IMPROVING THE SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MYANMAR

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN MYANMAR
PROFILE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MYANMAR’S ECONOMY

37.7 PER CENT of employed women surveyed are self-employed vs 47.3 PER CENT of employed men

25.6 PER CENT of employers are women
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENDER NORMS</td>
<td>Concerning women’s role in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACK OF RESPECT</td>
<td>For women as entrepreneurs/leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES</td>
<td>(financing, ICT, information, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITED FAMILY SUPPORT</td>
<td>For women entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORK-LIFE BALANCE CHALLENGES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW AWARENESS</td>
<td>Among women entrepreneurs of rights, procedures and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEW EFFORTS</td>
<td>To link women entrepreneurs to supply chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITED GENDER-SENSITIVE SERVICES</td>
<td>E.g. financial and BDS services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WOMEN ARE MOTIVATED TO HAVE A BUSINESS TO BE THEIR OWN BOSS

- Wanted to be my own boss: 38.2%
- Needed more flexibility to earn an income while taking care of family/household duties: 36.1%
- Wanted to increase my potential to earn a higher income: 33.6%
- Saw market opportunity for a profitable business: 23.9%
- Do not have skills for other kinds of employment: 7.5%
- Could not find work anywhere else: 7.1%
- Previous employment ended: 4.6%
- Other: 12.5%

Major motivations for becoming an entrepreneur/having a business

Note: Multiple response question.
Source: WES data.
Challenges that women face to starting a business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage of WES respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessing financing</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting customers</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding information on how to start a business</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a suitable business location</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding suppliers</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour shortages and skills</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing where to go to obtain advice</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting support from my family</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with registration and regulatory requirements</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Multiple response question.
Source: WES data.
Many survey respondents own multiple businesses

There is potential for women entrepreneurs to create a significant amount of jobs

Women entrepreneurs are under-represented in political and public life

Socio-cultural gender norms and attitudes pose a barrier to women’s entrepreneurship

4,818 people benefited from economic opportunities generated by the 208 WES respondents
WED FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

1. Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory system that advances women’s economic empowerment

2. Effective policy leadership and coordination for the promotion of WED

3. Access to gender-sensitive financial services

4. Access to gender-sensitive business development support (BDS) services

5. Access to markets and technology

6. Representation of women entrepreneurs and participation in policy dialogue
OBJECTIVES OF THE WED ASSESSMENT

1. Highlight the specific barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in Myanmar

2. Examine how women business owners are affected by policies, laws and regulations (and whether these are gender-sensitive)

3. Assess whether policies and programmes that support enterprises (financial and non-financial) are sensitive/respond to women’s needs

4. Assess the extent to which businesswomen have a “voice” in public-private policy dialogue, and the issues that affect them are raised in these fora

5. Identify country-specific recommendations on how to develop the potential of women’s entrepreneurship
Developing a profile of women's entrepreneurship

Assessing Myanmar's WED framework conditions

1. Preliminary data and desk review (statistics, studies, reports, documents, mapping of key stakeholders)
2. Key informant interviews
3. Women Entrepreneurs Survey (WES)
4. Focus groups with women entrepreneurs
5. Results validation workshop(s)
6. Scoring of indicators for the WED framework conditions based on an analysis of all findings
OVERALL SCORING OF THE SIX WED FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR MYANMAR

Strongest WED Framework condition in Myanmar:
1. Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory system
WED FRAMEWORK CONDITION 1

Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory system

**Gender Equality** is enshrined in Myanmar’s labour, property and inheritance laws.

Enforcement of the equality principle is weak and traditions disadvantage women.

Limited efforts to raise women entrepreneurs’ awareness of rights and registration procedures are needed to inform women of their property and inheritance rights.

Score: 3.0

---

International Labour Organization

Sasakawa Peace Foundation
REDUCING THE FEAR OF FINES IS AN ADVANTAGE OF HAVING A REGISTERED BUSINESS

Women entrepreneurs’ views on the advantages of a registered business

Source: WES data.

“Business registration and licensing processes may be more burdensome for micro- and small-sized enterprises than for larger businesses.”
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Uphold women’s employment rights
- Enforce the wage equality provisions of the Minimum Wage Law
- Disseminate information on business registration and licensing formalities to women entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas
- Establish a baseline on the status of women’s land ownership and effectively enforce women’s equal rights to land
- Provide training and build awareness of women’s landholder and ownership rights
- Ensure that local land use plans prepared by District Land Use Committees comply with the gender provisions of the Land Use Policy
- Guarantee women’s equal rights of inheritance, ownership, and use of land and property
Effective policy leadership and coordination for the promotion of WED

- **Gender Equality**
  - and women’s economic participation are policy priorities

- **Myanmar Lacks**
  - an intergovernmental strategic framework for WED

- **National Focal Point Structure**
  - concerning WED requires further institutionalization
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a National Commission on Women or Gender
- Allocate adequate budget and staff resources for the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) and gender mainstreaming activities
- Conduct a gender impact review of the SME Development Law and policy
- Perform a gender lens review of the Myanmar Private Sector Development Framework and Action Plan
- Allocate a budget to the Central SME Development Department to implement the Action Plan for Women’s Entrepreneurship
- Develop a national WED strategy and action plan
WED FRAMEWORK CONDITION 3

Access to gender-sensitive financial services

1. No gender-sensitive approach evident in financial institutions’ design of products/services.
2. Informal sources of external financing tend to be used by women entrepreneurs.
3. Microfinance institutions often target the borrowing needs of women from low-income households.
4. Loan products for women-owned enterprises and a government-backed credit guarantee programme should be developed.
5. Women-friendly banking environment requires designing products/services to meet women’s needs and building women’s capacities.

SCORE 1.5

Access to gender-sensitive financial services
WOMEN’S SAVINGS ARE THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF START-UP FINANCING

- Own savings: 71.2%
- Family/friends: 51.9%
- Sale of an asset: 33.2%
- Informal moneylender: 16.3%
- Microfinance institution*: 13.4%
- Bank loan**: 11.1%
- Pawn shop: 10.6%
- Informal savings group/ savings and credit scheme: 5.3%
- Government small business loan programme: 4.3%
- Cooperative: 4.3%
- Small and Medium Industrial Bank (SMIDB): 1%
- Crowdfunding site: 0%

Percentage of WES respondents

Source(s) of start-up financing for women entrepreneurs’ businesses

Source: WES data.
FAMILY/FRIENDS ARE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS’ MAIN SOURCE FOR LOANS

Women entrepreneurs who attempted to secure a loan in the past year

Source: WES data.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Financial service providers should partner to increase women’s access to commercial credit
- Develop gender-sensitive approaches to delivery, under the leadership of the Central Bank
- Create a government-backed loan guarantee scheme
- Develop and launch a Transition Loan Fund for Women Entrepreneurs
- Deliver a standardized financial literacy programme to women clients
- Gather sex-disaggregated data on bank clients, their loan applications and the tracking of loan disbursements
WED FRAMEWORK CONDITION 4

Access to gender-sensitive business development support (BDS) services

**LIMITED EFFORTS** by BDS providers to make their approach more gender-sensitive

**INFORMAL SOURCES** tend to be used by women entrepreneurs for BDS

**LACK OF AWARENESS** among women of available BDS services and training opportunities

**74 PER CENT** of WES respondents have never participated in entrepreneurship or business management training

**PROMOTING BDS ADVISORY AND TRAINING** services for women entrepreneurs are key to greater reach and participation
**WOMEN TEND TO SEEK BUSINESS ADVICE FROM OTHER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

### TOP 5 SOURCES OF BUSINESS INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family, friends and neighbours</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile or smartphone</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other business owners (female)</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other business owners (male)</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sources of business advice used by women entrepreneurs

**Source:** WES data.
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING DUE TO A LACK OF TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not have the time</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to find out what training is available</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kind of training I need is not available where I live</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is scheduled when I cannot attend</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care is not available</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not need the kind of training offered</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transport to the training site</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training fees are too expensive</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training does not meet my needs</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is not available online</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for women entrepreneurs not participating business training programmes

Source: WES data.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Design and implement a gender-sensitive government web portal
- BDS service providers should collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to better inform the tailoring of their programmes and services to the needs of women entrepreneurs
- Integrate gender analysis and data collection into the funding conditions of BDS providers
- Explore programmes to enhance the implementation of gender-responsive programming
- Create a dedicated women entrepreneurs’ kiosk inside all SME Centres
WED FRAMEWORK CONDITION 5

Access to markets and technology

**DOMESTIC MARKETS**
are the primary area of operations for women entrepreneurs

**FEW EFFORTS**
to link women entrepreneurs to supply chains or public procurement

**ICT USAGE**
is low and interest in improving ICT skills is high among women entrepreneurs

**AWARENESS RAISING AND SUPPORT**
is needed for women entrepreneurs on government tendering

**DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING**
Is required to enhance women entrepreneurs’ ICT capacities

**ACCESS TO FINANCIAL**
and non-financial services should be facilitated to enable supply chain linkages

**AWARENESS OF THE INTERNET’S**
marketing potential and capacity building are needed

SCORE: 1.75

STAKEHOLDERS

**International Labour Organization**

**SPF Peace Foundation**
INTERNET COSTS AND LIMITED BROADBAND CONNECTIONS ARE A MAJOR CHALLENGE

61.5 PER CENT of women entrepreneurs surveyed wanted training on ICT to improve their businesses.

Major challenges women entrepreneurs' face in using mobile phones, smartphones, computers or the Internet to grow their businesses.

Source: WES data.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Design and deliver a new exporters' training and mentoring programme
- Organize sector-specific trade fairs on export promotion for women entrepreneurs
- Raise awareness of government procurement opportunities and requirements
- Scale up existing good practices on value and supply chain linkages
- Develop and deliver a women entrepreneurs’ ICT training programme
- Explore the development of an ICT voucher scheme for women-owned MSMEs to increase their access to training and other BDS services, so that they can use ICTs in their businesses
Representation of women entrepreneurs and participation in policy dialogue

**WED FRAMEWORK CONDITION 6**

**SCORE 2.0**

**WOMEN’S MEMBERSHIP** in business and sectoral associations is very low

**NO GENDER-SENSITIVE** approach evident in financial institutions’ design of products/services

**MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS** often target the borrowing needs of women from low-income households

**SAVINGS AND LENDING GROUPS** require additional support

**GENDER-SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENT** should be created by business/sectoral associations

**CREATING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE** on Women in MSMEs should be considered
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure representation of women entrepreneurs in tripartite policy dialogue
- Create a Businesswomen’s Committee in UMFCCI
- Support employer’s organizations and sector associations in including women entrepreneurs
- Strengthen the capacity of women entrepreneurs' associations
# WED Framework Conditions in Myanmar

## Strongest WED Framework Conditions in Myanmar
1. Gender-sensitive legal and regulatory system that advances women’s economic empowerment

## Weakest WED Framework Conditions in Myanmar
2. Effective policy leadership and coordination for the promotion of WED
3. Access to gender-sensitive financial services
4. Access to gender-sensitive business development support (BDS) services
5. Access to markets and technology
6. Representation of women entrepreneurs and participation in policy dialogue

---

[International Labour Organization](https://www.iilo.org)
[SPF Sasakawa Peace Foundation](https://www.sasakawa-peacefound.org/en/)

---