CATALYZING WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women’s Economic Empowerment Session

Apia, Samoa

Sudha Gooty
Programme Manager
UN ESCAP
Context

World Bank’s Women Business and Law Report 2024 - Globally, only 44 percent of the legal provisions that support the entrepreneurship of women are in place, only about two-fifths of the supportive frameworks needed to promote the implementation of gender-equal laws have been established.

Closing the gender gap in employment and entrepreneurship could raise the global GDP by more than 20 percent. Eliminating the gender gap over the next decade would essentially double the current global growth rate.

Women led enterprises in the Asia Pacific Region were more adversely impacted during the pandemic compared to those owned by men –threatens to reverse progress made on gender equality in the past decade.

Distorted supply chains and shifts in market demands have exacerbated the already existing structural inequalities that impede the performance and growth of women-owned businesses.
The Catalyzing Women’s Entrepreneurship Programme

Regional programme (2018-2024) that aims to advance women’s entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific region through three interconnected pillars of influence:

- **Policy & Governance Environment**: Creating an enabling ecosystem for women
- **Innovative Financing**: Enhancing access & use of financial services
- **ICT & Business Skills**: Strengthening use of ICT & digital solutions
KEY ELEMENTS & APPROACH OF THE POLICY PILLAR

POLICIES, LAWS & PROCESSES

RESEARCH, EVIDENCE & MEASURING IMPACT

KNOWLEDGE & NETWORKING HUBS

GOVERNANCE / COORDINATION MECHANISMS

REGIONAL IMPACT & INFLUENCE

PRINCIPLES

Participation of women entrepreneurs in decision making

Solutions designed at the country level

Ownership and sustainability – beyond the project

Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups

Partnerships
Country examples

Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory systems to advance women’s economic empowerment

- **Viet Nam**: Assessment of SME Law; New Decree 80 for enhanced support for WEs
- **Cambodia**: Revised SME Policy, Policy guidelines for increasing business registration and access to one-roof service for WEs
- **Bangladesh**: Addressing business registration constraints of WEs, 5-year women entrepreneurship strategy
- **Fiji**: Review of MSME Fiji Policy and Young Entrepreneur Scheme
- **Nepal**: Provisions for women entrepreneurs submitted to Cabinet for inclusion in Nepal’s Micro Cottage and Small-Scale Industries Promotion Policy
- **Bangladesh**: Impact of COVID-19 on women owned MSMEs
- **Cambodia**: Impact of unpaid care work on WEs
- **Nepal**: Bridging gender divide in digital ecosystem for WEs
- **Fiji**: Assessment of impact of COVID-19 on WEs; Action research with Suva women market vendors
- **Vietnam**: Climate Change and Women Entrepreneurs
GOVERNANCE COORDINATION MECHANISMS

- Extensive relationship and partnership building with 7 Government Ministries (5 SME and 2 Women Ministries)
- Country-level project advisory committees (PAC) transformed into national platforms led by Governments, institutionalizing national inclusive policy dialogue platforms.

“The PAC has been a great platform to initiate dialogue on various dimensions that impact women’s entrepreneurship. We would like to see it strengthened further in Samoa to enhance our coordination with the women’s machinery to translate and decentralize the policy work”

- Representative of Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labor in Samoa
CWE in Samoa

**National Coordination**

*Working Group on Women’s Economic Empowerment* (i.e., PAC) chaired by MWCPA
- under National Task Force on Women’s Economic Empowerment

**Evidence Generation**

- Review of business license registration
- Baseline assessment on status of women entrepreneurs
- COVID-19 assessment on women entrepreneurs

**Technical Assistance & Capacity Development**

- Analysis of provisions pertaining to WE in MSME Development Policy and Strategy 2020
- Development of M&E indicator framework and training of Ministry staff
- E-commerce and digital marketing training for WE

CWE in Fiji

**National Coordination**

- Ecosystem of stakeholders
  - PAC transitioned into the Project Advisory Group
  - Established under the Trade, Commerce and Industries Board
  - Strong partnerships forged with diverse ministries

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**Technical Assistance & Capacity Development**

- Evidence Generation
  - Review of business license registration
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REGIONAL IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

STRENGTHENING WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP in National Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Policies and Action Plans

Toolkit for Policymakers

PARTNERSHIP WITH ASEAN AND POLICYMAKERS’ TOOLKIT

Collaboration with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSMEs (ACCMSME) on the scale up of the Policymakers Toolkit on “Strengthening Women’s Entrepreneurship in National MSME Policies and Action Plans” approach to the sub-regional level

Endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers Group and being piloted in the Philippines

The Toolkit assists policymakers to self-assess the development of women’s entrepreneurship at the national level, identify gaps and opportunities for improvements and develop action plans

This is the first time that an initiative on gender has received such a significant uptake by the economic community in the ASEAN region.

Implementation of the toolkit has been included as a priority economic deliverable in ASEAN’s workplan.
THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Aim: Gender-responsive development of the SME sector and a fuller contribution of women entrepreneurs and women-owned-led enterprises to the economy.

- Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory system
- Policy leadership, institutional support and coordination
- Gender-sensitive and -responsive financial services
- Gender-sensitive and -responsive business development services
- Access to domestic and international markets
- Access to ICTs and production technology
- Monitoring the impact of policies and measures for women-led enterprises
Being able to position the programme with the right anchor at the country level has been instrumental for creating influence and change in the policy space for women’s entrepreneurship (SME Ministries)

The CWE programme has been able to establish a sustained multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to discuss the multiplicity of issues to promote policy coherence on women’s entrepreneurship. Each country has leveraged the platform model based on its own needs and context to provide a solid foundation for systemic reforms.

Importance of strong diagnostics that have been instrumental in legal reforms (example - SME Law in Viet Nam)
Collaboration with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSMEs has been fundamental in shaping a sub-regional policy agenda for WMSMEs and increasing the footprint of CWE approach.

COVID-19 dominated the timeline of the project period, despite the difficult period, the programme was able to pivot and create opportunities to ensure women's entrepreneurship agenda remained visible and became part of the recovery planning and COVID response.

Impact of policy interventions takes several years. Ongoing M&E efforts and multiplier studies have been helpful to measure preliminary results.
THANK YOU