

# Gender & Enterprise - Towards a New Agenda

ISED Discussion Paper



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**ISED Small Enterprise Observatory**  
*Jointly with*  
**ISED Centre for Enterprise Development**

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## Preface

Looking at 'Entrepreneurship' from a gender perspective is a focal area of the global 'Sustainable Development' debate today. As such, the basic labour market issues have been discussed with 'gender' as a central theme. Various international organizations have their role in shaping this global agenda based on facets such as technology, trade and employment. 'Gender and enterprise', today, is a constituency in itself. Hence, in strategies of promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship promotion, this dimension has been seriously incorporated.

Under the India MSME Communication Programme(IMCP), the Observatory, in co operation with the various Knowledge Centres of the Institute, makes a rigorous analysis of the latest currents in the MSME constituency, leading to a unique 'Development Report'. This study is a spill-over of this exercise of Development Reporting on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the ISED.

While the team of the Observatory did a meticulous job under the guidance and support of the Project Leaders, individual members of the Team, including the editors and the Associates, have made their special contribution in specific thematic areas. While this title is significant in the present context of the Indian economy, and of the MSME developments in specific, I hope it will contribute to wider discussions in the subject area.

As this title come out as a joint output of the Observatory and the ISED Centre for Social Development, the Institute wishes to thank, without fail, the pains and efforts of the authors, and all who have supported it through inputs and suggestions. ISED has taken best efforts to ensure the quality and reliability of this paper. However, for the findings and views, the authors alone are responsible.



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October 20,2021



# Gender & Enterprise -Towards a New Agenda

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## Abstract

*Looking at 'Entrepreneurship' from a gender perspective is a focal area of the global 'Sustainable Development' debate today. As such, the basic labour market issues have been discussed with 'gender' as a central theme. Various international organizations have their role in shaping this global agenda based on facets such as technology, trade and employment. 'Gender and enterprise', today, is a constituency in itself. Hence, in strategies of promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship promotion, this dimension has been seriously incorporated.*

*Key Words: Gender, enterprise, India, sustainable development.*

## 1.0. Introduction

Looking at 'Entrepreneurship' from a gender perspective is a focal area of the global 'Sustainable Development' debate today. The global agenda of economic empowerment of women got into its present stage through various steps. While the question of empowerment was essentially considered in terms of provision employment and livelihood opportunities to begin with, it has, of late, gained a central position in mainstream economic development strategies. As such, the basic labor market issues, of late, have been discussed with 'gender' as a central theme. The involvement of various international organizations, such as the ILO, ITC, and the UNIDO have significant implications in shaping a global agenda, with different facets, such as, technology, trade and employment. 'Gender and enterprise', today has gained the position of a constituency in itself, so that in strategies of enterprise and entrepreneurship promotion, this dimension has been seriously incorporated.

## 2.0. Conceptual Framework

While rationalising 'gender' as a critical dimension of enterprise and entrepreneurship development, it is important to understand the conceptual framework as also the prevailing paradigmatic discourse on the subject. The neo-liberal and post-feminist ethos is reflected in the contemporary policy for women's entrepreneurship development. This is a growing global phenomenon, largely motivated by women's actual or potential contributions to

economic growth (APEC, 2011; Henry, Orser, Coleman, & Foss, 2017; OECD, 2014). Research on women's entrepreneurship is also a growing field (Ahl, 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013), but is, at large, only marginally concerned with policy. Policy implications, if discussed at all, were found to be 'vague, conservative, and centre on identifying skills gaps in women entrepreneurs that needs to be "fixed", thus isolating and individualising any perceived problem' (Foss, Henry, & Ahl, 2014). For a realistic understanding of the scope and leading issues in the context of women entrepreneurship development, it is important, at the outset, to set the conceptual framework.

'Women enterprise' has been defined in development policy and practice, as those entrepreneurial activities initiated and managed by women. As such, it is the process in which women initiate a business, mobilize all resources, undertake risks, and manages it independently. According to the definition given by the Government of India, "a women enterprise' is an enterprise owned and controlled by women, having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital, and giving at least 51% employment generated to women". Here, the two defining criteria are: a) participation in equity; and b) employment structure.

While an 'enterprise' can be a business, not all businesses are enterprises. An 'enterprise' is usually a venture that reflects an initiative or high risk-taking ability of the entrepreneur. 'Enterprise' connotes something bigger, sustainable, and far-reaching than a simple livelihood activity. In many States

### India's Gender Gap is a Pointer

The 'Gender Gap Index' measures gender equality based on the relative gaps between women and men in four key areas including health, education, economy and politics. The value ranges between 0 (complete inequality) and 1 (complete equality).

In the 2020 index, WEF had said that India had closed 66.8% of its gender gap. In that year's index, the country had ranked 112th among 153 countries. India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries in the current year Report becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia. The index has benchmarked 156 nations across the globe in 2021. The data also shows that it will take 135.6 years to bridge the gender gap.

'Global Gender Gap Report' series, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) since 2006, provides a longitudinal picture of the global gender gap of countries.

of the country, it is such simple activities, often accompanied by substantial publicity that has been described as "women enterprise development". As a matter of fact, such activities do not often contribute to the expansion of sustainable capabilities.

An 'entrepreneur' is generally defined as a person, driven by some vital capabilities, identifies new opportunities, and establishes and manages an enterprise. Unlike the above academician's definition, this research discusses the semantics from a development practitioner's point of view. For this study, "women entrepreneurship" is an abstract concept. It needs to be made concrete according to the norms and ideas of Development Practice.

'Enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' are not synonymous. Enterprise is a physical entity; entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is a capability. In order to nourish a capability, there needs to be the interplay of three key factors: a) achievement motivation (AM); b) role of actors; and c) effective delivery system (economic governance system). These three factors are not mutually exclusive.

'Gender Gap' is a key term in the discourse of 'Gender and Development'. The Global Gender Gap Report series, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) since 2006, provides a longitudinal picture of the global gender gap of countries. The Gender Gap Index measures gender equality based on the relative gaps between women and men in four key areas including health, education, economy and politics. The value ranges between complete

inequality (0) and complete equality (1).

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It is an indicator of the balance of gender roles, in relation to participation and involvement in entrepreneurial activities. An important way to bridge the space is by economically empowering women by providing them income opportunities. The entrepreneurship route, along with wage employment, forms the two forms of income opportunities.

#### **2.1. Women Enterprises/Entrepreneurs as a Subset**

Self-employment has often been considered as the micro form of entrepreneurship in any society. Therefore, the trends in growth of self-employment, as also its relative share in the labor market, are decisive variables in understanding and planning for entrepreneurship development.

In India, the Economic Census defines and delineates economic activities in terms of the unit 'establishment'. An 'establishment' is defined as a unit situated in a single location in which predominantly one kind of economic activity is