

Innovative Strategy for Developing Women Entrepreneurship & Gender Equality in Nepal

HIGHLIGHTS

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at

Roundtable on “Innovation at work: national strategies to achieve gender equality in employment”

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- **Nepal** – Himalayan Kingdom nestled between two towering economic giants – China and India; landlocked. Population of approximately 26 million people, women represent a little over 50 percent of the populace.
- **Patriarchal society** - wide gender gap in social, economic, administrative, political and legal fields primarily because of the patriarchal social system that confines women within the home and places men in control of all resources.
- ***Disproportionate burden of work*** - Women work on average 10 to 16 hours per day compared to 7.51 hours by men. Yet the position and participation of women at different levels, and paid employment is still very low.
- **Nepal Human Development Report 2004:**
 - *Literacy rate* 35 percent compared to 63 percent for men.
 - *Maternal mortality* of Nepali women rank among highest in the world; one out of every 185 women dies because of pregnancy and childbirth related complications
 - *Property rights* - absence of property rights hinders the economic development and empowerment of women.
 - more than 70 percent are *trapped in low-wage, low-skilled sectors*
 - *Violence* is accepted and perceived as normal behavior due to stereotyped roles and economic dependence
 - *Ongoing conflict* - many female migrants find work in the informal economy in unregulated sectors such as domestic work, entertainment and the sex industry
 - *Women's political participation* and access to positions of power are restricted
 - A local women's group report in 2000 found *118 laws which discriminated against women* including abortion law – women are still serving sentence for having an abortion.
- **Gender Mainstreaming:** While Nepal struggles to find a political consensus on the path ahead it is encouraging to note that women have not been totally left behind.
- **Proposed laws: Citizenship Rights, Property Law and at least one-third representation of women in Nepal's governmental infrastructure amongst others.**
- **Women's empowerment is not only strongly linked to economic empowerment, but is its very basis.**

- **Women entrepreneurship emerged in the late 70s in the Nepali economy, but is mostly confined to small and medium scale business activities.** 7,000 women entrepreneurs are registered and it is estimated that 400,000 women are active in business all over the country. Their contribution to the national economy is estimated at 40 percent of the GDP
- **Major Milestones : establishment of WEAN, FNCCI –WEDC, FWEAN**
- **MICROFINANCE garners major force.** Thousands and thousands of women become economically independent.
- **Nepal Woman Crafts creates new business model:** new model created work opportunities for 10,000 villagers and goods are exported to over 19 countries worldwide.