

## ‘Towards recovery: Women entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic’

04 March 2021, Kathmandu: South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) organized a webinar titled ‘Towards recovery: Women entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic’ to discuss the findings of the survey undertaken to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the women entrepreneurs.

During the webinar, the findings of the survey was presented which showed that 61 percent of the women-owned businesses reported having been affected severely by the pandemic and the lockdown measures; 57 percent of the respondent sought loans to cope with the pandemic; 56 percent of the respondents used e-commerce platforms for sales or promotion during the period. Further, 92 percent of the respondents were not aware of any support facilities offered by the government, pointed out Ms. Dikshya Singh, Senior Research Officer, SAWTEE.

Despite the troubles brought by the COVID-19, the pandemic might emerge as the turning point for the women entrepreneurs as there is a considerable jump in the loans offered to the women-owned enterprises in the last seven months. By mid-July 2020 financial institutions’ lending to women entrepreneurs stood at NPR 4 billion, the amount has reached NPR 27 billion as of now, informed Dr. Gunakar Bhatta, Executive Director, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) at the webinar titled ‘Towards recovery: Women entrepreneurs coping with the pandemic’ by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE). He also pointed out that the number of female borrowers has also increased three-fold during the period.

Highlighting the difficulty in access to finance experienced by the women entrepreneurs, Ms. Chandni Joshi, senior gender, rights and policy specialist, expressed that investing in women should not be considered a charity but as a smart decision. She urged the private sector to invest in women-owned/-led businesses as viable business decisions.

Ms. Shobha Gurung, Vice President, Federation of Nepalese Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI), pointed out the difficulty faced by their members as the economic activities shut-down but they also utilized the period to enhance the digital and financial literacy of the members. She pointed out that during disasters like these, small businesses need more support from the government to survive.

Ms. Reeta Simha, President, Federation of Women Entrepreneurs’ Association of Nepal (FWEAN) also seconded that suggestion. She also insisted along with the soft skills entrepreneurs need better support in the form of finances for their recovery and revival.

Dr, Mona Shrestha Adhikari, CEO, Enterprise for Management, Economic Reform and Gender Equality (EMERGE) added that women entrepreneurs need more support to help transition from brick-and-mortar setting to digital. She added more analysis is needed to examine disaster impacts through a gender lens.

Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, pointed out the lack of mentorship offered to women entrepreneurs, by private sector associations, government and civil society, during the pandemic to help them innovate and shift towards the digital landscape.

The participants in the webinar included women entrepreneurs, representatives from civil society organizations, policymakers and academia. The participants pointed out limited access to information



for the women entrepreneurs that inhibits their ability to expand their businesses. Similarly, they also insisted that the difficulty in accessing finance needs to be addressed for enhancing women's participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.