

# Mainstreaming Gender in Enterprise

*ISED Discussion Paper*



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by

ISED Small Enterprise Observatory

*jointly with*

ISED Centre for Social Development

**Institute of Small Enterprises & Development**

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## PREFACE

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Mainstreaming gender, as a concept, is by now, well accepted at the policy level. But on its practice, there is need for much improvement. For that, the operational meaningfulness of the concept must be examined in detail. There is also need for a road map for action.

Kochi  
March 05, 2016

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Project Director

# Mainstreaming Gender in Enterprise

## Abstract

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*Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, capabilities*

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## 1.0. Introduction

While gender mainstreaming in India has got significant policy attention and practice, the sustainability of such mainstreaming initiatives, with special focus on enterprise development, have not got the attention they deserve. Gender mainstreaming becomes a meaningful initiative, essentially when the capabilities of women are enhanced. The spirit of enterprise is a focal theme which deserves close attention here. The key question, therefore, relates to how the initiatives for economic empowerment of women have contributed to triggering their creativity and the spirit of enterprise. A detailed discussion on this topic is crucial from the point of view of research and policy.

## 2.0. Gender Mainstreaming

While gender mainstreaming has been generally accepted as a first step towards economic empowerment of women, beyond conceptualisation, the tools and techniques have not developed to a significant extent in India. This, in itself, is a reflection of the state of development of the economy and of the society. Following the inauguration of the International Women's Decade in 1975, several initiatives were taken by the Government on gender mainstreaming. Of these, four types of initiatives stand out: 1) ensuring equality of opportunities; and 2) promoting social organisation; 3) gender budgeting; and 4) women's representation in the legislative process. The equality of opportunities has happened through various steps. On the one hand, the Government of India initiated a policy of gender mainstreaming in government way back in the 1970s itself. As such, various ministries of the Union government began to propagate gender sensitisation. For this, various measures, such as creation of data bases, publication of literature and organisation of seminars and meetings were initiated.

It is expected that, these measures will enhance gender sensitivity in society, with its positive effects on the society as a whole.

The initiatives for social organisation essentially belong to the realm of social engineering. The Union and State Governments, initiated a variety of steps to promote gender based social organisations that, in turn, lead to economic activities on a collective basis. Thus came the idea of women's cooperatives and self help groups (SHGs). Studies have shown that, the SHG movement, over time, has faced a major crisis, in the actual execution of economic activities.

Gender budgeting in Government has been a third critical step. The Ninth Five Year Plan had a specific objective to achieve in the form of empowerment of women. A study carried out by NIPFP, New Delhi in 2007 highlighted the need for conducting gender budgeting based on the empirical evidence that as women and men are at the asymmetric levels of socio-economic development in India especially in the field of health, education and work participation. This study warned that the existing gender neutrality of budgets can lead to many unintentional negative consequences, translating the gender neutrality of budgets into gender blindness. Again to bring in coherence between budget estimates and actual it is important to understand that higher allocation itself does not lead to spending. ([www.nipfp.org.in/working\\_paper/wp2007\\_46.pdf](http://www.nipfp.org.in/working_paper/wp2007_46.pdf)). The way Government budgets allocate resources, has the potential to transform these gender inequalities. In view of this, gender budgeting has been adopted by the Government of India as a tool for achieving gender mainstreaming.

Gender budgeting initiatives analyze how governments raise and spend public money, with the aim of securing gender equality in decision-making about

public resource allocation; and gender equality in the distribution of the impact of government budgets, both in their benefits and in their burdens. The term, Gender budgeting refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analyzing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way. It involves analysis of actual expenditure and revenue (usually of governments) on women and girls as compared to expenditures on men and boys. It helps Governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and reprioritized. Gender budgeting is a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocations are in line with policy commitments and are having the desired impact. The process of mainstreaming gender budgeting should eventually result in gender responsive budgets. The terms gender responsive budgets, gender-sensitive budgets, gender budgets and women's budgets are often used inter-changeably.

A fourth major initiative is legislation for political empowerment. There has been strong arguments in favour of providing preferential precedence to women in order to create a level playing field for all of its citizens. The rationale has been : 1) that there will be more women participation in politics and society; and 2) that such reservation is expected to increase opportunities for women. The steps towards ensuring representation of women in the basis of a national legislation is expected to bring in a greater access and command over resources by women.

In 1993, a constitutional amendment was passed in India that called for a random one third of village council leader, or *pradhan*, positions in *gram panchayat* to be reserved for women. The village council is responsible for the provision of village infrastructure – such as public buildings, water, and roads – and for identifying government program beneficiaries. Although all decisions in the village council are made by majority, the *pradhan* is the only full-time member and exercises significant control over the final council decisions. Recent research on the quota system has revealed that, it has changed perceptions of women's abilities, improved women's electoral chances, and raised aspirations and educational attainment for adolescent girls.

There is a long-term plan to extend this reservation to the Parliament and legislative assemblies. The Women's Reservation Bill or the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, is a pending bill in India which proposes to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33 per cent of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all State legislative

assemblies for women. The seats to be reserved in rotation will be determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat shall be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on 9 Mar 2010. As of February 2014, the Lower House, Lok Sabha, has not yet voted on the bill. If the Lok Sabha were to approve the Bill, it would then have to be passed by half of India's state legislatures and signed by the President.

### 3.0. The Missing Links

Despite the above three types of initiatives, it has been widely accepted that there is a wide gulf between policy and practice. This divide arises essentially because of the largely weak mechanisms that can link policy and practice. These mechanisms need to be defined in terms of two things: 1) general governance issues; and 2) weak gender accounting tools and techniques in economic governance.

Studies by the ILO show that, in most countries, although gender equality of opportunity is mentioned in enterprise development policy, it does not often suffice for gender equity. Gender equality of opportunity usually requires significant changes in institutional culture and processes -including language, assumptions, relationships and incentives. For example, Pakistan has legislation and even religious laws against different forms of gender discrimination, for example, property rights legislation under *Sharjah*, which remains unimplemented without supportive measures to enable women to take advantage of these laws. There is still a need for an initial period of affirmative action in order to support sufficient numbers of women or men to challenge existing inequalities and stereotypes, and to establish new norms and practices that provide equality of opportunity.

The entrepreneurship policy in many countries, and SME policy in specific, neglects the gender mainstreaming/gender equality perspectives. Such perspectives often do not reflect in the working of institutions..

There are no gender mainstreaming instruments or gender target- setting in the SME sector generally, and in the SME policy specifically. The current subsidized programs for women through government platforms, do not have often the requisite outreach to even fifty percent of the women s enterprises . Moreover, women' s enterprises, along the value chains, are often micro enterprises belonging to socially vulnerable groups and mothers with small children: these groups require higher subsidies and explicit inclusion strategies within the SME policy and plans.

It has been learned from SME interventions in various countries that a policy focus is required alongside a programme or project approach, because gender inequalities that burden women require changes in the behaviour and position of men as well as of women. Change is also required in the underlying gender inequalities in power and resources that structure the ways in which women and men behave towards each other. Therefore, gender equality objectives are better met through mainstreaming change in gender relations in strategies targeting men; for example, the inclusion of gender awareness in capacity building and SME training for men as well as women.

There is limited evidence of gender mainstreaming in the SME policy support and implementation. Several initiatives may have had a gender impact, but there are no gender impact assessments available. In addition, despite the strong emphasis on women's participation there is very little attention to the gender-equal distribution of the resources and/or its benefits in terms of time, money and power. Women should benefit from the SME policy on a more or less equal footing with men, but this is not apparent. Some of the key issues lies within the structural reform for achieving a more efficient and transparent labour market.

#### **4.0. Gender Mainstreaming Tools in Enterprise Development**

The ILO has developed some tools of gender mainstreaming, through the WEDGE project of the ILO, it became clear that there was a need to increase the understanding of gender differentiated aspects of SMEs from value chains, to enhancing the capacity of practitioners in their work, to redressing gender imbalances in enterprise development. Policies are often based on gender-blind or gender-discriminatory assumptions, marginalizing women as a 'special' minority case. Women are still excluded from, and often further disadvantaged by, many 'mainstream' SME development interventions.

Policymakers need to recognize that women are not a homogenous group. There are different levels of vulnerability according to race, class, disability etc. Nor should women be seen as passive victims in need of social assistance. Women are dynamic agents capable of transforming communities and economies when given opportunities. The ILO Guides and Tools (see Annexure) aim to improve the accuracy, relevance and usefulness of practitioners work and policy recommendations in general through including the perspectives and needs of the majority, rather than just the male half of the population involved in SMEs and SME development.

The ILO has developed specific gender concepts and definitions. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, treatment and valuation of women and men both at the workplace (in jobs and enterprises) and in the relation between work and life. The promotion of gender equality does not mean giving more power to women and taking away power from men. It recognizes that men and women are different but equal. Gender equality is about ensuring that all persons are treated with dignity and can develop to their full potential, leading to a higher quality of life for all.

The gender equality of opportunity is a basic human right established by International Agreements and Conventions, such as the ILO's Conventions 111 and 100 and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women. Gender equality of opportunity and women's empowerment are now widely recognized as integral and inseparable parts of any sustainable strategy for economic growth and enterprise development.

Gender mainstreaming, therefore, requires addressing many interlinked and mutually reinforcing dimensions (economic, social and political) and levels (individual, household, community, national, and international) on which gender inequality operates. While reviewing the SME Policy, the ILO 'GEMS Toolkit in Brief' was found to be extremely useful and its concepts, definitions and strategies were especially kept in mind when studying the SME policy. Consequently, beside the overall gender neutral language and omission of gender equality in the analysis, objectives and SME promotion strategies, it was also observed that gender budgeting is required within the SME Policy content. The GEMS Tools are used for self-assessment as well as for assessment of the SME policy processes.

##### **4.1. GEMS Check-list**

The ILO GEMS Toolkit offers a check-list to assess to what extent gender concerns are integrated into the design of any ILO action. If most of the answers to the following questions are 'yes', it means the design of ILO action is responsive to the needs and concerns of people of both sexes. If more than half of the answers are "no" or "not sure", more attention is needed to make sure that the action will address the needs and concerns of men and women. This and other questionnaire sets have been modified for the purpose of examining the SME Policy with a gender lens (see Annexure ) women have a lower status in society and more limited networks, and often do not