Women entrepreneurship in natural resource management
Challenges and Opportunities for MSMEs in the post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery
Introduction
Objectives of the study

The State Committee of Industry, Energy and Subsoil Resources of the Kyrgyz Republic requested the UNECE to conduct a study on this topic.

This study has been conducted with support from the UNECE Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC).

The study provides a summary of policy imperatives and insights that will be useful for UNECE member States in their decision making.

Case studies on RPTC countries:
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
Introduction

Scope of the study

- assess role of women in natural resources sector, including SDG linkages
- analyse new paradigms for innovative resource management ecosystem vis-à-vis women participation
- assess role of women in MSME sector related to resource management COVID-19 related challenges and opportunities
- identify opportunities in digitalized ecosystem, circular economy, and low-carbon industry
- identify challenges & contextual obstacles (educational choices, STEM curriculum, stereotyping, gender differences, etc.)
  - economic obstacles (access to markets, access to financing, etc.)
  - soft obstacles (access to information, networks, training, role models, etc.)
- case studies from selected countries in the UNECE region
- promoting women entrepreneurship in post-pandemic economic recovery
The first phase of the research was desktop-based detailed review of:
- national policies
- government-led programmes
- role of local and international institutions
- financial mechanisms
- industrial climate
- academic literature
- published news articles
- market-based reports

In the second phase, the report was reviewed by national and international experts.
Challenges for Women-led MSMEs

Natural Resources Management

- **access to Markets and Finance:**
  - 70% of women-led SMEs are underfunded; shortfall projected to be up to $285 billion (IFC)
  - women tend to have better loan repayment records than men (OECD, IFC)
  - as a result of societal norms and unconscious biases, male investors are less confident in investing in women-led businesses (IFC)
  - men are more likely to use bank loans than women
  - women tend to be more risk averse

- **access to Information:**
  - access to information is critical for MSMEs
  - the lack of information can create confusion in uncertain times
  - unclear messages / absence of communication from government severely disrupts planning

- **access to Learning and Skill Development:**
  - historic gender gap narrowing, but gender bias remains in some regions of the world
  - gender disparity exists in education at the tertiary level in many countries
  - policies targeting STEM gender gap in tertiary education should consider gender differences emerging earlier in life
  - reducing gap earlier at the family level most effective at impacting culturally embedded roles (OECD)
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

- prior to COVID-19 pandemic:
  - encouraging and supporting women entrepreneurship gaining traction across organizations and financial institutions
  - social perceptions, doubting capabilities of women in high-risk sectors, slowly evolving

- under COVID-19 crisis:
  - rate of private investment and raising capital shifted away from preferentially supporting women-led firms due to economic downturn
  - increased market volatility and economic slowdown have set back women entrepreneurs

- increased financial risk and social impact
Opportunities

- cleaner and greener economic opportunities in natural resource management:
  - bioeconomy
  - circular economy
  - digitalisation, big data, and AI
  - innovation, R&D

- promoting new opportunities through training and skill development
- evident gender diversity problem in natural resources management
- COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously presents unprecedented challenges and unique opportunities to women-led MSMEs
- few policies to promote women entrepreneurship in NRM
- number of women studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics increased in recent years
Enabling business environment
Pro-growth tax systems
Labour market flexibility
Challenge social and cultural stigma
Information and data distribution system
Disaster management strategy
Non-discrimination
Networking and mentoring
Affordable childcare and healthcare
Capacity development
Green economic recovery
Create a platform; mentoring, business networking
Thank you!

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