

# **Marginalized Women Social Wellbeing through Enterprise Development: A Glimpse of Remote Women Status in Pakistan**

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## **Abstract**

Recent global political and economic development have started to force countries to shift from command economies to demand economies as leading nations of the world are building new political and economic institutions. These global challenges have created substantial economic opportunities for both the genders especially for women. Unfortunately, statistics from the underdeveloped and conservative countries exhibit numerous obstructions which limit the women participation in labor force and to play the role of opportunity entrepreneurs. Since, the gender imbalance that exists in these regions is stanchd from the traditional values and norms which downgrade women to a secondary status. Pakistan is one of the countries where the rural women are struggling to find a space for themselves to make a break-through as opportunity entrepreneurs for the purpose of enlivening their individual and family economy. Therefore, the present study is based on primary data collection from all four provinces of Pakistan by interviewing female entrepreneurs in order to identify the social, cultural, political and economic hazards which act as the impediments for their development as the opportunity entrepreneurs. In the light of exploratory research a mechanism will be proposed to help boost the entrepreneurial culture among the women entrepreneurs in Pakistan that eventually may result in improving the social wellbeing of the women status in the remote areas of Pakistan through enterprise development.

*Key words:* Entrepreneurship, Cultural and Social Support, Micro Finance

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## **Introduction**

The defining feature of entrepreneurship in today's global economy is the focus on change in women's lives, particularly political and economic empowerment that translates into access to financial resources, increased opportunity for education and training, power to affect decision in their communities, and independence in personal life choices. Women's entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Women are faced with number of impediments i.e. finances, cultural orientation, family set-up, market access and orientation, etc., which are limiting women opportunities to become a part of the business world specially in the under-developed and few conservative developing nations, yet the increased participation of women in business and other aspects of life in developed and developing nations is making them an emerging force that policy makers cannot afford to ignore. The world's modern economy, and in fact democracy, depends on the participation of both the genders.

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The field of entrepreneurship is centrally concerned with understanding “how opportunities to bring into existence “future” goods and services are discovered, created, and exploited, by whom and with what consequence”. Entrepreneurship research to date, however, has focused on a relatively narrow portion of this rich domain (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). The balance of attention has been directed towards explicating how business plans, marketing strategies, sponsorship and personal traits enable entrepreneurs to access and mobilize pools of resources to start new business, move into new lines of business, or promote new products, ideas, or processes that create wealth. Despite the fact that entrepreneurship is a context-dependent social process yet entrepreneurship researchers have largely neglected the broader social and cultural dynamics that embed start-ups.

Incursion of women into the labor force is the significant social change that world has started to witness during the last couple of decades. The rate of women participation varies from one country to another as women rate of labor force participation is high in developed and liberal nations like United States, Britain and Australia (Evans, et al 2000) and low in underdeveloped and conservative cultural nations like Pakistan. The explanation for these trends remains controversial, but key theories link it to fundamental and enduring changes in the economy or society. First, many follow Parson's arguments for a global "sea-change" in preferences, attitudes, and values accompanying modernization, or accept one of the many materialist and technological arguments about changes accompanying economic development. On these arguments, the value changes underpinning modernization and development undercut traditional sex roles by encouraging us to use the same standards to judge everybody (universalism) and, further, the content of those standards emphasizes academic and occupational achievement (achievement orientation). So women are free to hold values conducive to careers outside the home in the developed and liberal cultural economies.

In contrast to the developed nations, underdeveloped and conservative cultural economies are still struggling to benefit from the global social changes that have started to impact significantly on the development of their economies. Pakistan is no exception to bear the effect of these changes, which started to occur globally. The effect of the global social change has made the local authorities to ponder on the issue in order to formulate a regulatory framework to motivate the professional and household women entrepreneurs in Pakistan to become the economic agents. Unfortunately, in many developing and conservative countries, women are economically and socially handicapped in the society. Therefore, they face many challenges, as they do not enjoy the same social and economic empowerment opportunities as men. They are not only deprived of financial resources but also lack access to basic needs such as education, health, clean drinking water and proper sanitation. Limited access to the essentials of life undermines their capabilities; limit their ability to secure gainful employment, or hunting an opportunity as entrepreneur, and results in income, poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, the social discrimination among the urban and rural women in Pakistan complicates the social structure and completely jeopardizes the rural women growth patterns to grow as entrepreneurs. As a result of this cultural influence women residing in remote part of Pakistan are being socially caged, where women rebellion in breaking the social cage

would result in the form of their social isolation and considered a threat to their existence as women in a caged society.

Therefore, this study is based on primary data collection from all four provinces of Pakistan by interviewing female entrepreneurs in order to identify the social, cultural, political and economic hazards which act as the impediments for their development as the opportunity entrepreneurs. In the light of exploratory research a mechanism will be proposed to help boost the entrepreneurial culture among the women entrepreneurs in Pakistan that eventually may result in improving the social wellbeing of the women status in the remote areas of Pakistan through enterprise development.

### **Situational Background**

Pakistan is a federation of four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan) conjoined with the federal capital area, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to the 1998 census the total population of Pakistan is 132,352 thousands (68874 thousands Male and 63478 thousands female) and Average annual growth rate 2.69%. But the current total population of Pakistan is 155648500. Average household size is 6.8.

Since its inception Pakistan's economy is struggling to sustain and the poverty level in the country is increasing with every passing day. The recent proclaimed economic growth by the government does not justify the prevailing poverty conditions in the country. The digital divide among the rich and poor is making it difficult for many to survive and sustain as an individual and a family. As noted by (Coleman, 2004) Pakistan's economy has not sustained the growth rates required to reduce the country's dire poverty. There are several reasons of disappointing economic conditions ranging from excessive defense spending at the cost of human capital development to growing gender disparities, weak governance, corruption, political instability, sectarian violence and gender disparity.

Gender ratio in the country is a primary indicator of gender disparity. The issue of gender disparity in its two facets of female literacy and female workforce participation is linked directly with the economic growth of the country.

In Pakistan, literacy rate is very low and underinvestment in education especially girl's education in particular has been intensely noticed and reported, which is less than 30%. The gap between the male and female literacy is continuously widening. Coleman (2004) reports that in 1975 the literacy gap between men and women was 25 points (11% literacy for women vs. 36% literacy for men). By 2001 the gap increased to 29 points (29% literacy for women vs. 58% literacy for men) and this gap is expected to increase in the coming years. The government's efforts to reduce educational gap by introducing educational reforms in Pakistan failed for many reasons and as a result the illiterate Pakistanis has doubled since 1951, whereas the uneducated women have trippled due to population increase.

The second element of gender discrepancy that creates a collision on economic augmentation is female workforce participation. Unfortunately, in Pakistan the female workforce participation is reported as very low compared to other countries with same per capita GDP (Coleman, 2004). Low female literacy rate has been observed as a major obstacle to increased female workforce participation. Policy makers are continuously arguing that the increased female workforce participation would raise unemployment level in the country as women professional life span is very short due to the social set up of the country.

Gender disparity is considered a constraint on economic growth but the impact of islamization on economic growth is not fully determined yet. Pakistan's constitution guarantees equal rights to women and empowers the government to take affirmative actions to protect and promote those rights. However, over the years, parallel to the Pakistan's constitution islamic legal systems have been promoted which undermine those rights, like Federal Shari'a Court (FSC) in 1980. The discriminatory nature of Islamic legal reforms for women in Pakistan is obvious but the extend of its impact on women lives in improving their standard of living and economic development is hard to measure. The Islamic reforms impact has reinforced social control of men over women, limiting female bargaining power within family and their control over resources. All of this has resulted in the creation of an environment where violence against women is not sufficiently discouraged. The overall economic cost of this discrimination is the suboptimal resource allocation and lost female productivity. Policies that create gender disparities eventually reinforce the traditional, conservative role of women particularly in rural and remote areas with 70% of total population.

Development planning in Pakistan has generally remained hostage to the welfare approach which makes women the passive recipients of the various programs (Goheer, 2003). Women are an integral and indispensable segment of human society as they have complemented the men in every civilization and one can hardly ignore the multi-dimensional role of women in every society. She commands respect and honor in all religions (Tariq, 2002). In Pakistan's policy-making on women, problem identification is clear and strong but policy formulation is negatively influenced by macro-level political pressures, limited resources, and limited conceptual understandings. Micro-level implementation and evaluation are extremely weak. Hence, the pattern of decision-making on women, which becomes identified as a policy when it unfolds, appears inconsistent. Women's role in development has been neglected in Pakistan as the planners and policy makers have failed to recognize women as an essential ingredient of the development process. Women are considered as an isolated part of the isolated sectors rather than as integral to the development process. Though during the "90's women-in-development underwent an evolution as the new term was invented GAD (Gender-In-Development). Both of these concepts were referred to women development through gaining an understanding of women's access to resources and their control over resources. As a result of promoting these concepts gender sensitization and training started to gain momentum in Pakistan with a specific development focus on women. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, this conceptual shift is not proving to be productive because of ineffective government planning and focus on women development for various

reasons. The over all situation of Pakistan is not considered favorable for the women to freely participate in the labor force nor work as an entrepreneur in the open market structure. The business and opportunity environment for women in urban areas is relatively conducive as compared to the rural women; socio-cultural and socio-economic impediments jeopardize the women mobility in the rural parts of the country. Moreover, ignorance on the part of the policy makers to facilitate the creation of a favorable business environment for the rural women to participate in the labor force or grow as an entrepreneur is making the situation vulnerable for the women to sustain and survive in Pakistan.

The status of women in Pakistan varies considerably across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide due to uneven socioeconomic development and the impact of tribal, feudal, and capitalist social formations on women's lives (Bari, 1999). Historically, in the 19th century, feminist-sympathetic movements within the South Asian Muslim community tried to counter social evils against Muslim women through the custom of “Purdah” where women were forcibly isolated from social contact, primarily with men. Other Muslim reformers such as Syed Ahmad Khan tried to bring education to women, limit polygamy, and empower women in other ways through education. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was known to have a positive attitude towards women. After the formation of Pakistan, women's groups and feminist organizations started to form that worked to eliminate social injustices against women in Pakistan.

It was only after Zia-ul-Haq's regime, there was a notable change in the policy context in favor of women. The seventh, eighth, and ninth plans formulated under various democratically elected regimes have clearly made efforts to include women's concerns in the planning process. However, planned development failed to address gender inequalities due to the gap between policy intent and implementation. During the Benazir Bhutto regime in 1988 she voiced concerns over social issues of women, health and discrimination against women. She also announced plans to set up women's police stations, courts and women's development banks. She also promised to repeal controversial Hudood laws that curtailed the rights of women. However, during her two incomplete terms in office (1988-90 and 1993-96), Benazir Bhutto did not propose any legislation to improve welfare services for women. She was not able to repeal a single one of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization laws. By virtue of the eighth constitutional amendment imposed by Zia-ul-Haq, these laws were protected both from ordinary legislative modification and from judicial review. To improve the women stature in Pakistan several initiatives were taken by the government that resulted in the establishment of women's studies centers by the Ministry of women's development in Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar, but unfortunately due to the lack of financial and administrative support four out of five turned non-functional, only the center at University of Karachi was able to run with the financial support of Canadian International Development Agency. The First Women Bank was established to address the women's financial needs. It provided a credit line of Rs48 million to finance small-scale credit schemes for disadvantaged women. The enhancement of women's status was stated as one of the 16 goals listed in the *Pakistan 2010 Program during the Nawaz Sharif regime* (1997), a critical policy document. However, the document omits women while listing 21 major

areas of interests. Similarly, another major policy document, the "Human Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy" (1999), mentioned women as a target group for poverty reduction but lacks gender framework. Yet in Pakistan, the women's access to property, education, employment etc. remains considerably lower compared to men's. The social and cultural context of Pakistani society is predominantly patriarchal. Women have a low percentage of participation in society outside of the family specially the rural women in Pakistan are still in the process of awakening. Although the urban women in Pakistan are in the process of transformation as noted by (Ferdoos, 2006) Pakistani women status is not homogenous, there is a considerable diversity in the status of women across classes, regions and the rural / urban divide due to orthodox socio-economic development, impact of tribal, feudal and capitalist social formation on women's lives. The impact of these factors are the continuous negation of the women status and their role in the society. Especially in the rural areas where women are not allowed to educate themselves, join the work force, as their role is only limited to that of producers and providers in all social aspects. The problem being a women in Pakistani society is that, women's deprivation starts even before her birth, because "girl child" is not a wanted child, the whole society acts as an oppressor, browbeat her into obedience as referred by (Najam, 2006) in his report. The word "woman" in Pakistan is synonymous with "endurance".

The author further argued the strategies through which women's status in Pakistan can be lifted: Proper commitment of the local media (TV, Radio, Newspaper) that has the power to mold opinion with the unconditional government support, the evolutionary process where the mothers by being independent of religion, caste or creed can instill in their children from the very beginning, that both the genders are important and "honorable" and have the key role to play in the society.

### **Literature Review**

The concept "women entrepreneurship" is relatively new and under explored especially in the underdeveloped and developing economies. The relative significance of women participation in the labor force has already been established in the developed economies of the world but world is still searching to make a break-through in the under developed and conservative economies of the world to formulate a mechanism which could ensure increased women participation in the labor force and strengthening the phenomenon of women entrepreneurship. Several organizations have been working on the social and economic issues pertaining to women throughout the world, the issue of strengthening women socially and economically has attained the focus of the world authorities and world has started to ponder on the issue in order to strategize the facilitation for women to become a true economic agents.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is a research program that measures the difference in level of entrepreneurial activities between countries, existence of relationship between entrepreneurship and national economic growth, factors leading to higher level of entrepreneurship and so on. As revealed in GEM study (2007), status of women's entrepreneurship varies from country to country. There are several dominating factors that support and limit the women level of participation as an entrepreneur in their

respective countries. It was noted in the GEM study that countries with high women economic participation as entrepreneurs are those, where women's level of education goes up, especially beyond the secondary education. It was also discerned that the ratio of male-to-female entrepreneurship levels vary from country to country. It is almost equal in a number of developing countries such as India and Japan. But exceeds three to one in some European and developed Asian Countries such as Croatia, Singapore and Israel.

GEM classified entrepreneurship into two major classification and motivations for starting a business: **Opportunity Entrepreneurship**: Which is defined as perceiving a business opportunity (i.e. an entrepreneur elects to start a business as one of several possible career options.); and **Necessity Entrepreneurship**: Where an entrepreneur sees entrepreneurship as a last resort (i.e. they feel compelled to start their own business because all other options for work are either absent or inadequate.)

The findings of GEM study suggest that three in five entrepreneurs are opportunity entrepreneurs and the remaining two choose entrepreneurship out of necessity, but there is a difference by gender. Sixty nine percent of men are opportunity entrepreneurs with only thirty one percent citing necessity – Whereas in women only fifty six percent cite opportunity and the rest forty four percent are necessity entrepreneurs. Thus, almost half of women are entrepreneurs because of non-availability of any other option. Furthermore, economic development of a nation also has a significant impact on motivation for entrepreneurship among women. In developed countries opportunity entrepreneurship is more common among women, with higher level of participation of women in the labor force due to greater female entrepreneurship. On the other hand, in developing countries it is mostly a necessity that makes a women entrepreneur. The findings of the report stated that Opening and glooming the entrepreneurial potential of female sector could prove to be challenging in many cultures as women are in many underdeveloped and conservative nations are socially caged and not allowed to move freely. Thus, social barriers cause low rate of women participation in entrepreneurial process. Therefore, by addressing the social issues that limit the women participation in conservative nations successful women entrepreneurs, as role models, could play a major role in encouraging other women to participate in the entrepreneurial activity. Role model is most likely required in least entrepreneurially active countries and may play a significant role in overcoming the ethical limitations and gender discrimination. However, in case of developed nations, the major focus is to increase the entrepreneurial process whereas in the least developed and developing nation the major focus is on preparing the society to accept diversity.

The social make up in most conservative economies require women to stay at home and play the role of home makers, the diversity in women role is still a challenge for many developing and under developed countries, as (Markovic, 2007) discussed that, traditionally gender role was recognized and rewarded whereas no suitable gender and social support was given to women. Business women were abandoned and were misinterpreted, often criticized in their efforts to present themselves equally eligible and creditable among men. Advancement of conventional models of society form the mail-centered archetype in business leadership resulted in numerous global associations

established by women, whose mission was to struggle for equal women rights to work and to share equal cultural reimbursements in society.

Women in such engagements were considered as “mannish” or “with excess of male hormones”. These women were pulverized as deviant because they wanted to swap kitchen with office and other modern devices of daily work. They wanted to be better than conventional women. Moreover, the women who managed to struggle in opposition to the widespread world view, to fruitfully join the modern social stream in new ways were not rewarded appropriately and were not rated likewise and also were paid less for equivalent work in comparison to their male counterparts. They were disrespected and stepped over in employment chain of command. Moreover, they were given undistinguished and inferior standing purpose and were not given equal opportunity to demonstrate their exact endowment and their part in decision making was not considered essential.

Those who brawled for their rights to shatter gender margins were compelled to surrender their rights to start a family. Since in anticipation of a flourished business, it was very difficult to generate equilibrium between family and business. Therefore, in the absence of social support by the society many women had to turn their back on families and thus endured in their private lives. The other way out to this problem was that they adopt new structures of self employment - the home business. With the passage of time home based businesses had become most established form of work for women who want to hoist their children and at the same time want to realize their dreams as a flourishing business person. This success in home business has influenced the self-respect and self-confidence of women in an affirmative manner recently.

Even with sustained line of distinction between men and women, due to mounting partaking, it is still predictable that women will have more significant role in business startups and developments in many of the world’s economies. Thus, the contemporary business women will persist to ascertain new marks and accomplishment over time. Women entrepreneurial spirit has been noticed and seen through history where women have constantly been economically active. In year the 2000BC women raised cattle along with men, besides raising children, cooking and doing all other house hold activities. When cities developed then women started to work outside the house as market traders, nurses and so on. Not before 14th century in England and France women who knew some crafts were recognized by the same token as men. Only in 18th and early 19th century manufacturing started to recoil women to industrial fabrication.

Angothica, the first female doctor, in the world had to face many problems from the time she decided to study medicine to the instant when she started medical practice. However, later on due to initiative of some other female organizations, women were allowed to study and to be educated, which greatly improved their position at that time. In changing times there has been great change in the position of working women world wide. Still, there is no parity between salaries of men and women. Among the developed countries, women in Sweden have greatest rights and protection. But with the passage of time

things have changed a lot as now there are bright examples of many leading businesses managed by women such as Hewlett Packard, Boeing or Amazon.

In developed countries of Europe due to the configuration of various women's organization, the development of women entrepreneurs is given more initiation and promotion. The best known women entrepreneur organization in world is "the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs [BAWE]". A non profit organization in Great Britain "the European Federation of Black Women Business Owners" is an other big name in same arena. The basic aim of all such organizations is to build wide business network of women around the world. However, despite all their efforts a women has still to struggle to be recognized not only as a mother but also as a business leader so as to have equal place in the "business game "with men. Developing countries are slowly and steadily recognizing the reimbursement of promoting women in economic activities inorder to have positive development. Although, condition and position of women in developing countries have improved due to certain steps such as women organization and globalization but still women in developing countries are far behind as compared to their counterparts in developed countries in many aspects such as: education level, imposed family and social restrictions, male dominance in employee's hierarchy, under paid jobs and little growth opportunities as compared to men.

The disparity and discrimination by the society between the men and women is the longstanding delimma, this social discrimination over the period of time resulted in deteriorating the women socio-economic conditions and strongly influencing their social and family lives. The social discrimination has led to the establishment of an environment throughout the world that jeopardises the women growth as a creature equal to men. As indicated by (Thabethe, 2006) Deputy Minister of Trade & Industry South Africa during the conference "Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship" that South African women comprise 83% of the informal economy, this poses a huge challenge to all women to stand up and seek for business opportunities. Opportunities do exist for women in the hair and beauty salons, tourism and retail businesses through formulations of consortiums. In today's world success of national and world's economy depends indirectly on the women participation in revenue generating activities as they comprise half of the world population. However, many of women are unable to exploit these opportunities because they are still trapped in the lower echelons of the economy. The challenge world is facing now is to bring the women out of their defined shell in order to ensure their participation in the labor force to help grow the economy.

It was surprising to note the development, world has made in restoring the image and quality of a creature called women after 1979, prior to that immemorial women were considered as assets to men. This was a form of oppression and a sign of gender imbalance. After the 18th December 1979 International Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on gender inequality women internationally have now been recognized as contributors to the Nations Development. Therefore, all forms of oppression and discrimination are now considered as injustices against women's human rights and policies have been formulated internationally favoring

gender equality and fighting against illiteracy. After the period of oppression and many global and local changes occurring worldwide due to various reasons, many women have come up to join the Business and Industry, but majority of them are unskilled. Yet, they need to participate in the nation's social and economic development and due to lack of formal education, starting a business is the only option. This dilemma, where women are forced to opt the business or pattern of life which they are not capable of performing and maintaining is making them vulnerable especially in underdeveloped countries. Women are truly the assets to the world comprising half of the world's population and having impact on the growth of the other half, produce half of world's food supply but comprise only ten percent of world's economy and surprisingly own less than one percent of real estate (Mahtab, 2006). This phenomenon can be attributed to the gender biasness, that exists globally, where women have little access to production resources and negligible control over family income. Although women make a high level of investment in terms of time yet, women are marked "poorest of the poor". The globalization is starting to impact the world dramatically helping the economies to grow and expand yet 1.3 billion people in the world are living in abject poverty and it has been estimated that nearly seventy percent of them are women.

Over the last three decades, the issue of feminization has gained a dramatic popularity requiring the world to ponder and strategize on the issue. Women in the third world countries are socially and economically deprived and unfortunately the environment and social structure does not favor the women empowerment in these part of the world. Although, in Pakistan the government has tried to bring a positive change through the establishment of women Ministry and number of other initiatives to improve the socio-economic status of women in Pakistan, but the position of women has not improved up to the desired level. Poverty being the major problem in Pakistan followed by cultural and social hazards. The current state of economic development in Pakistan where poverty line is increasing and ineffective growth strategies are becoming the buzzword for each successive government. Part of the government strategies involve focus on engendering development i.e. focusing on women as an important economic factor which needs to be given emphasis in order to alleviate poverty, thus creating opportunities for women both economic and social would allow women to become larger contributor towards the national income. One such area for women to develop is self- sustained businesses or entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurship is not a new concept, but its implication vary from one nation to another nation, the system support and women entrepreneurship success is a story of developed economies but in transition economies this concept of women entrepreneurship is surrounded by problems. As described by (Ibrahim, 1996) that problems encountered by women entrepreneurship are marginalized in the marketing process. Women operating at micro level preferred to work at home. Women in the informal sector have little or no access to information about obtaining finance, discrimination against women in labor markets which exacerbates negative effects of women trade expansion. The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) emphasized on the significance of home-based women workers role in the economic development. As delineated by NCSW the women entrepreneurs falls in three categories

namely: self- employed, Casual workers and Home-based workers, who may either be, Family owned micro-entrepreneurs or Piece- rate workers.

The majority of the home based workers are either skilled, semi-skilled belonging to the different strata of the society. Therefore, the workers belonging to the upper stratum are usually the tax payers, being well placed and well connected and do not normally come across with substantial problem in their business. On the other hand, the home-based women workers belonging to lower middle and lower strata of the society representing a significant proportion of informal sector are faced with multiple problems ranging from finance to social and cultural, which makes them the most vulnerable group of the society. The research conducted by (Alvi, 1995) concluded about the rural women that women place in society and their role in the division of labor in production differs widely from region to region and also between different classes. It appears that rural women have to carry the burden of working on fields and domestic chores. It is in the urban context where women's contribution to the family economy has changed as compared to forty years ago. These changes seem to be having a greater impact on lower middle class families than upper middle class families and upper class ones. It might be said that lower middle class women are amongst the most oppressed of women in Pakistan especially the rural women who are being confined to "Purdah": veil and "Char Diwari" four walls of their homes. He further described that women belonging to the middle class families are being deprived of their right of education that could benefit them for respectable salaried jobs. Traditionally, they were relegated to the role of house wives but with increasing need to work and survive as a family, new avenues for exploiting the labor of these women have opened up. In this case entrepreneurs employ women agents who go around houses distributing orders and raw materials among the women to work and collecting the finished goods. Home based women workers denied the freedom of movement and relative independence, frustrated by their increasingly straitened circumstances and lack of freedom to freely move and make independent decisions.

It was noted in his research by (Hassen, 2004) that small scale women entrepreneurs in Pakistan play a significant role in the economic development but face greater obstacles than their male counterparts. Women's productive activities particularly in industry empower them economically and enable them to contribute more to the overall development of the country. The actual and potential contribution of women in all areas of development has already been recognized, but they also have a valuable contribution to make in the area of enterprise development. He further stressed that women entrepreneurs in achieving their full potential contributes to the economic growth and to the social and political development. But unfortunately in Pakistan women do not enjoy the same opportunities as men though progress has been achieved in opening doors to education and health protection but political and economic opportunities for women have remained limited. This is due to deeply rooted discriminatory socio-cultural values and tradition, embedded particularly concentrated in a few traditional areas and are characterized by low technology and low production levels. These areas are typically those which require skills that are extension of household skills and it reflect the need of educational and employment experience of women.

As pointed out by (Aslam, 2006) poverty in Pakistan is largely a rural phenomenon. There are several sectors which are left unattended and mismanaged by the government which have tremendous capacity to employ and self employ rural women. Handicrafts is one of these neglected sector in Pakistan as this sector is confronted with structural problems like financial, technical, management and marketing. It has been recognized world over that small-scale women entrepreneurs play a significant role in the development of the economy (Hassen 2002). Women productive activities in industry also empower them economically and enable them to contribute to the overall welfare of their families and largely the nation's economy. It requires serious assistance to women to utilize their full potential in order to contribute to the social and economic development of the country. Unfortunately, in Pakistan women do not enjoy the same opportunities compared to men. Though progress has been made in opening doors to women education and health protections but economic opportunities for women remain limited. This is due to the deeply rooted discriminatory culture, traditions, lack of information, lack of infrastructure facilities, lack of finances, lack of education and as a result women's full potential to contribute to the socio-economic development remained unapped.

The social discrimination limit the women independence and growth patterns in Pakistan, urban women in Pakistan have started to rise as professionals and entrepreneurs but their ratio comparing with men is still negligible. The growth opportunities for women in rural part of the country are very bleak as they are socially caged and discriminated largely by their male counterparts. Their basic rights such as education, health, access and control over finances and self-independence are being largely suppressed by the society and their families as these social traditions in rural part of the country determine the women way of life. In order to understand about the feelings of rural women about the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural hazards, this research aims at assessing impediments and their intensity which limit the women professional growth patterns in rural part of the country.

### **Data and Research Methodology**

In order to assess the intensity of socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural hazards experienced by the rural women entrepreneurs, research was carried out in selected cities of all four provinces of Pakistan. The cities were selected from the provinces based on the women participation level in commercial activities as entrepreneurs. The selections of the cities were done through an informal base line survey done with the help of local community based organizations. Research was carried out in phases in all four provinces; starting with NWFP where Abbotabad and Manshera districts were the selected cities, in Punjab where Bahawalpur and Multan were the selected cities, in Sindh where Karachi and its suburbs were selected to carry out research and finally in Balochistan where Quetta was the selected city. Based on the understanding gained during the informal base line survey in all four provinces, a detailed methodology was framed to successfully penetrate and access the women entrepreneurs residing in the remote areas of Pakistan for the purpose of generating first hand information:

1. For the base line survey key Informants were identified and recruited from the community based organizations (CBO's) working in these remote areas.
2. Informants were identified and recruited with the help of the Key Informants from the community. The plan to recruit the Informants was to access and mobilize the community.
3. Individual woman entrepreneurs were accessed initially in all the cities through the recruited informants from the community for the purpose of building rapport and unstructured interviews, where the women entrepreneurs in all four provinces were asked to highlight all those problems, which are considered impediments to growth as entrepreneurs (structured interview guide is annexed).

Women Entrepreneur: the target respondent is defined as women engage in the production of commodity or providing services for the purpose of releasing profit. This definition is different from the traditional entrepreneurship definition, but evolved specifically for this research to define the target respondents who participated in this research. In the absence of relative frame for choosing the appropriate statistical sample of women entrepreneurs' residing in remote areas of the country, respondent driven sampling technique was deployed to identify the women entrepreneurs. The details of the sample size and their geographical distribution are discussed below.

Total 872 women entrepreneurs were interviewed in all four provinces. Where, Abbotabad and Manshera cities were selected in NWFP to carry out the research, eighty eight women entrepreneurs were interviewed in NWFP, Bahawalpur and Multan cities were selected in Punjab where four hundred and thirty eight women entrepreneurs were interviewed, In Sindh and Balochistan, research was carried out in the suburbs of Karachi and Quetta cities where two hundred and six women entrepreneurs and one hundred and forty women entrepreneurs were interviewed respectively.

## **Results and Discussion**

Based on the individual interviews following information is pertinent to report

1. Rural women entrepreneurs in all four provinces belong to the bourgeoisie families and are fighting to sustain as an individual and together as a family. All these remote areas where these women entrepreneurs' are dwelling in are backward areas of the country and neglected by the political authorities.
2. These remote areas do not vary much in terms of their characteristic, as all these suburbs exhibited the miserable living conditions for the families dwelling in these areas.
3. Majority of the women living in these areas used to work in the houses of rich families doing their house chores against salary, but a decade ago the young generation preferred to work at their own instead of working in the houses against salary. The age gap between the young and the old in these remote areas are extending as sixty five percent respondents were aged between 20 –40, and thirty five percent were aged between 41 – 60. (Table 1)

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age**

Age Group	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
20 – 30	103 (23.51%)	21 (23.86%)	45 (21.84%)	25 (17.85%)
31 – 40	198 (45.20%)	38 (43.18%)	88 (42.71%)	49 (35%)
41 – 50	101 (23.05)	20 (22.72%)	56 (27.18%)	55 (39.28%)
50 and above	36 (8.21%)	9 (10.22%)	17 (8.25%)	11 (7.85%)
Total	438	88	206	140

4. The reported behavior patterns in the age groups of the respondents clearly signify the urge among the respondents to grow in their professional careers. It was learned during the interviews with the women entrepreneurs that majority of women entrepreneurs residing in the remote areas are the necessity entrepreneurs, who were compelled to start their own business because all other options for work were either absent or unsatisfactory.
5. The lack of opportunity environment for women in remote areas of the country is classified in terms of their low level of education. As data in Table 2 reveals that eighty five percent of all the respondents had either a primary level of education or did not go to school ever, sharing of information by women entrepreneurs during the interviews indicated that the social tradition in their areas are not women supportive as girls are not allowed to go out of their houses, so going to school and study is not possible.
6. As indicated by women respondents, recently, number of non governmental organizations are persuading the head of the families to send their kids to school and it seems that their efforts are starting to bear fruits yet the number of families who agreed to enroll their kids specially girls are few but gradually the trend of sending girls to school will pick up in these remote areas of the country. The efforts of the non governmental organizations may produce results in the years to come but the current situation demands immediate solutions in order to improve the women entrepreneur’s capacity residing in these remote parts of the county to sustain and grow as entrepreneurs.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

Level	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
Primary	273 (62.33%)	58 (65.90%)	98 (47.57%)	31 (22.14%)
Matriculation	61 (13.92%)	2 (2.27%)	34 (1.45%)	7 (5%)
Intermediate	2 (0.45%)	1 (1.13%)	21 (10.19%)	0 (0%)
No Schooling	102 (23.28%)	27 (30.68%)	53 (25.72%)	102 (72.85%)
Total	438	88	206	140

7. Women education level in these remote areas is severely affecting their level of income as depicted in Table 3, as they are unable to understand the dynamics of the complex business structure that prevails in the global business world and as a result they are left far behind than the urban educated women entrepreneurs.
8. The income level of the respondents in Table 3 shows their vulnerability as an individual to grow and survive as an entrepreneur. Ninety five percent respondent's income level fall below the minimum wage rate of Rs. 4600 set by the government during the last budget of 2007. All of their income is spent on the family who is struggling to survive and left with nothing to invest on the expansion of their enterprises or business.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Income Level**

Income Level in Pakistani Rupee	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
1000 – 2000	85 (19.40%)	20 (22.72%)	33 (16.01%)	31 (22.14%)
2100 – 3000	304 (69.40%)	56 (63.63%)	140 (67.96%)	97 (69.28%)
3100 – 4000	26 (5.93%)	8 (9.09%)	20 (9.70%)	9 (6.42%)
4100 – 5000	23 (5.25%)	4 (4.54%)	13 (6.31%)	3 (2.14%)
Total	438	88	206	140

9. The combined family structure of 76.6 percent as depicted in Table 4, requires on the part of the women entrepreneurs to spend most of the time doing the household errands and the remaining time is spent on the income generating activities. Though eighteen percent respondents in Punjab are only responsible for their own families and they lack funds and training to grow as mature entrepreneurs, unlike the urban women, who seek support from their families to grow as entrepreneurs. In remote areas, combined family structure is an added burden on the growth of the women entrepreneurs as their earnings are spent on the needs of the entire family.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Family Structure**

Family Structure	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
Independent	81 (18.49%)	23 (26.13%)	71 (34.46%)	29 (20.71%)
Combined	357 (81.50%)	65 (73.86%)	135 (65.53%)	111 (79.28%)
Total	438	88	206	140

10. The lack of understanding on the part of rural women entrepreneurs about the complex business environment and its interplay is causing serious damage on the women entrepreneur interest and confidence level to survive as an entrepreneur.

As depicted in Table 5, 76.2 percent respondents believed that the social and business environment prevailing in Pakistan is not favorable for women to grow as business women.

**Table 5: Distribution of Respondent’s Perception of Social and Business Environment**

Social and Business Environment	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
Favorable	89 (20.31%)	30 (34.09%)	56 (27.18%)	32 (22.85%)
Unfavorable	349 (79.68%)	58 (65.90%)	150 (72.81%)	108 (77.14%)
Total	438	88	206	140

11. 23.8 percent women entrepreneurs believed that business environment can be made favorable provided that the rural women are assisted, facilitated and trained in all required aspects. It was interesting to note that the business environment was rated favorable by those respondents who are living in their own independent capacity and not living in a combined family structure.
12. The role of skillful individuals in the growth of an economy can never be undermined. In order to get best out of these human resources the only effort authorities have to make is to regulate their income generating efforts stemming out of their skills. Local and multi-national organizations employ skillful employees to generate revenues through the production of goods and services demanded in the market. Researchers have also been discussing the role of small and cottage industry in the overall development of the economy. The dilemma with the Pakistani small and cottage industry is that it is operating without any regulation.
13. All the women entrepreneurs who were interviewed are very skillful, they possess skills which are not very common in the country and the demand of the products produced by them is high both locally and internationally. Unfortunately, they operate in isolation and in their own individual capacity, none of them is capacitated enough to penetrate in the larger market structure as an entrepreneur as revealed by the respondents during the interviews.
14. The promotion and marketing of the products produced by these entrepreneurs is dependent on the role of the middle men, who interact with the customers locally and internationally and collect orders and distribute among the women to complete the task. The major chunk of money in the form of profit is taken away by the middle men and the meager amount is left for the producer.
15. Table 6 reports the problems and their frequency as reported by the women entrepreneurs during the interviews. The intensity of the reported problems varies from one to another but all of them collectively are having a strong impact in their professional lives.
16. Respondents were asked during the interviews to highlight the problem(s) which they think is a hurdle(s) in their way to grow as entrepreneurs as depicted in Table

6. Respondents were also asked to specify the problems in terms of their intensity as perceived by them. Data in Table 6 is organized to reflect the perceived problem(s) in terms of reflecting the intensity in a descending order. 48.8 percent respondents mentioned that finance is the biggest hurdle and it is not possible to expand the horizon of their businesses without it. Respondents also believed that communication is a key to succeed in today's complex business environment; they feel very unfortunate that they were unable to educate themselves and now they feel as if they are outcasted from the social and business environment.
17. The social and cultural environment is also not conducive for the women to grow and prosper especially for the rural women, fourteen percent respondents mentioned that, we being the part of the male dominant society, it is very difficult for the women to freely operate in such a caged and structured environment, the rigid environment making the women vulnerable and weak as a creature and shatters the women ability to make independent decisions. In Pakistan the major reason for women specially the rural women not succeeding as a businesswoman is largely due to the lack of conducive and supportive working and growing environment.
18. The other problems revealed by the respondents were that they lack market orientation as there are no business centers in their local community so it is not possible for them to access the information that pertains to business. Moreover, they also feel that being a feminine creature they are incapacitated to handle the requirements of doing the business.

**Table 6: Distribution of the Problems Encountered by Respondents**

Problems	PROVINCE			
	Frequency (Percentage)			
	Punjab	NWFP	SINDH	Balochistan
Finance	153 (34.93%)	58 (65.90%)	118 (57.28%)	97 (69.28%)
No Market Orientation	40 (9.13%)	11 (12.5%)	21 (10.19%)	12 (8.57%)
Market Access	10 (2.28%)	1 (1.13%)	8 (3.88%)	5 (3.57%)
Family Set up	27 (6.16%)	5 (5.68%)	16 (7.76%)	19 (13.57%)
Education	73 (16.66%)	3 (3.40%)	9 (4.36%)	-
Old Age	9 (2.05%)	-	5 (2.42%)	-
Ability to Handle	8 (1.82%)	-	11 (5.33%)	-
Fear of Failure	11 (2.51%)	2 (2.27%)	8 (3.88%)	-
Cultural & Social Support	99 (22.60%)	6 (6.81%)	10 (4.85%)	7 (5%)
Feminine	8 (1.82%)	2 (2.27%)	-	-
Total	438	88	206	140

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research was carried out in the remote areas of the country with the primary objective to assess the intensity of social, cultural, political and economic hazards which act as impediments for women entrepreneurs in their development as the opportunity entrepreneurs. The concept of women entrepreneurship is moderately new and under-discovered in Pakistan. The women participation in labor force in developing and conservative nations is an area of concern for the authorities to ponder upon. Women increased participation in labor force and as entrepreneurs has contributed a lot in the development of developed economies of the world but the underdeveloped and conservative nations like Pakistan are still searching to make a break-through to motivate women to participate in the labor force or to become opportunity entrepreneurs.

In the light of information generated through first hand interviews with the women entrepreneurs in the remote areas of Pakistan, authors would like to make the following recommendations to the policy makers.

1. The ministry of women development in consultation with the ministry of education should reformulate an educational policy for women and girls' residing in remote areas of the country as education can strongly contribute to the success of women economic and social life.
2. The ministry of women development should discover means and resources required to support and encourage women's entrepreneurship especially in remote areas of the country, which include access to vocational education and professional training, business development services, credit facilities exclusively for women entrepreneurs on low mark up rates to promote the women entrepreneurship concept, information and communication technologies and training on the use of the technology, appropriate business premises and mobility.
3. Men occupy key positions in Pakistani economy and society and have the ability to bring about positive changes in the society, the government should take the initiative in collaboration with the selected non-governmental organizations working in remote areas to design social-cultural orientation programs for the families and male community leaders of remote areas in order to create awareness among the male members of the society to initiate change in order to gain support for the female enterprise development in remote areas of the country.
4. Business support centers to be formulated in remote areas of the country to provide the on-going business information to the women entrepreneurs residing in remote part of the country along with the services needed for women to coordinate their family and professional lives, including nurseries and transportation.
5. Government must improve the regulatory and lawmaking structure pertaining to women regarding the women property rights, mobility and the liberty to be an entrepreneur.
6. Government must initiate or enforce legislation against gender discrimination both in urban and rural areas of the country.

7. Government should fund researches related to women entrepreneurship in remote areas of the country for the purpose of assessing the current state of women entrepreneurship in order to generate factual information for the policy makers to make informed decisions.
8. Government must design the mechanism for creating awareness on the significance of women entrepreneurship and labor force participation especially in remote areas of the country in order to improve their family economies and the over all development of national economy.
9. Government must formulate a collective strategy and outreach campaign via community workshops, community leaders in remote areas of the country for the stakeholders to consider it important for women to take active part in revenue generating activities to positively contribute to the family and the national economy.

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## **Annex**

### **Interview Guide for Women Entrepreneurs Residing in Remote Areas of Paksitan**

- First name
- Age
- Level of education
- Income group (as specified in the beginning)
- Nature of work performed by you (specific skill)
- Best thing being a female entrepreneur
- Worst thing being a female entrepreneur

**Perception of Social Environment:** Your experience as a female entrepreneur and your perception of social environmental support

**Role of Education in Succeeding as Women Entrepreneur in Pakistan:** Your experience as a female entrepreneur and the significance of education in succeeding as n entrepreneur

**Role of Family Support in Succeeding as Women Entrepreneur in Pakistan:** How you see the role of family members in contributing to the success of women entrepreneur

**Nature of Problem(s) encountered by you as Women Entrepreneur:**

- Specify the problem(s) you are surrounded with being as women entrepreneur
- Specify the perceived impact of the problems in limiting the women entrepreneurs growth in Pakistan
- Specify the provision of facilities extended by the government, financial institutions and non- governmental organizations in supporting the growth of women enterprise development in Pakistan.

**Perceived Remedies**

- In what way you think the intensity of the problem encountered by you as women entrepreneur can be minimized
- How you see the role of government and non- governmental organizations in strengthening the women entrepreneurship development in Pakistan.

