

# Trade, gender and technology transfer in the South Asian context

By Ms. Pramila Acharya Rijal

President

South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF)

# Trade and Gender

Women play a key role in innovative economic development and business expansion in the Asian region. With more than half the female population in Asia, the United Nations estimates that the Asia Pacific economy would earn an additional \$89 billion annually every year if women were able to achieve their full economic potential.

## Contd...

With over 50% percent of the female population in the South Asian Region, Women play a key role in innovative economic development in this region.

However, despite the recent economic growth and changing social norms, dramatic gender inequities persist in South Asia. In the current context, the gender impact of trade policy must be paid serious attention especially as it is increasingly evident that trade policy is not **‘gender neutral’**.

# Findings of IFC

Based on the findings from the International Finance Cooperation (IFC)'s Enterprise Finance Gap Assessment Database, it is estimated that globally there are roughly 9.34 formal million women-owned SMEs in over 140 assessed countries, which is approximately one third of all formal SMEs where South Asia has the least.

# Contd...

The International Finance Corporation estimates that as many as 70% of women-owned SMEs in the formal sector in developing countries are unserved or underserved by financial institutions — a financing gap of around \$285 billion.

## Contd...

Nepal is estimated to be around 6-10 percent in contribution of SMEs. According to International Finance Corporation (IFC), of the total population in Nepal, over 51 percent are female, yet the number of women entrepreneurs is estimated at 30,000 (0.1 percent).

# Key Factors are:

## Lack Of

- Economic freedom,
- Gender friendly economic policies,
- Property rights,
- Uneven distribution of resources,
- Limited mobility and access to information and networks, etc

# Gender and Technology

Technology creates opportunities and gives women the power to reach beyond local communities and enriches the human capacity. This information technology can connect the rural economy with the urban economy.



## Contd...

According to latest estimates, almost 70 percent of employed women in South Asia work in the agriculture sector. Agriculture sector is most crucial for inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Nepal as it employs more than two third of total labor force mostly women farmers.

According to the World Bank 83% of female participate in labor force (2012-014).

# Government Partnership

Trade promotion organizations have a critical role to play between governments and multinationals to ensure that women-owned businesses are more connected to value chains. Thus “Partnerships are the answer, and trade promotion organizations are at the root of the solution,” as they are vital to help connect women business owners to government and corporate buyers.

# Outcome of Government Partnership

The nationwide campaign to reach out to individual associations, chambers of commerce, academia and professional bodies, combined with a very strong export capacity building programme.

# Partnership - Green Economy

Considering that South Asia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the need for climate-friendly green technologies is extremely high in all South Asian countries. Given the lack of green technology in South Asia, it is imperative for South Asian countries to explore new innovative ways to facilitate the transfer of greener technologies.

# Partnership Impact

## **ALEAP-First Women Entrepreneurs Industrial Estate**

**Today there are more than 103 industries  
established and run by women  
entrepreneurs.**

Contd...

**ALEAP-Multi Product Industrial Estate**

**Now more than 70 industries are running  
and they create employment for more  
than 4000 local people.**

Contd..

## **ALEAP-Green Industrial Park**

**It will inhabit 147 micro & small industries exclusively for women and create employment for 8000 local people.**

# Recommendation

- Trade and gender issues are not properly raised and debated in the public sphere, and need to be heard and featured prominently in development discussions.
- Shift from welfare, to development to integrating women in development
- Learn from the successful policies implemented in the neighboring countries of South Asia.



## Contd...

- Legal interventions from the government for women to participate in the formal economy
- Mapping, capacity building, building product diversification should be part of government policies and strategies to ensure that women, who constitute half of the world's population, are integrated in the formal economy.
- Connect the rural economy with the urban economy.

**In conclusion the question is do we  
work on a thriving economy with  
the participation of women or leave  
half the population behind?**



Thank You