

ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Fact Sheet Series No.1 - Women and Entrepreneurship - March 2019

This is the first of a series of fact sheets that Development Alternatives will be disseminating monthly on its focus areas that are aligned to sustainable development goals. Situating women and entrepreneurship in the national context, this fact sheet gives an overview of the work done and approaches adopted by Development Alternatives in this sphere.



Development Alternatives

WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Indian society is amongst the most entrepreneurial in the world. The national willingness for entrepreneurship in India is 83 percent versus a global willingness of 53 percent (Global Report Randstad Work monitor, 1st quarter 2017). Despite this, women's participation in the Indian labour force and female entrepreneurial rates remain dismally low.

GLOBALLY

In 2017 the World Bank announced the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, which aims to mobilise more than US\$ 1 billion to unlock finance, markets and information constraints faced by women-owned small and medium enterprises in developing countries.

If women and men have equal access to land, technology, financial services, education and markets, the consequent 20-30 percent increase in agricultural production on women's farms could lead to 100-150 million less hungry people (Remarks by UN Women Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri at the SHE-ERA: 2017 Global Conference on Women and Entrepreneurship, in Hangzhou, China).

KEY CHALLENGES

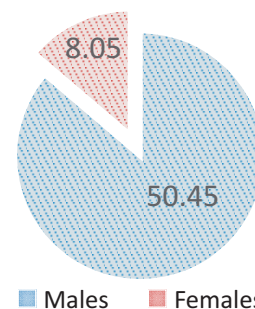
- Access to technical and financial assistance
- Lack of pro-gender policies at a macro level
- Family ties and homemaking responsibilities
- Red-tape in government services and lack of e-service options
- Competition from male dominated organised sector

We believe that empowerment approaches for women should not just look at providing services, but also address the multiple layers of discrimination that hinder their access to opportunities.

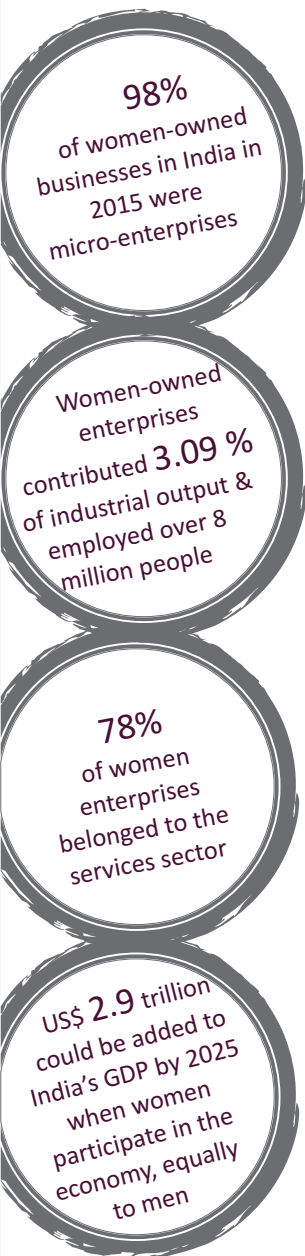
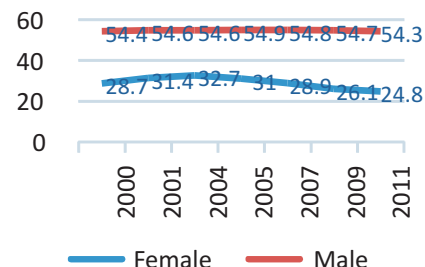
FEMALE ENTREPRENEURIAL RATES

(IN MILLIONS) in 2013

WERE FAR LOWER THAN MALE



In the past decade the female workforce participation rate has been far lower than the male's



... Here's how

Over the last thirty-five years, the Development Alternatives (DA) Group has built socially relevant enterprise solutions for local economic development and job creation. DA continuously engages with women entrepreneurs to reduce time lags in the business model process. This is significant as income earned by women will empower them to define and make improved and informed decisions about their families, thus ensuring a safer and healthier lifestyle. The enterprise model caters to sectors that create livelihood opportunities, enhance the quality of life and promote environmental sustainability.

Driven by the belief that unleashing the entrepreneurial potential of women is central to inclusive and sustainable development, DA determined three major approaches for including women – Overcoming socio-cultural barriers, building new models and catering to specific ambitions articulated by women.

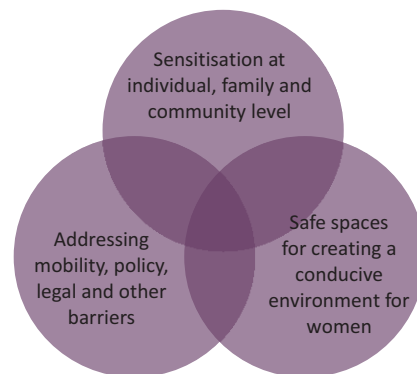
30,00,000 Sustainable
Livelihoods

50,000 Direct Jobs

8,500 Micro Enterprises

Socio-Cultural Barriers

The approach focusses on triggering systemic shifts in local communities and ecosystems to enable an inclusive culture of entrepreneurship. It is crucial to address social and discriminatory practices in an inter-connected society and change perceptions of women on issues of growth and livelihoods. This is done through social innovation processes such as participatory dialogue and co-creation processes with women. DA creates safe, physical spaces to build solidarity and networks, facilitating active participation of women. These spaces enable access to tangible and intangible resources through a network of partners for existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs within the village. By overcoming social and cultural barriers, DA aims to alter women's social, economic and political status, along with providing better health and educational conditions for them.



Women driven e-rickshaws

The lack of safe transport forces many adolescent girls to drop out of school. Women looking for job opportunities also find it difficult to traverse long distances (nearby towns/cities) without safe transport. To address the issue of safe transport for rural women, DA provided e-rickshaws to female entrepreneurs. Three women entrepreneurs, Pragya Devi from Lacchapati, Bhagwani Devi from Gopalpur (Mirzapur) and Meera Devi (Newadi) from Orchha, were selected on the basis of their basic knowledge of driving and their desire for financial independence. The objective was to diversify their existing entrepreneurial portfolio. Pragya Devi was counseled about customer management and book keeping; her business model was created and her travel routes and timings were fixed. Bhagwani Devi pinpointed the need for transportation for tourists visiting the nearby Asthabhuja shrine. Meera agreed to set up an e-rickshaw business to meet the social need in villages. All three women are expected to increase their monthly income by INR 5,000 to 6,000.

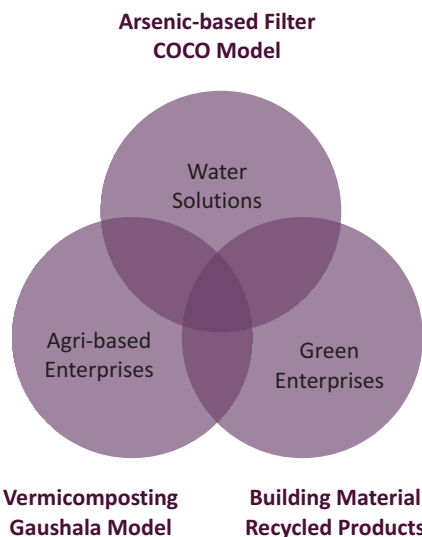
Building New Models

DA recognises various catalysts for women entrepreneurship, and believes in building more inclusive value chains by mainstreaming women led models. For instance, in the energy sector, it recognises the dual role of women – that of “producers” as well as “consumers” - and prioritises the use of electricity to put money “into people’s pocket”, for not just lighting but improved nutrition, entertainment, healthcare and other needs. Access to improved energy services also reduces the time and effort involved in household activities, thus enhancing income generating opportunities. Similarly, DA also focuses on institutionalising women’s groups, such as SHGs and federations, building women's capacities to stand and fight for their rights. This creates opportunities for leaders to deal with mainstream institutions of the society on more equal terms, and enables creating identities for each woman.



The brick making industry has always been male centric. Women are seen working only on fields or at small road side shops, besides their daily household chores and responsibilities. With DA’s introduction of the VSBK technology across the globe, a significant number of women have been linked to livelihoods. This has broken the gender bias in the construction sector, and has testified women's efficiency and capability.

“Now that I have set up the enterprise, even the men folk of my village look up to me”, says Mikki Devi, the only woman fly ash brick manufacturing entrepreneur in Bihar.



Gaushala Model

The Gaushala started with 20 acres of barren land and 20 non-productive cows given by the Government of Madhya Pradesh. It is now a well established community owned, biogas-based enterprise managed by women. This livestock based Livelihood Resource Centre is run by self help groups with more than 300 village women, who are earning additional income by growing pulses and nuts, machine shelling of ground nuts, pressing mustard seeds for oil and spice grinding. These are produced using alternate energy services based on waste management, which enable lifting ground water for irrigation, lighting, cooking, running flour mills, chaff cutting and spice grinding machines. The Gaushala model has also uplifted the domestic economy of federation members through alternate livelihood options such as sale of green fodder, vermin-compost and milk products under the brand named 'Shakti'.



Catering to Specific Ambitions

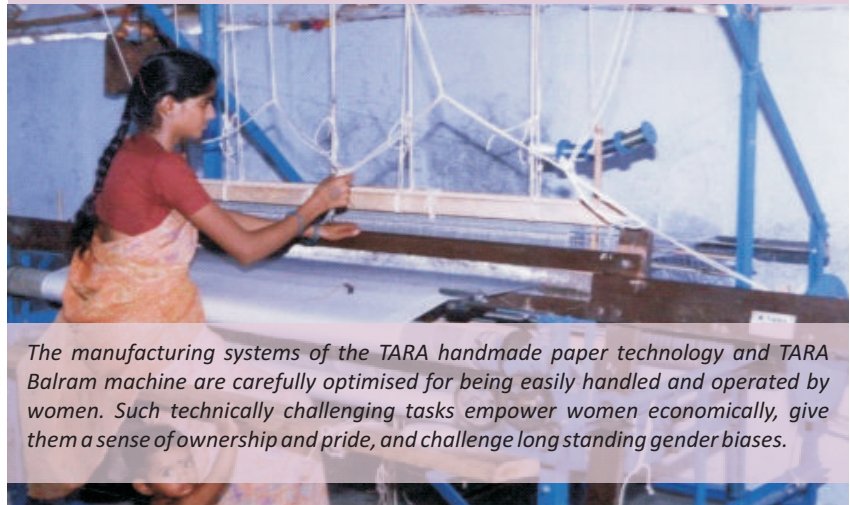
The DA Group has developed a design driven research tool to understand specific ambitions and motivations of potential women entrepreneurs and customise models specific to their needs and demands. Their progress is mapped for analysis of processes and used for charting the way forward.

Technology is a key enabler for women's empowerment. However, the terminology 'appropriate technology' was never adapted to benefit women. When developing technologies for use by women, system design needs to be suited to their capabilities and skills. This has been demonstrated by various DA Group initiatives.

Literacy is the bedrock of women's economic, social and psychological empowerment. Till 2010, the DA Group had enabled 61,500 illiterate women to read and write, linked 25,000 women with financial services, 30 percent of whom, that is, 7,500 have availed credit services and have supported 14,000 families to access public programmes through information and capacity supports.



Asha Devi, a resident of Village Dhannipatti, was interested in supplementing her household's income when she approached our team. The team along with Asha Devi contemplated and finally settled on the idea of setting up Vermi-Compost Units. This waste-to-wealth enterprise is an increasingly common demand from our entrepreneurs given that cow-dung - a major raw material for compost is abundantly available in rural areas. Asha has employed two other women from her community, creating two jobs.



The manufacturing systems of the TARA handmade paper technology and TARA Balram machine are carefully optimised for being easily handled and operated by women. Such technically challenging tasks empower women economically, give them a sense of ownership and pride, and challenge long standing gender biases.

What Next?

Subvert the traditional top-down approach of handing out solutions to women entrepreneurs by empowering them with tools to create their futures with their own hands and act as change agents in the community.

Capitalise on the power of collaborative action to enable change and build networks at two levels – the meso-level, with one set of actors providing services that enable 'efficient' and 'effective' operations and the macro-level, with agencies that provide easier access to capital and influence the policy and regulatory environment for growth of women, thereby simplifying the complexity of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Create an inclusive culture of entrepreneurship that bridges open generational and gender related divides in an increasingly inter-connected society

A premier social enterprise with a global presence in the fields of green economic development, social empowerment and environmental management. It is credited with numerous innovations in clean technology and delivery systems that help create sustainable livelihoods in the developing world. DA focuses on empowering communities through strengthening people's institutions and facilitating their access to basic needs; enabling economic opportunities through skill development for green jobs and enterprise creation; and promoting low carbon pathways for development through natural resource management models and clean technology solutions.