their earned money, suspect women when they return home late even torture physically etc. They often lack leadership in family decision making resulting in less self-confidence and those personality traits important to entrepreneurialism such as assertiveness, ambition and vision. This can make them unwilling to risk and expand their enterprise. Lack of collective platform to raise voice on their pertinent issues. Domestic and external violence hinders the growth of women entrepreneurs. Due to Low or no implementation of the existing laws the situation remains poor.

Strategies/Programs needed for the changes

The most important learning is the need to couple programme actions with policy work. Advocacy work should be directed to policymakers in order to raise their awareness of the important role of women in the economy and the positive effect of economic participation on women and their families.

Existing legal frame work

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (as amended) declares equal right of women in society in every aspects. Other laws like Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939,Dowry Prohibition Act 1980(as amended),Family Courts Ordinance 1985,Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act 1973 ,Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961, as amended, Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act 1974 ,Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1937 ,Muslim Family Laws Rules 1961 ,Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Rules 1975 etc uphold the rights of women at home and outside. Again special Gender related rigts like-National Policy for the Advancement of Women 1997, Acid Control Act 2002 (unofficial English translation) ,Acid Crime Prevention Act 2000 (unofficial English translation), Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Act 2000, as amended ,Acid (Import, Production, Stocking, Transportation, Sale, and Use) Control Rules 2004 and Intellectual Property Law 2008 also reflects the Governments intensions to help women make advancement .

Constraints:

In Bangladesh, the extent to which economic growth, poverty alleviation and empowerment are achieved is limited by various constraints on entrepreneurship development. These constraints often affect women more intensely because of society's perceptions of women, the roles and responsibilities assigned to women by society and the unequal power relations between women and men. These constraints result from societal norms that are institutionalized at the macro level and affect only women due to the perceived gender differences. The various constraints influencing women entrepreneurs are categorized into three broad clusters by the experts- a) Socio cultural, b) Financial and c)Capacity building.

Many constraints influence women entrepreneurs. Recognizing that entrepreneurs are not homogeneous. We consider entrepreneurs from grass root to urban areas. Not all face the same constraints or need the same support services. That is why structure of support agencies and methods of service delivery will also be different.

Information about markets, suppliers, export opportunities etc-is another resource that women entrepreneurs have difficulty accessing which impede their capacity building process. Information can be obtained through informal networks, as well as through membership in organizations such as associations and unions. They have greater difficulty in accessing information because of difficulties in attending events due to their dual work roles and the resulting time constraints. They often lack access to modern equipments which could improve their productivity .This may be due in part to other constraints, such as financing and information. Access to markets for both final goods and inputs is another problem for some women entrepreneur, again due in part to a lack of information. The market power of large enterprises may close women entrepreneur out of certain markets. As women are less informed than men are and more isolated, they are more constrained in accessing markets. A lack of relevant skills and knowledge constrains their growth potential.

Women tend to be less likely to have education and experience relevant to starting and managing a business and thus have less potential for success. Gaining relevant skills and knowledge is also difficult for women since their double work burden and childcare responsibilities make them less able to attend formal and informal training than men. Market saturation is a major problem for Women entrepreneur related to a lack of access to higher value markets and a lack of innovation. Many entrepreneurs are located in low value markets where there are few barriers to entry. The sectors tend to be crowded because of these low barriers. This leads to saturated markets and little room for growth. Without innovation through new product development and access to higher value markets, the potential for success for women entrepreneurs in these sectors is low.

The economic success of women entrepreneurs is constrained by many factors. Women may experience these constraints more intensely due to the roles and responsibilities assigned to them as women. Some of the more common constraints include: access to financing, information, productive resources and markets; levels of skills and knowledge, relevance of education and experience, effects of market saturation. Women's household responsibilities and role as mothers represent a constraint affecting only women. Other constraints exclusive to women are occupational segregation, which limits women's free choice among economic sectors, and socialization practices which often result in women having less self-confidence and assertiveness compared to men. The gender dimensions of these constraints and the influence of other characteristics such as race, class, etc. must be recognized in developing programmes to support them.

Solution:

a) In order to make long-term changes in women's ability to participate freely in the economy, the socio-cultural constraints on women must be addressed. The most important learning is the need to couple programme actions with policy work. Advocacy work should be directed to policymakers in order to raise their awareness of the important role of women in the economy, and the positive effect of economic participation on women and their families.

b) Women need to be able to access mainstream banking and finance, and need support in this area. Different methods of providing access to financing, such as loan guarantees or partnerships with formal financial institutions have been successful, particularly with women entrepreneurs. Increased access to credit is a key to the development of women entrepreneurs. Women need flexible finance that meets the developmental needs of the enterprise. The system of loan guarantees has emerged as a successful means of increasing access to credit. This reduces the perceived risks to formal lenders associated with lending to women. However, it is essential that the delivery should be kept simple and transparent. Orientation programs for applying for loans are also required. Again resource mobilization in favor of women is a crucial need.

Training is one of the most common business development services required. Training initiatives include both the provision of general business skills as well as skills more particular to an industry or that is need based training. General business training includes basic business skills such as costing, marketing, accounting and negotiation, and is usually a central element of an integrated service package. However, training in skills is often not enough for women, and successful training programmes for women entrepreneurs therefore also include confidence building, entrepreneurship development training, fostering the attitudes important to starting and managing one's own business, etc. A modular approach to training, programme design is often considered good – it offers core courses, and then allows clients to select other courses suiting their needs. This makes the training flexible and gives clients the independence to choose the skills on which they want to focus.

However, successful programme designs are always those which are based on realistic needs-based assessments. Women have different training needs in terms of course content, scheduling, length and delivery. Programme designers must be aware of women's multiple roles; programmes should be scheduled when women are likely to be free. Participatory techniques and incremental learning using female instructors are considered good teaching models for reaching women entrepreneurs.
Individually based services where clients receive help on problems specific to their businesses have proven to be most effective. However, counseling programmes tend to be expensive. One way of cutting costs is by using volunteers and using group-based services for more general issues. In addition, gender training of consultants should be done.

Many women want post-start-up support, accessible after trying out the skills learned in earlier training. **Mentoring** is one method of providing this support which can be very effective as it addresses the specific problems faced by the individual entrepreneur. This kind of support includes individual or group-based assistance directed at specific problems where mentors serve as role models. This is a form of knowledge transfer. It can be tailored to client needs and can have high effectiveness and impact. However, it may be costly in terms of mentors' time. Mentoring can be offered to individuals or groups.

Information is a key resource for women entrepreneurs. It can relate to markets, suppliers, costs and technology, and networks have emerged as key strategy for offering support to women entrepreneurs. **Networking** is very important to the success of a business and it is identified as one of the key ways to strengthen women's enterprises as it can provide access to information, new customers and suppliers. Networks are relations with others in the business community; they are one way to access information. Sometimes training courses provide early networking opportunities. Training courses also allow women to meet others starting businesses. Networks can also contribute to the knowledge and development of support agencies. Information exchange in the networks is provided through many means including one-stop shops, trade fairs and the Internet. Information technology has proven to be an important asset for accessing information and expanding networks through telephone, fax and Internet. In fact, the use of ICTs can greatly help to widen the geographic areas of networks-between entrepreneurs and support agencies. Internet allows clients to access it at times that suit their schedules. This helps women getting a greater access as they often have to juggle multiple demands on their time. Decentralized service provision also ensures that the information provided to local women is relevant to the local context.

Type and Role of Support Organizations

Many different types of organizations provide either direct or indirect support to women entrepreneurs. The various opinions of experts about their role for promoting women entrepreneurs is discussed below.
The different organizations working with women entrepreneurs include government agencies, NGOs, research institutes and universities, professional organizations and private sector. The government's role as a facilitator of women entrepreneurs' growth as a direct service provider and in cases of market failure is more effective. The government should try to make more direct provision for most efficient or effective services like the SMEF. It can facilitate the development of the women entrepreneurs through various means. It should ensure that the legal and fiscal framework for supports their growth .It has a role in promoting skill training and providing basic education as well as developing local economic, physical and social infrastructure. The government should also work to create an enabling policy environment and to make procurement procedures open to women entrepreneurs. From a gender perspective the government should work to ensure that women have the opportunity to participate to the same extent as men, recognizing the different needs of women. Government should support policies facilitating women's involvement in the economy, such as childcare provision, equal opportunity programmes, anti-discrimination legislation, and training for women in new nontraditional sectors. Since in Bangladesh it is observed that the different service providers are working on the same theme-training and similar capacity building programs, government can assign them different roles to perform. For example the NGOs do the capacity building and private sector to provide access to finance and government can monitor and evaluate their performances.

Many NGOs at the local, national and international level work to support women's entrepreneurship. They have become the key service providers in development work, perceived as being closer to the people, smaller, more flexible and more cost efficient relative to government provisions .Some of this description is more applicable to local NGOs rather than national or international NGOs. The latter is as large, bureaucratic and out of touch as government. The key for the higher level NGOs is to decentralize, to carry out operations at the local level, with the strength of national or international support and planning behind the local actions. Decentralization also can involve developing partnerships with local NGOs rather than developing local satellites of the high level NGO.

Local NGOs working with women tend to be more gender aware in their operations. They may have started with the purpose of supporting women, or started by women who experienced various constraints on their success. Thus they may be more sensitive to gender differences and better able to understand the need to perform gender analyses to ensure that the diverse needs of the client group are met.

Universities and research institutes can contribute to women entrepreneurship development. First, they can improve policy-makers' knowledge of the women entrepreneurs and its actors through general research. This can help to convince policy-makers of their importance to the economy. Research done on women in the sector is vital for this reason. Second, they have a role in research and development in technologies to improve their productive capacity and in technologies that can decrease women's household work burden. The latter seems to be an area, which does not receive much attention. Finally, universities in particular can be a source of trainers and consultants, drawing from professors and graduate students are sometimes located on university or community college campuses.

Membership organizations are another supporting group. These can include chambers of commerce, professional groups and women's groups. These organizations may provide services to members, serve as a source of information or as a place to network. Some also have a policy advocacy role. These organizations generally are not for profit, and their aim is to serve the collective interests of their members. But it is often better to have smaller organizations with a high level of commonality amongst members. Otherwise determining a collective interest would be extremely difficult. If they have power to act on their own in women's interests, this could be a good strategy. It is to be mentioned here that, NGOs need to work closely with the media, government, and private enterprises to undertake its activities. Media, in turn, would play a coordinating role in combining and synchronizing pollution management activities of different agents.

Private sector, banks and private training providers include suppliers of inputs, final goods customers and consultants. They work with women entrepreneurs by supplying inputs, raw materials, used equipment or technical assistance. These are viewed as an increasingly important source of assistance .Particularly for-profit service providers. Besides consultants may work with pay or as volunteers. The provision of voluntary services can be done at the firm or individual level. For example, some firms may volunteer their staff's time as consultants while some individuals working in the private sector may do so, independent of their place of work.

One important function provided by many of them is the opportunity to network with others or with suppliers of goods and services needed by them. This is a particularly important opportunity for women business owners, as they often do not have the same ability to network, or the time and place to do it due to their multiple roles. However, networking is very important to the success of a business, and it is identified as one of the key ways to strengthen women's enterprises as it can provide access to information, new customers and suppliers. Often training courses provide early networking opportunities, giving 'practice time' to women before they go out to network in the wider business environment. The training courses offered by membership organizations and other service providers allow women to meet others starting businesses, as well as more established members of the business community who may serve as instructors, consultants or guest speakers in the programme. Many service providers include programmes for developing networks amongst them. They can also perform as the watchdog over the scenario.

Government's role in promoting women entrepreneurs should be as facilitator not provider. Means of facilitating the women entrepreneurs include: simplifying legal and fiscal frameworks, promoting skill training and basic education, developing physical, social and economic infrastructure, and a gender sensitive policy environment.
Local NGOs are key service providers, being smaller, less bureaucratic and closer to the people than the government; decentralizing the operations of national and international NGOs or developing partnerships can help them achieve outcomes similar to local NGOs. Local NGOs have greater potential to be gender aware since they are closer to their clients; this is particularly true for those targeting women.
Universities and research institutes contribute to women entrepreneurs' development through provision of trainers and consultants and through direct research on this sector by highlighting the sector's importance to the local, regional and national economy and can be vital to making women's contribution visible. They also can develop technologies to improve their productivity and reduce the time burden of women's domestic tasks.
Membership organizations work to change policy and provide services and networks to members. They work best when they serve a clientele with common interests. Membership organizations (like chamber of commerce) serving women entrepreneurs must recognize that women will have many differences-crossing race, class, age, education, etc. Networking opportunities are central to accessing information, new customers and new suppliers. Women often must work harder to find time to network due to the multiple demands on their time. This is an important skill to develop amongst women entrepreneurs. Networking also is important to the continuous development of women support organizations, offering ways to disseminate best practices and develop new materials.

Towards a Women entrepreneur's friendly environment-

Education policies should aim at creating Entrepreneurs. Ensuring the effective inclusion and participation of women, mechanisms in place for gender responsive resource planning, budgeting are also needed. Support for institutional framework for gender and women mainstreaming (Ministry and other mechanisms)needs to be strengthened and supported. Commitment is required to mainstreaming gender in national policies effectively; networking nationally and regionally in thematic and cross-cutting concerns; adopting gender and the Need Based Approach .Moreover institutionalize and implement affirmative action by allocating resources over and above the budget allocated to ADP and Revenue budget towards the implementation of women specific declarations, programmes and projects in line with the MDGs and PRSP. Support women political initiatives to enable them to enter and effectively participate in politics and launching local innovative and appropriate resource mobilization activities that will empower women to influence national policies; Promote women's self-reliance by advancing women entrepreneurs through small and medium scale enterprises, access to resources, inputs and markets and take to account the time and energy that women invest in national development; Support institutional capacity building by recognizing and utilizing existing mechanisms. Develop monitoring systems for the implementation of the existing Policies and establish an **Annual Gender Peer Review Mechanism** to facilitate implementation follow-up. Further ensuring the effective inclusion and participation of women, especially in assessment, prioritization, implementation, management and monitoring.

Development of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh

Women Entrepreneurs need to engage themselves to the task first. They need to come out on their own to take part in the business ventures in the mainstream economy. Only then they would be able to determine what the real obstacles are and what the solutions might be and what assistance the state may provide. Entrepreneurship education policy may bring some results in this regard. In policy and program level, there must be entrepreneurship thinking; only policy guidelines may not bring much fruitful outcome. Besides having thinking in the policy level, there should be a medium through which the linkage between women entrepreneurs and elected member of Union Parishad may be maintained so that they can collaboratively work with responsibility at the divisional level. For the accomplishment of successful women entrepreneurship, women must have the feeling that they are working in a secured environment. Special incentives to rural entrepreneurs particularly to enable them to access global market opportunity in lower end product is required. Gender mainstreaming is needed in Export, trade and policies of BOI. Also Bangladesh Bank can make it compulsory to have a loan officer dedicated for women entrepreneurs. Along with it a positive social and cultural attitude needs to be created for a congenial field for **investing in women** as this promising sector is yet to be fully explored. **Investing in women** will transform them into potential human resources. Again

Policies should reflect advancement of financial and technical know-how. Government should examine the outcome of exiting policy support to the women entrepreneurs to undertake future policy action; creating a level playing field and ensuring equal treatment for women.

b) Major Issues

Access to finance

Access to finance is a key issue for women. Accessing credit, particularly for starting an enterprise, is one of the major constraints faced by women entrepreneurs. Women often have fewer opportunities than men to gain access to credit for various reasons, including lack of collateral, an unwillingness to accept household assets as collateral and negative perceptions of female entrepreneurs by loan officers. In South Asia, women are almost invisible to formal financial institutions – they receive less than 10 per cent of commercial credits (Mahbub ul Haq human Development Center, 2000). When women do have access to credit it is often in small amounts, whether this suits their needs or not. Differential access to credit may of course be a reflection of differences in the choice of sector, educational level or the amount of loan requested. However, as sector choice and educational levels tend to be limited or influenced by gender, one could say that any differential access based on this motive is indirectly caused by gender perceptions. In addition to this, women entrepreneurs in developing countries continue to suffer from poor overall assets, poor enforcement of financial rights and the existence of unequal inheritance rights and consequently poor access to community and social resources. Gender-based obstacles – conventional thinking, cultural and social values, lack of collateral – all aggravate the difficulties faced by women. High transaction costs, the rigidity of collateral requirements and heavy paperwork are further impediments to women entrepreneurs

Women, in particular the less educated ones, also find it more difficult to get financing from banks because they lack information on how to go about securing a loan. Moreover, bank managers are often more reluctant to lend to women than to men.

Sometimes, credit may be available for women through several schemes but there are bottlenecks and gaps, and the multiplicity of schemes is often not adequately listed nor is there networking among agencies. As a result, clients approaching one institution are sometimes not made aware of the best option for their requirements (Vishwanathan, 2001). In many countries, women face unequal inheritance practices and laws, discriminatory laws on ownership of property or access to bank loans, or discriminatory practices by banks. In the area of guarantees, several discouraging habits have become ingrained in financial institutions and banks, such as requiring male members to accompany women entrepreneurs for finalizing projects proposed by women, as well as almost invariably insisting on guarantees from males in the family (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002).

A general lack of experience and exposure also restricts women from venturing out and dealing with banking institutions. Those who do venture out often find that transaction costs for accessing credit are high, and cannot be met by the cash available to them. Because of this, they are dependent on the family members for surety or collateral and hence restrict the money they borrow. This results in lower investments. Alternately they tend to find working capital at higher rates of interest. The availability of finance and other facilities, such as industrial sheds and land for women entrepreneurs are often constrained by restrictions that do not account for practical realities. All these in turn affect the enterprise and its survival.

All women entrepreneurs acknowledge that financing is a crucial problem for them as they get very seldom support in this regard from their husbands. Because of lack of finance most robust idea of women entrepreneurs could not be realized. They mentioned that bank credit is related with collateral, which only a very few women can manage. Besides, interest rate is very high and constrained with many hassles and bribes. NGOs provide loan at 15 percent interest, which is very high. The loan is very small and the recovery starts from the next week, which does not give them the least time to produce goods. As a result the client has to pay from the loan amount without producing and selling.

Women entrepreneurs often have difficulty gaining access to credit. In some cases this is due to the smaller loans requested by women, which are not profitable for formal financial institutions to deliver. In other situations, banks may not have enough information about clients, making them unwilling to lend money due to the perceived risk involved and unproductive use of loans for the dowry payment of daughter. Often opportunities are fewer for women to gain access to credit for various reasons, including lack of collateral, an unwillingness to use household assets as collateral, the small amounts of credit requested and negative perceptions of female entrepreneurs by loan officers. When women do have access to credit it is often for small amounts, whether this suits their needs or not. As sector choice tends to be limited by gender, any differential access based on this motive is indirectly caused by gender perceptions.

Causes to deter their access to finance:

- Lack of appropriate skills to evaluate the business especially those in the informal sectors.
- Fear of being rejected, unwillingness to have collaterals from partner, doubts about defending the project.
- Lack of knowledge on different available options of financing scheme.

In sum, it is interesting to note that although it often is self reliance that motivates women to venture out on their own, they have to rely on the securities of others to raise their basic capital requirements.

Marketing Problem:

Women entrepreneurs face marketing problem of their goods and services, which should be resolved through appropriate strategy. Women entrepreneurs of remote region do not get right price for their products. As the wholesalers from Dhaka and other big cities have in fact monopoly, so wholesalers buy their goods at dumping price, which are sold in Dhaka at a very high price. The situation is worse for exportable goods produced by women entrepreneurs in small towns and rural areas. So direct market access could be very helpful support for women entrepreneurs Some of the goods produced by women have exportable quality but there is no opportunity for access to export market. So, marketing opportunities not only for local but also for international market have to be created. They think that if there were marketing spots for buying goods from the women entrepreneurs locally, it could be very helpful for women entrepreneurs. Organizing trade fair for the product of the women entrepreneurs could boost their marketing. In this respect, show room facility for the products of the women entrepreneurs could also be very helpful. Quota for participation of the women entrepreneurs in the international trade fairs could be practical step supporting their international marketing. Besides, women entrepreneurs from remote and rural areas should be given chance to participate in the national and international trade fairs with government support.

Access to market

The ability to tap into new markets requires expertise, knowledge and contacts. Women often lack access to training and experience in on how to participate in the market place and are therefore unable to market goods and services strategically. Thus, women-owned SMEs are often unable to take on both the production and marketing of their goods. In addition, they have often not been exposed to the international market, and therefore lack knowledge about what is internationally acceptable. The high cost of developing new business contacts and relationships in a new country or market is a big deterrent and obstacle for many SMEs, in particular women-owned businesses. Women may also fear or face prejudice or sexual harassment, and may be restricted in their ability to travel to make contacts.

Market liberalization leads to increased competition which demands swifter response to the market. SMEs thus face competition from transnational corporations as well as from efficient low wage, low cost producers in other developing countries, and need to engage in active technology and skill upgrading, and more efficient quality management in order to stay competitive. This may require fast and easy access to capital, something that women entrepreneurs often lack. Unfamiliarity with the external world and lack of ease in moving around in it also hampers women when it comes to dealing with a multiplicity of agencies in setting up or running a business. Thus, even when they do have professional competence and training, women are often forced to turn to male professionals for assistance.

c) Essential consideration for economic development:

The services of the women at home are not properly evaluated by their male partners. Not only that their potential and capability for entrepreneurship is doubted and discouraged. Government should take legal steps to remove all discrimination in respect of women entrepreneurship.

1. Technical Support Needed

Women entrepreneurs require up-to-date training for upgrading their skill for productivity enhancement, better management of the undertaking and improving the quality of their products and services. Women entrepreneurs have little designing skill, they need good and marketable designing training, which should be organized.

2. Institutional Services Needed

Trade License requirement and TIN procedure should be simplified. Export Promotion Bureau should be so activated that it becomes helpful for women entrepreneurs. Further, it was mentioned that an Information Centre with initiative of the government should be established for women entrepreneurs. In this way information problems, which hinder development and marketing, could be resolved. Besides, the women entrepreneurs viewed that establishing separate Ministry for Women Entrepreneurs could exclusively deal with all problems of women entrepreneurs.

3. Policy Reform

Women have the views that government should act as facilitator for women entrepreneurs. In this regard, an investment and business friendly, policy framework needs to be formulated. Though government committed, government has not implemented Beijing declaration. Women's empowerment is directly related to economic development, so engagement of women in national political activities for national economic development should be legally ensured.

Empowerment for women entrepreneurs will help reform the traditional society and emancipate the women society culturally, economically and politically. The women participants of the workshops propose government to formulate policies suitable for women entrepreneurs, who are less advantageous group.

In respect of the government development policy, strategy and direction following suggestion may be made:

- National Action Plan for the development of women entrepreneurship should make provision for undertaking necessary steps to feed women entrepreneurs with resources.
- Ensuring timely implementation of the Policies of National Action Plan.
- Ensuring Implementation are regular monitoring of the Beijing UN Convention on Women Development

4. Abolishing Discrimination

A parent gives mortgage for their son and not for the daughter – so discrimination starts from home. Besides, inheritance law of the country should be reformed so that women have access to resources and collateral for credit.

Analysis of the government national policy regarding women entrepreneurship development, critical analysis of the supporting activities of the public, private and non-government organizations and agencies and analysis of the data and information of our own survey we may propose some suggestions for the development of the women entrepreneurship.

5. Financial Policies and Strategies

In respect of the policy, strategy and function of Bangladesh Bank and Commercial Banks following steps should be taken:

- Identification of genuine women entrepreneurs
- Establishing credit guarantee scheme for women entrepreneurs
- Sinking interest rate for loans for women entrepreneurs
- Setting up special w window for financing women entrepreneurs
- Pre- and post investment counseling for women entrepreneurs for credit allocation of women share in equity development and fund
- Preferential treatment of the women entrepreneurs by credit in thrust sectors
- Monitoring of credit disbursement for women entrepreneurs
- Maintaining gender-based data on credit disbursement and dissemination information on credit opportunities
- Establishing a exclusive bank for women
- Enabling credit for the women without collateral

6. Institutional and Technical Support

6.1 Institutional Measures

- Establishing strong relation among different institutions and agencies involved in the development of the women in general and sharing their experiences
- Establishing strong relation among different chambers and business organizations to ensure support for development of the women entrepreneurs

6.2 Study and Lobbying

- Studying prospect of joint venture and providing support in this respect to the willing women entrepreneurs
- Undertaking sector-based study to identify potential sectors and ensure women participation
- Preparing sector-based study paper to collect reliable information and lobby with government for necessary reform

6.3 Management Support

- Arranging management training for women entrepreneurs
- Providing personnel support in this respect, if necessary

6.4 Marketing Support

- Supporting and ensuring the participation of the women entrepreneurs innational and international trade fairs
- Arranging display centre at national and international level for displaying the products of the women entrepreneurs
- Counseling and supplying of national and international trade information regularly

6.5 Tax, VAT & Regulatory barriers:

- For new women enterprise tax may considerably reduced or exempted
- The procedure for Tax Identification Certificate should be simplified
- Procedure for Income Tax should be simplified and made investment friendly
- Tax holiday for women entrepreneurs should be extended further and made more supportive for them
- Gift Tax should be dismantled in the case of women beneficiaries
  Issuing of trade license should be made simple and free for women entrepreneurs
- The registration procedure for import and export business should be simplified and made women friendly or completely dismantled
- Women representation in Import Trade Control Committee should be ensured
- Pre-shipment Inspection should be more simplified and made speedy
- All anomalies in custom procedure must be removed and made women friendly
- Tariff for women entrepreneurs should be abolished
- Value Added Tax (VAT) for women entrepreneurs should be abolished

d) Suggestions from the women entrepreneurs:

1. Advocacy with different financial institutions
2 Workshop, meeting with financial institutions at divisional , regional and national level
3. Media advocacy for implementing BB Circular
4. Provide easy loan services
5. Separate bank for women entrepreneurs
6. Regional level training institution (training need assessment, training plan and implementation) for women entrepreneurs
7. Continuous training follow-up and counseling
8. Provide need based technical training
9. Cold storage for raw materials preservation around the year (like mango, hog palm etc.)
10. Re-starting sericulture at Rajshahi
11. To ensure social security for women entrepreneur
12. Establish ICT center at local level for providing legal and business information

13. Promotion of the success women through media
14. Reduce Bureaucracy
15. Develop Partnership with local administration
16. Ensure easy access to trade fair for women entrepreneur
17. Develop skill trainer on design and product development
18. Ensure domestic raw material for sericulture at Rajshahi
19. Establish women market corner at local level
20. Establish showroom for product display at local and regional level
21. Establish processing center for agricultural product at local and regional level
22. Increase national and international linkage
23. At least 10% media quota for women entrepreneurs

Steps to Achieving Policy Changes

- Problems of financial institution will also be identified especially those regarding monitoring and evaluation of small businesses.
- New and flexible financial package will be designed in consultation with the marketing personnel of the financial institution.
- Dialogue with different trade body like BWCCI, WEAB, WEA and financial institutions will be conducted to adopt the proposed new credit policy.

IX. Recommendations:

Access to Finance

- Women Entrepreneurs should be provided collateral free loan as they have no assets
- Interest free loan should be provided to encourage women entrepreneurs
- Long term loan should be available
- Interest rate should be very low and long term interest free loan should be available
- An Investment Bank for Women should be established
- Access to finance should be easier
- Women entrepreneurs should be freed from VAT at least in mid-term basis
- Women entrepreneurs should have direct access to finance and other infrastructure and institutional facilities
- One stop service should be created in the commerce ministry exclusively for the women entrepreneurs for facilitating investment and business.
- A special window with the Bangladesh Bank could resolve this problem
- Proper execution of the central bank's circular on refinancing scheme for women SME.
- Increase amount of central bank's aggregate fund for women SME development

- Enable women entrepreneurs, particularly rural women, to be informed of the provisions in central bank's circular and facilitate them with proper information and knowledge to go to respective banks for loan.
- Sensitize people working in various financial institutions to women.
- Execute announcement by the then Prime Minister to establish a separate Women SME Bank
- Initiate gender cell in each public and private bank and financial institutions.

Design and product development

- Adapt policies by the government to facilitate women entrepreneurs for their product and design development.
- Activate and sensitize existing public institutions responsible for providing services for product and design development.
- Initiate need based training by the public institutions on product and design development.

Company registration and trade license

- Sensitize local government (city corporations, pourosova and Union Parishad) institutions and other public bodies responsible for company registration.
- Establish a gender cell/separate wing at targeted city corporations, pourosova to facilitate women to get trade license.
- Increase awareness among new women entrepreneurs about importance and procedures of company registration.

Training and capacity building

- Activate SME Foundation, initiate special program/component for women SME at SME Foundation and allocate increased budgetary allocation by the government for SME Foundation.
- Undertake a long term comprehensive plan (at least for five years) for women entrepreneurship development
- Continue support for women SME helpline centers established by the Industry ministry to institutionalize them.
- Capacity building training facilities by respective public institutions and ministries for women SME, particularly for rural women SME.
- The different technical training needs to be reorganized and regular coaching is needed until the project beneficiaries are familiar with the technical terminologies.
- Need to be imparted the business intensive counseling session among the beneficiaries to identify their business opportunities considering their capacity, feasibility, resources, etc.
- Need to be introducing the English learning course.
- Develop some master trainer through pear process.

- Organize more training on theoretical and technical skill based like; accounting, human resource management, design, business promotions and some technology oriented trades.
- More sensitization session needs to be conducted with SME authorities and the local banks in presence of women entrepreneurs.

Access to Market

- Establish local level display center for women entrepreneurs
- Establish divisional level ICT center
- Establish separate market for women
- Organize fair for women entrepreneurs
- Facilitate women market corner in each pouroshava and city corporation

Tax and VAT

- Make tax and VAT procedures easier for women entrepreneurs.
- Establish special cell for dealing with women entrepreneurs regarding tax and VAT procedures.
- Provision of tax rebate and exemption from VAT for new women entrepreneurs.
- Increase awareness and understanding level of women entrepreneurs about Tax and VAT procedures.

Media

- Establish and continue a strong network with national and local news media.
- Sensitize people working with media to get news coverage on MDG, PRSP, livelihood, corporate governance, democracy with special reference to women's economic empowerment.

National Budget

- Special allocation for women entrepreneurship development.
- Keep budgetary provision for women SME in ADP of various ministries.
- Increased allocation for credit support to women entrepreneurs.
- Provision of cash incentives to promote women entrepreneurs in export oriented sectors.
- Special allocation for design and product development.
- Special allocation for training and capacity building.
- Allocation for employment generation for women, especially rural women.

Avoiding & Reducing Corruption

- There should be separate desk or booth for women in each of the service providing offices
- There should be women officials responsible for separate desks or booths to provide support service to women (anticipated that women are less corrupted and do not harass women or can not give any illicit proposals)
- Prime Minister's Office should take necessary steps and actions to reduce and eliminate corruptions
- There should be a complain box in each office so that sufferers can drop their complain into the box and the authority can take action through proper investigation of complains
- Women entrepreneurs should be aware of the process to receive support and services
- Women entrepreneurs should increase their skill and capacity
- Terminate corrupt officials immediately
- Increase salary and benefits of the officials
- Regret bribe and protest against the corrupt officials
- Strengthen Anti-Corruption Commission
- The Government should investigate properly when complain raise against an officials and take necessary actions considering his/her offence
- Increase monitoring of government officials and effort should taken to aware public servants and other officials to prohibit corruption
- A complete act to support women entrepreneurs should be enacted or there should be a policy in favour of women entrepreneurs
- There should be a platform for women entrepreneurs for awareness raising and raising voice against corruption jointly
- Increase online facilities in private and public sector (such as providing license, loan application processing etc.)
- Take initiatives for increasing capacity of women entrepreneurs
- Increase gender sensitivity among the officials so that they consider women as human being, not to devalue them
- The should be a dedicated banking or financial institutes for women entrepreneurs
- Processes for receiving support and services should be simplified to create better accessibility of women entrepreneurs
- Establish separate markets for women entrepreneurs
- Increase social security of women entrepreneurs
- Facilitate easy loan processing in low interest rate and without equatorial
- Ban on mandatory male guarantors to open a bank account. It should be replaced by a female guarantor
- Facilitate a proper marketing channel for the products of women entrepreneurs so that they can have opportunity of direct marketing without the middleman

- There should be joint monitoring cell represented by government and trade body and trade associations like; BWCCI , WEA to monitor corruptions in different service providing offices

Steps should be taken for way forward of women entrepreneurs:

- Emphasize women's political empowerment
- Increase women's participation in public sector
- Increase male participation for women rights establishment
- Sensitized male dominated bureaucracy on gender and women rights
- Proper Implementation of Women Development Policy 2008
- Ensure property rights for women
- Introduce and implement of the law of domestic violence
- Initiate project/ program on "For the women by the men"

Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship: Gender Perspective

Realization has gradually dawned on all concerned that a society cannot afford to waste half of its human resources by discrimination on ground of sex. This increasing awareness on the part of the government has led to the adoption of national policies to facilitate a development process involving women in all spheres particularly in economic activities focusing especially on entrepreneurship development and empowerment.

Women's participation in the workplace, leadership role in the political and social arenas and access to the credit may be regarded as empowerment of women, though in a narrow sense. Empowerment of women in its very simplistic view asserts that the gender composition of the workforce and rate of women's participation, if the percentage is higher, then their empowerment is prominent. Redistribution of power in favor of the women is also regarded as a signal of empowerment. It is a process that enables women to gain access to and control over the physical resources as well as in the power structures. Besides, it is a mechanism of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision-making process.

Conclusion:

In Bangladesh, though the majority of the working women still have not been able to impose a controlling authority in mainstream production, there has arisen a new class-the women entrepreneurs, who have accepted the challenges of life and have emerged as leaders in the socio-economic development–earning for themselves and for their families or contributing towards the socio-political upliftment of the women. Women have now become aware of their socioeconomic rights and have ventured to avail of the opportunities initiated for them. Rural Bangladesh is now a changed scenario for the women who have gathered courage to break barriers and enter off-house working force as entrepreneurs and workers – a situation not accepted by the society in the past. The urban areas have greater opportunities for business development but the areas where women lack assistance are in the access to credit, provision of skill training, and market facilities. today has become an important profession among the women of Bangladesh at the various levels of the society, both in the urban and rural areas. Due to poverty, they have been forced into off-house income through entrepreneurship for economic solvency, the women of the middle class families, who have always lived a restricted lives, have today, ventured into this profession as a challenge and an adventure into a new world of economic activity. On the other hand, many women have taken up entrepreneurship and become professionals in order to establish their rights through the development of a sector and thereby contribute towards the progress of the society and nation. The changing role of women shows that over the last two decades, there has been a steady upward trend in the participation of women in economic activities in developing countries including Bangladesh. Despite the problem of serious under-enumeration of women's involvement in economic activities in a sex-segregated society as ours, the potential of women's economic contribution is now well recognized. Greater participation of women in remunerative work is improving their living conditions and bargaining positions in the households and wider community. The importance of women's entrepreneurship development focuses on women's development in general and their participation in income generating activities in particular, while it deserves a special consideration in rational development planning on two counts. First, leaving the women, who comprise about half the total population, outside the purview of development, no nation, can achieve any significant degree of success. It would be like working half strength compared to nations where women make full participation. Secondly, Women's participation in gainful labor is expected to reduce fertility, a common development goal of the most developing countries. Women entrepreneurship in the rural industries is a new arena for investigation in the socio-economic environment of Bangladesh. In view of the need to bring the rural women folk in the development stream of the country, both the Government, the NGOs and other related agencies have provided ample opportunities to promote entrepreneurial skill among women. Income-generating activities, credit facilities, skill training, market opportunities have all combined to pave the way for the emergence of entrepreneurial development among women in rural Bangladesh

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