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SDG 5: Gender Equality in Energy Transition and Natural Resources Management, Post-COVID-19 – Overview of Two Studies



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1. Women Entrepreneurship In Natural Resources Management

Challenges and Opportunities for MSMEs in the Post-COVID-19 Socio-economic Recovery



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Objective of the study - assess role of women in MSME sector in the post-COVID-19 socio-economic reconstruction, focusing on value chains/networks for identifying the opportunities and challenges related to the natural resources management (NRM) sector.

The report was supported by case studies from five RPTC countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Key findings - There is an evident gender diversity problem in natural resources management.

- The COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously presents unprecedented challenges and unique opportunities to women-led MSMEs.
- There are few policies to promote women entrepreneurship in NRM.
- In recent years, the number of women studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) topics has increased.

Opportunities and Challenges

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Challenges

Access to Markets and Finance

- 70% of women-led SMEs are underfunded
- male investors are less confident in investing in women-led businesses
- 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
- absence of communication from governments disrupts business planning

Access to Learning and Skill Development

- gender disparity exists in education at the tertiary level

Opportunities

Cleaner and Greener Economic Opportunities in Natural Resources Management

- bioeconomy
- circular economy
- digitalization, big data, and AI
- innovation, R&D

Promoting New Opportunities through Training and Skill Development

- training and skill development programmes to meet local needs, enhance familiarity and comfort, and provide unique mentorship opportunities
- Development of online academy for training programmes across the natural resources sector for women workers and entrepreneurs could be a strong potential business opportunity for MSMEs.

Selected Recommendations to promote Women MSME in NRM



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- **Green Economic Recovery:** Financial investments in the NRM sector supporting innovation, green growth, and sustainable development can create multiple opportunities for women entrepreneurs to “build back better” and promote low-carbon solutions during the socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Disaster Management Strategy:** A coordinated approach on planning rules, tax reforms, subsidies, and other measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 can be beneficial for identifying reform priorities and to implement new regulations that can be used to overcome consequences of future pandemics and other disasters.
- **Create a Platform for MSMEs:** Policymakers and financial institutions to support resilience of resource supply chains in the ECE region.
- **Information and Data Distribution System:** Collection and processing of up-to-date, relevant data on women-led MSMEs across all sectors would allow the development of proper support policies.
- **Non-discrimination:** Ensure that property rights and access to finance, including for equity investment, do not discriminate by gender.
- **Enabling Business Environment:** Ensure stable, transparent legislation and policies that support all entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs in particular, including easy access to publicly available information on starting a business.

2. Energy Transition and Post-Covid-19 Socio-economic Recovery: Role of Women and Impact on Them

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Objective of the study - assess the impact of the energy transition and post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery on women and their role in these processes.

The study is supported by case studies from five countries of the UNECE region: Albania, Belarus, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.

**The report is currently in the final stages of completion.*

The overall findings from the research and analysis of country case studies are that the role of women in the energy sector is consistent with their qualifications in STEM fields. The five country case studies revealed the stark reality of gender inequality in the energy sector. Most countries have policies and initiatives to address the observed disparities, but implementation is mostly voluntary.

Behavioural change within society is equally important, to eliminate stereotype mind-sets and to pursue non-traditional opportunities in energy and subsectors of energy.

Opportunities and Challenges

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Challenges

Contextual Obstacles

- Women's own biases are holding themselves back from realizing their full potential to support society and the sustainable energy transition.

Economic Obstacles

- access to finance and training to enter the formal labour market

Soft Obstacles

- Lack of information regarding employment opportunities acts as a barrier to women's employment in energy and other non-traditional sectors.
- access to mentors and role models
- low representation of women in senior roles

Opportunities

Energy Transition Trends and Developments across Technologies

- energy generation and storage
- carbon capture, utilization, and storage
- carbon circularity and material efficiency

Social Context

- During recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and businesses should incorporate an intentional focus on gender equality.

Job Creation and Diversity in Energy

Entrepreneurship

- The energy transition has the potential to create employment opportunities for people from a diverse array of backgrounds, skillsets, and interests

Proposed Recommendations towards Gender Equality in the Energy Transition

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For Policymakers

- Adopt low-carbon energy pathways.
- Invest in technological development.
- Challenge social and cultural issues through awareness building.
- Ensure national energy security by promoting the adoption of low carbon technologies in the energy mix and supporting the development of local supply chains in the energy sector to create green jobs.
- Employ financial tools and incentives to promote entrepreneurial activities across the energy sector.

For Industries

- capacity building through upskilling the current workforce
- review gender equality gaps
- promote networking and mentoring

Common Recommendations for the Two Studies

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Labour market flexibility: Ensure that labour policy frameworks support flexible working approaches for women entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Challenge social and cultural stigma: Empower women by helping them develop skills to build confidence to address cultural norms that may discourage women to explore opportunities in non-traditional economic sectors.

Networking and mentoring: Find ways to support connections among female and male entrepreneurs, and among female members of the energy sector workforce; one option may be entrepreneurial networking including through small business initiatives and connecting large and small business.

Affordable childcare and healthcare: Access to quality affordable childcare and healthcare is critical for promoting women participation in all sectors of economy, including natural resources management and energy.

Capacity development: Provide opportunities for women to access training and education programmes that improve entrepreneurship and technical skills, to increase chances for success for women in the choice of their career.



Thank you.

For more information on - Women Entrepreneurship in Natural Resource Management: Challenges and Opportunities for the MSME Sector in the post-COVID-19 Socio-economic Recovery. [See full report and detailed presentation](#)