

AN INVESTIGATION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCE
OF WOMEN : IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESS
POLICY IN SRI LANKA

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Women represent an immense entrepreneurial potential for the small scale industry, when they try to enter the businesses, though they are generally exposed to a number of barriers and constraints, which make it extra difficult to successfully start and maintain a business venture. It is also now widely accepted that ensuring of an "enabling environment" is more important for small enterprise development and in this regard it is equally evident that major government initiatives in policy formulation specifically to promote small-scale women entrepreneurs are indispensable. It is the aim of this paper, therefore, to analyse the status of female entrepreneurs with a view to strengthening the contribution of women to entrepreneurship development.

More specifically the objectives are,

- (i) to examine the potentials and barriers of women in entrepreneurial initiative behavior,
- (ii) to propose strategies to overcome the constraints and
- (iii) to suggest measure for effective utilisation of females in entrepreneurial activities in Sri Lanka.

The information was gathered by means of structured interviews and a questionnaire survey.

Societal attitudes concerning the values of women's work, lack of confidence in women's entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities function as a barrier to women's entry and success in enterprises. Most women entrepreneurs face certain obstacles that are common to entrepreneurs in general such as lack of capital, insufficient entrepreneurial, managerial and vocational training or experience and economic and technical problems.

Gender specific policies would be functional in removing many of these environmental barriers. Women also need to be educated and motivated to join existing organisations or promote action to make them form co-operatives or societies to strengthen their activities. Surveys should be conducted to identify the potential and existing women entrepreneurs. Training programmes should be directed to diversify the investment opportunities introducing new technologies. Priority should be given through assistance programmes and supportive services to enterprises oriented household, labour-saving devices that would increase women's free time and facilities their entry into the entrepreneurial activities.