

An Empirical review of Entrepreneurship Support Programmes: A need for holistic Support.

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Abstract: The last decade has seen a burgeoning of entrepreneurship support programs for women entrepreneurs which have gained traction and prominence as a means to create jobs and boost productivity at the national and regional levels. However, disparities in initial resource endowments of male—and female-led firms, sector sorting into low productivity activities, social norms, and institutional arrangements, constrain the growth of female-led enterprises. This note reviews the outcomes of programs supporting female growth entrepreneurs and draws lessons from available evidence to inform the design of more effective programs. The review shows that most programs are primarily geared toward microenterprises, making it difficult to draw conclusions about program design for growth-oriented entrepreneurs, but some early findings point the way forward. Management practices appear to improve as a result of business education, but there is little robust evidence to prove that support programs lead to significant improvements in business performance outcomes. Furthermore, in programs with both male and female participants, firm performance improves in some cases for male-led firms only, not for female-led firms. This paper concludes by suggesting new focus on strengthening the engendering of support programs to more specifically address gender-specific constraints such as social norms, entrepreneurial preferences, and institutional arrangements, and paying more attention to factors that induce female entrepreneurs to diversify into higher value-added activities. Offering mentoring, networking, and other consulting services, in addition to education on basic business practices and strengthening critical areas such as gender-specific content, can potentially increase the effectiveness of the program.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women constitutes 2/3 of the world's poor, their poverty level is worse than that of men as clear gender disparities in education, employment opportunities and decision- making power exist.(Binta,2016).

A large number of women are mainly engaged in subsistence agriculture as well as in micro and small-scale enterprises, in most developing countries particularly in Africa were women constitute 70-80% of the total agricultural labour force and account for over 80% of food processing, weaving, personal services, beverage production and selling of snack foods .United Nation Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO,2003). In addition to their economic and income generating activities, women assume many roles in the society as unpaid family workers, bread winner of the family, services providers in the communities, mothers/ care- takers. All these were done in response to their economic potential to be able to improve their standard of living. Reducing gender inequalities is an important element for any poverty reduction strategy. To mobilize the potential productivity of rural people particularly, women it is dispensable to empower them through entrepreneurial development by addressing the totality of the challenges facing women entrepreneurs, to achieve the resilient economic growth that will pull people above the poverty line.

In the recent years, the general attention on women entrepreneurship in developing countries has increased to a great extent and the focus on this untapped source of growth is indispensable for economic practitioners and policy makers. Despite this growing number of initiatives and efforts geared towards the promotion and development of women entrepreneurship women still own and manage fewer businesses than men, less income from the business which has slower rate of growth and susceptible to high rate of failure.

Poverty reduction and shared prosperity can only be achieved with the full economic participation of both men and women. Yet almost one billion women have the potential to contribute more fully to their economies but are unable to do so. of these 812 million live in the developing world, where their contributions, as workers and job creators, is greatest. Female entrepreneurial activity is concentrated in low- productivity sectors with limited potential for growth in income and employment and that often operate informally. In many cases, female entrepreneurs are unable to grow their businesses from micro or small to medium or large productive enterprises with transformational economic impact. Therefore, empowering female entrepreneurs,

especially those in high-growth sectors, has the potential to create jobs, increase incomes, lift millions out of poverty, and lead to greater economic and social transformation.

The developed economies of the world today owned their substance and achievement to entrepreneurship. They rely on the ability of some individuals in their midst to research and come up with some innovative business ideas that may be realized as products or services for the benefit of the people. An entrepreneur is the coordinator, mobilize and controller of resources towards creation of wealth. Thus he initiate an idea, develop it, and seek ways of financing it to actualize production.

This note reviews the empirical literature analyzing the performance gaps between male and female entrepreneurs and the impact evaluations of programs that support female entrepreneurship. Its aim is to enhance the effectiveness of these programs by drawing lessons from current and past support programs, identifying gaps in knowledge, and proposing areas of focus for program design going forward. The note focuses on female entrepreneurs growth that is, those with the potential to create new jobs and generate productivity gains rather than “necessity” entrepreneurs, who are unlikely to generate substantial growth in terms of job creation and broad economic impact. Female growth entrepreneurs are defined here as those who wish to grow their firms—not only “high-growth” firms, or gazelles, but also small firms and microenterprises with growth potential. Little is known about the relative merits of using entrepreneurship programs to support “necessity” entrepreneurs, self-employed and other groups, especially vis-à-vis other support programs to facilitate integration into the labor market or social assistance. More evidence is needed to understand how better to support these groups in order to improve their incomes, and whether entrepreneurship programs are the best instrument to do so.

Women empowerment in reality occurs when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources and therefore improvement in socio-economic status. Women economic empowerment is low in Nigeria, compare to their male counterpart, many women are still living on menial jobs which are unaccounted for in the national output.

Women Entrepreneurship and Economic development

Some recent studies have shown that, developing entrepreneurial potential among women can have long term implications for economic development . for instance, Ogundale, Olajide and Ashamu cited in Abdullahi, (2012). Have stressed that entrepreneurship activities are very important to any meaningful development . That leaders always clamored for the development of entrepreneurs that would bring a turnaround in the economy. This explains the reason for government conscious efforts towards entrepreneurship development.

Studies on entrepreneurship by Acs et al, (2005), Verheul, et al, (2006), Eddleston & Powell, (2008). Found out that more women are actually involved in business ventures trying even to become trend setters by deviating from the conventional gender-specific roles and investing in business. The increase in female entrepreneurs is regarded as one of the important factor for economic development . McClelland et al, (2005) in Faraha, (2009). opined that most self- employed women are considered capable of owning and managing up to 1/3 of all business in developed nations

Women undertake economic activities at all levels of the economy both at rural and urban areas. They engage in all categories of production activities ranging from agriculture business, tailoring, or fashion designing, craft making, snack foods and drinks owning and controlling business centers . Women are found mostly in the informal sector.

Entrepreneurship development among women represent an appropriate opportunity for women across the globe this potential is yet to be fully achieved due to the presence of many challenges being faced by women entrepreneurs constraining their efforts or ability to improve their level of production.

Women entrepreneurship has attracted increasing attention in the light of concrete evidence of the importance of new business creation, for economic growth and development. Acs et al, (2005, Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Explained that, Not only does women entrepreneurs contributes to economic growth and employment creation but it is increasingly recognized to also enhance the diversity of entrepreneurship in any economic system and to provide avenues for women expression and potential fulfillment . These benefits are rarely leveraged in a systematic way, however, given that women entrepreneurship talent and potential , remain largely untapped in many context because the rate of women entrepreneurial activities are significantly lower than those of male.

(Minniti, et al 2005). Cited in Faraha, (2009). Documented in this respect substantial variations in entrepreneurship rates across countries participating in the global entrepreneurship monitor (GEM) in 2004 with men more active in entrepreneurship in all countries This can be attributed to the numerous factors constraining women entrepreneurs.

Despite the increase in the number of female-owned enterprises and their increasing impact on the economy, most women who are in the business, their survival remain a real problem as many of them lack professional abilities in managing their businesses compared to men.

They are confronted with the challenges of nurturing their businesses and promoting the tradition of innovation and entrepreneurship (OCED, 2009; Wube, 2010). This could be associated with the actual business environment which is entangled with force of complex socio-cultural, factors creating intricate challenges for owners of SMEs in (Tesfayohannes,2012; Felicia *et al.*, 2013). This has led women to make tradeoff between tradition and the kind of business activities to undertake. For instance, most women in Nigeria tends to undertake business activities that are in harmony with their traditional roles which happen to be least profitable (Tundui, 2012)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE GENDER GAP IN PERFORMANCE

The emergence of gender-disaggregated cross- country entrepreneurship surveys, such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) several national firm-level surveys, and access to national business registries, has led to empirical studies characterizing female entrepreneurial activities. Most of this literature has focused on OECD countries, but an increasing number of studies analyze female entrepreneurship in developing countries. These datasets are not perfectly designed for studying entrepreneurship dynamics, since they capture neither the decision to become an entrepreneur nor firm dynamics for existing entrepreneurs. However, they provide a starting point (GEM,2017),

Performance of Female-led Firms vs. Male-led Firms

Lower Entrepreneurship Performance Rates among Women Across the world, entrepreneurship prevalence rates tend to be lower among women than men, but this gap is reduced in regions with lower income per capita income. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the lowest gender gap as well as the highest rate of entrepreneurial activity among women, and in some countries, female entrepreneurs are more prevalent than male entrepreneurs. These high entrepreneurial rates in SSA are likely explained by the large entry costs, especially for women, into labor markets. Entrepreneurship prevalence rates, however, are only part of the story; a deeper look at World bank's data on global entrepreneurship reveals that a larger share of female than male entrepreneurs tend to be "necessity" entrepreneurs. That is, more women are driven to entrepreneurship out of necessity (for example, due to lack of employment,

Women-led Firms are concentrated in Low- productivity, Low-technology, Low-growth Sectors Women not only lead fewer businesses; they also tend to concentrate in less profitable sectors. In developed countries, women entrepreneurs are concentrated in the sales, retail, and service sectors (Klapper and Johnson, 2012), with little participation in high-growth or high-technology sectors (Menzie, Diochon, and Gasse 2004). A similar sectorial distribution is observed in developing countries. For the SSA region, Hallward- Driemeier (2013) shows that women are more likely to operate in traditional, informal and lower value- added sectors. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data reveal two interesting results. First, women entrepreneurs tend to have higher levels of sector concentration than men, although the concentration gap varies greatly by country. Second, there are male-dominated sectors where male entrepreneurs have larger shares, such as real estate or construction, and others that are clearly female- dominated, mainly services such as wholesale and retail or personal and other services. These female-dominated sectors are traditionally lower-productivity sectors.

Women-owned Firms are Significantly Smaller Closely associated with the higher incidence of necessity entrepreneurship among women and their concentration in lower productivity sectors is the fact that women-owned firms are significantly smaller than male-owned firms, in terms of employment and sales. Data from World Bank enterprise surveys shows that women-owned enterprises have lower overall sales volumes than male-owned firms in Europe and CentralAsia, Latin America, and SSA.(Bardasi et al,2011) They also suggest that the number of both "gazelles" and high-growth firms is larger among male-owned firms.

Women-led firms Experience Lower Returns to Capital and Lower Profitability Studies of microenterprises in Sri Lanka and Madagascar by de mel et al,(2008),Normand &Vailant (2013) and Atlerido&Hallward,(2011)found out that women-owned firms experience lower returns to capital and lower profitability. For example, Fafchamps et al. (2014) find that although returns to capital for female-led microenterprises in Ghana were high, they were not as high as those for male-led enterprises. Interestingly, Ghanaian female- led enterprises that have sales above the mean (for all firms) are found to have returns to capital similar to male-led counterparts—which suggests that the gender gap in capital returns may be smaller for women- owned enterprises with initial high profits.

Female-led Firms Do Underperform! Summing up and answering the question about whether female-led firms underperform, posed at the beginning of the section, the evidence points to a gender performance gap between female and male entrepreneurs. This is manifested primarily as lower entry into entrepreneurship and

sorting of existing female entrepreneurs into lower- productivity business sectors and activities. As a result, some of these differences disappear once performance is compared within the same sector.

What Explains the Performance Gap? If performance gaps are significantly reduced or even disappear entirely when controlling for initial conditions and sectors of operation, the critical question becomes, What motivates women to operate in certain sectors over others? Understanding the reasons will help inform the design of programs and enhance their impact.

Traditionally, the literature has differentiated between two sets of potential explanations (Bardasi et al., 2011): constraint-driven factors, that is, external barriers stemming from institutions, the regulatory environment, and social norms, and preference-driven factors arising from internal motivations such as risk tolerance and subjective preferences. In practice, however, it is difficult to disentangle the two types of determinants, since cultural norms also shape preferences, and preferences inform social attitudes.

Constraint-driven Factors

Regarding constraint-driven factors, initial conditions are the first important consideration. Female entrepreneurs often start businesses with less startup capital and less access to credit, less experience, and less schooling, and lower level of management skills, which constrains their growth and chances of success. Fairlei and Robb (2008), for example, find that women-owned businesses in the United States are less successful than male-owned businesses because they have less startup capital, less business experience, and less human capital. This is confirmed by Cohoon et al. (2010) in their study of a selective cohort of 540 successful entrepreneurs in high- tech companies, which finds no differences in education and access to capital between male and female entrepreneurs. Thus, when initial conditions are similar, outcomes are also similar, regardless of gender.

A far more complex barrier to female entrepreneurship are social norms, which induce female entrepreneurs to choose socially acceptable sectors and can impact their perceptions about what they are capable of achieving. Social norms also limit educational opportunities and access to finance, affecting initial conditions for female- led enterprises, and influencing intra-household choices that constrain entrepreneurial decisions. Normand and Vaillant (2013) find that informal female entrepreneurs in Madagascar self-select into industries in which they can combine market-oriented and domestic activities. Comparing male and female entrepreneurs in India in households where one or both members may have an enterprise, Field, Pande, and Rigol (2014) find much weaker performance in terms of profits and higher concentration in low-profitability sectors for female entrepreneurs in households where both men and women have businesses. They attribute this to the fact that the household is the unit of decision for female entrepreneurs when making economic choices. It is consistent with findings that female entrepreneurs may invest loans or grants in male-led enterprises if they are the more profitable enterprise in the household. Although these female enterprise decisions might be optimal for the household, they can substantially limit the potential for enterprise growth and in some cases women's empowerment. More research on these complex interactions within the household is needed in order to help design support programs.

Barriers to female entrepreneurship are also embedded in legal frameworks and institutions, especially in developing countries (Bardasi et al., 2007). The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (WBL) measures the extent to which women and men have equal access to economic opportunities. Research shows that the higher the number of gender-based legal restrictions, the lower the female participation in firm ownership. For example, the rights of married and unmarried women affect women entrepreneurs' capacity to register businesses, sign contracts, open bank accounts, as well as their mobility, measured by their ability to choose a residence or obtain a passport. According to WBL, 200 million women live in countries which legally require formal permission from the husband or a male relative to start a business. There has been some progress in introducing reforms aimed at reducing gender-based economic restrictions. In Ethiopia, for example, reforms in family law that allowed women to pursue economic opportunities without requiring the husband's permission and joint administration of marital property led to increases in women's participation in work outside the home, full- time work, and higher-skilled work.(Hallward&Driemeier,2010) Most countries, however, are still lagging behind in addressing legal constraints to female entrepreneurship.

Preference-driven FactorsA second set of interlinked elements that determine entrepreneurial choices are subjective preferences and personal traits. The psychology literature suggests that there is a set of subjective traits that are important predictors of entrepreneurial activity, such as perceptions of opportunity, self-confidence, and fear of failure (Koellinger et al., 2007). In many cases, women rank lower than men in these perceptions. For example, GEM data show that across countries, early-stage female entrepreneurs tend to exhibit significantly higher fear of failure than male entrepreneurs. Minniti (2010), also using the GEM dataset, estimates that subjective perceptions about one's own skills, likelihood of failure, and the existence of opportunities explain a significant portion of the gender gap in entrepreneurial activity. In a review of the experimental literature on gender differences in risk, social, and competitive preferences, Croson and Gneezy (2009) find that the bulk of the evidence highlights fundamental differences between male and female

preferences in relation to entrepreneurial activity. They also find that women are more risk averse than men and less likely to engage in competitive situations.

Gender differences have also been found when examining motivations for business ownership. Fairlei and Robb (2008) find evidence that women entrepreneurs in the United States work fewer hours and have different goals for their businesses. In their study of successful high-tech entrepreneurs in the United States, Cohoon et al. (2010) find gender differences in motivation for starting a business. For female entrepreneurs, encouragement from peers is the most important motivation in starting a business, and networks are cited as critical for success. Knowing other entrepreneurs and access to networks are especially important for women entrepreneurs in poorer countries. (Miniti,2010).

Is nature or nurture the source of these differences? Croson and Gneezy's (2009) review supports both explanations and suggests that the critical element is to understand the relative weight that should be given to each determinant. The fact that social norms and institutions limiting female entrepreneurial activity are stronger in developing countries might suggest greater influence of nurture on these preferences in these countries.

LESSONS FROM EXISTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The trends and facts outlined above combined with the growth imperative in developing countries have led to an increasing number of support programs aimed at facilitating the growth of female-led enterprises. The following section reviews the lessons from these programs.

A review of entrepreneurship programs is complicated by the dearth of impact evaluations of programs supporting growth entrepreneurs in developing countries. Most evaluations focus on the microenterprise sector, which includes both micro- entrepreneurs with a desire to grow their business and "necessity" entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is difficult to extract concrete lessons for the design of support programs targeted primarily at growth entrepreneurs.

Impact of Support Programs is Mixed at Best A meta-analysis of impact evaluations of entrepreneurship programs for SMEs and microenterprises in developing countries (Cho and Honorati 2013) finds an overall positive impact on the business knowledge and management practices of entrepreneurs in the programs. But impact on business growth is limited (for example, positive business performance outcomes were observed for youth and entrepreneurs with higher education). More specifically for female entrepreneurs, most researches find improvements in business attitudes but no significant impacts on business growth outcomes. McKenzie and Woodruff (2012), focusing on business education in their analysis, find weak evidence of positive effects of these programs on male-owned businesses and zero or negative impact on women-owned firms.

The lack of impact of support programs on business outcomes of female-led enterprises, even as intermediate outcomes improve, also appears to be a common finding in the empirical literature on microenterprises. Berge et al. (2012) find positive effects of business training and financing conditional on gender for micro firms in Tanzania. Although women entrepreneurs gained business knowledge, it failed to translate into improved business performance. De Mel et al. (2014) evaluate a program combining standard business training with cash grants and find that business training alone results in improved business practices but has no significant impact on business profits. However, when business training is combined with a grant, there is a positive impact on profits, which dissipates after the first eight months.

Not all studies, however, find a lack of impact of support programs on female business outcomes. For example, Valdivia (2011) finds a positive impact of business education on sales among women-owned microenterprises in Peru when the educational package is combined with technical assistance. This impact, however, was measured only once, at the four-month mark, with no measurement of the medium-to-long-term impact.

Three main themes emerge from the evaluations of these programs.

First, these programs appear to be successful in improving the management skills of beneficiaries—both men and women. Second, there appears to be little to no impact on firm growth among female entrepreneurs. Third, there is a gender differential in attrition rates, business outcomes, and overall program efficacy.

Two reasons may account for the lack of effectiveness of entrepreneurship programs for women. First, beneficiaries of such programs may be primarily necessity entrepreneurs, who are less likely to grow their businesses or be motivated to do so. There is some evidence that impact is enhanced when larger enterprises are targeted. (Valdivia,2011)

Second, the programs evaluated may not be designed to address the main binding constraints to female enterprise growth specifically at growth entrepreneurs. Depending on the local context, programs could opt to focus exclusively on women-led small and medium-size firms with high growth potential. In

environments where women entrepreneurs are highly constrained, there may be a concurrent focus on female-led microenterprises that can be scaled up to SMEs.

Therefore, it is necessary to carefully delineate the target segment for a proposed support program and then develop a selection process to identify members of the segment from among the applicants to a program.

Networking and Mentoring: Networking and mentoring play a critical role in improving women's entrepreneurial decisions and performance. Yet, as the GEM 2010 Women's Report found, female entrepreneurs across a range of countries have smaller and less diverse networks and tend to rely more heavily on personal sources of advice than male entrepreneurs.

Networking and Mentoring are Important Resources for Female Entrepreneurs A study based on surveys in Nigeria and Argentina suggests that mentors and networks provide invaluable market information to female entrepreneurs, facilitate access to finance, and provide intangible benefits in terms of support and increased confidence. More than 80 percent of women in Argentina and more than 90 percent in Nigeria reported significant benefits from networking, including mentoring, access to information, and professional visibility. Half of the women surveyed depended on personal contacts for access to finance, and more than 35 percent in both countries received advice regularly from other women in the network.

Networking and mentoring have also been found to be critical in motivating women entrepreneurs to lead crossover enterprises, that is, firms operating in more productive, male-dominated sectors. Campos et al. (2013) investigate the attributes of women who successfully cross over in Uganda. While human capital does not appear to be a significant determinant, access to a role model, in addition to initial capital, is a critical determinant of crossovers. Women who had male role models were between 55 and 74 percent more likely to cross over into higher-productivity sectors than women who had no such access. Fifty-four percent interacted with other business owners at least once a month, while only 39 percent of non-crossovers did. These results stress the importance of including in support programs regular productive interactions with role models and inductions into industry networks, while also providing access to finance to reduce the gap in initial capital.

There is significant evidence pointing towards the positive impact of mentoring and networking on women's entrepreneurship activities, and many entrepreneurship programs have incorporated the provision of these services. For example, 70 percent of growth entrepreneur programs reviewed by Drexler include mentoring components. Several approaches have been tested in existing programs. High-impact entrepreneurship programs, such as Endeavor, typically rely on experienced and successful volunteer mentors who operate within guidelines to prevent potential conflicts of interest. Other programs focusing on micro and small-scale entrepreneurs in developing countries encounter difficulties recruiting appropriate mentors. Some use consultants, while others find faculty or entrepreneurs who need to be paid in order to keep them engaged in the program. The relative merits of these approaches have yet to be directly compared, and further experimentation is needed to structure the delivery of networking and mentoring services for impact.

Anecdotal evidence also indicates that networking events with other female entrepreneurs can be inspiring. However, access to male networks can probably help women access valuable market information and facilitate crossover to a greater degree.

Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs

1) Societal norms: social dishonor especially in some regions with certain norms, in the society. The restricted values restrain women entrepreneur's mobility. This form of societal behaviors hinders their open involvement in a variety of entrepreneurial fields. Rahman, Hossain & Miah, (2000) in Dima, (2008) Shared the view that women entrepreneurs operating in the rural areas particularly, are bounded by some social customs and strong religious barriers creating difficulties in their operations. In view of this, it is difficult for officials to perform their responsibilities smoothly, in terms of dealing with women entrepreneurs working under severe social constraints. They stressed further that in some region women are socially neglected due to the purdah system that prevent women from taking part in different activities like social, economic, cultural and political mainly taking place outside their homes.

2) Technology : Modern development is technology driven. Production cannot meet the demand of the market unless; its quality is up-dated frequently in line with the up-dated technologies. Research conducted by Dima, (2008). Revealed that most entrepreneurs depended on traditional technologies. They don't have much technical knowledge and they don't have the capability to take risk as well. The opportunities are mostly available but for the urban entrepreneurs, rural entrepreneurs have little scope to enjoy such facilities, they are in practice of using traditional technology, which ultimately results in increasing inefficiency

II. CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurs are now widely recognized as critical engines of national, regional, and global growth. It is therefore important to design appropriate support programs to facilitate their move into higher-growth and higher-productivity and activities.

A review of the evidence on the entrepreneurial gender gap and of the impact evaluations of female entrepreneurship programs revealed that support programs have yielded positive outcomes in improving management practices but do not seem to be producing similar results in firm performance in terms of sales, profits, or employment. The review found that women-led enterprises underperform under certain conditions which have to do with social norms, perceptions about abilities and opportunities, and entrepreneurial preferences.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings suggest that there is significant room for improving entrepreneurship support programs, by offering mentoring, networking, and other consulting services, in addition to education on basic business practices and by strengthening critical areas that can potentially increase the effectiveness of these programs includes : (i) Engendering programs more effectively in order to overcome some of the constraints stemming from social norms and subjective preferences.

(ii) Supporting women entrepreneurs to cross over into higher value-added and more productive activities, and
(iii) Addressing legal and institutional constraints

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