

Women entrepreneurship in natural resource management

Challenges and Opportunities for
MSMEs in the post COVID-19
socio-economic recovery



RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WEEK 2021

ENABLING SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



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Introduction

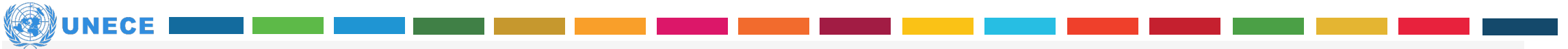
Objectives of the study



- 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

Methodology



- 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



Conclusions



- 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



Recommendations



- 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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