# INTRODUCTION

# Introducing Entrepreneurship

The participation of women in entrepreneurship has been increasing day by day globally, and more so in Kenya. There have been significant contributions to advance women entrepreneurship in line with modern society expectations as economies grow at national and international levels (Agarwal et al., 2018).. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development stated that women entrepreneurs have been considered as a ‘major force for innovation and job creation’, and account for a third of all businesses in the formal economy worldwide. OECD further describes entrepreneurship as being at the heart of national and local economic growth, and that by innovating and seizing opportunities, entrepreneurs drive national and local economic change and competitiveness.

The word ‘entrepreneur’ comes from the French word ‘*entreprendre*’ which means ‘*to undertake*’. Since the 1700s, an entrepreneur is one who has the capability of identifying an opportunity and undertakes risks in order to achieve maximum satisfaction from a venture. The foundation of entrepreneurship steps from the characteristics of an entrepreneur and the way he/she does the entrepreneurship activities so as to identify market opportunities and utilize them for their enterprise (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017).

# Introducing Women Entrepreneurship

Women contribution in today’s world of small and medium enterprises (SME) is seen as a vehicle of entrepreneurship, contributing not only to employment, social and political stability, but also innovation and competition power.

Women are voluntarily participating in entrepreneurship. There are several success factors that play important roles in a woman’s entrepreneurship journey. Success is the sense of happiness cultivated by accomplishment of goals. Researchers have varying views about what determines success among entrepreneurs because of differences in the situations perceived by them (Agarwal et al., 2018). Studies show that psychological and personality traits of entrepreneurs, managerial skills and training of entrepreneurs, and external environment factors encourage entrepreneurs to achieve entrepreneurial success (Agarwal et al., 2018; Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Chowdhury et al., 2013; Tiwari & Goel, 2017; Ukil & Akkas, 2017). Other influences of the success of entrepreneur’s journey are the cognitive and emotional experiences as one performs tasks associated with venture creation and high growth (Schindehutte et al., 2006).

Kenya’s woman entrepreneur undergoes many limitations to successful growth of their enterprise. Access to finance; the regulatory environment; developmental opportunities; cultural and societal values; education and training; and family responsibility are the major challenges facing women entrepreneurs. So far, the government of Kenya has made major strides in promoting women empowerment through business and finance literacy initiatives. Commitment from social, economic, and political institutions in the country have encouraged pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunity. There is plausible literature on determinants of success of women entrepreneurs (Nieuwenhuizen & Kroon, 2002; Ukil & Akkas, 2017).

# Introducing MSMEs business growth, capacity, performance

Improving SME business capacity and performance is critical to increase the productivity of countries, regions, and cities, create jobs, reduce inequalities, and build a more resilient and sustainable growth. But there are many barriers to entrepreneurship that policy must address – obstacles in the regulatory environment, access to finance, exploitation of knowledge from research, skills for entrepreneurship, and ensuring that women, youth, and people from all social groups have an opportunity to create successful businesses. Societal attitudes and norms inhibit some women from even considering starting a business, while systemic barriers mean that many women entrepreneurs stay confined to very small businesses often operating in the informal economy.

Women entrepreneurs can be particularly motivated and effective at protecting the environment and promoting green business opportunities. According to World Bank, Worldwide, at least 30 percent of women in the non-agricultural labor force are self-employed in the informal sector; in Africa, this figure is 63 percent. Women-owned businesses tend to be informal, home-based and concentrated in the areas of small-scale entrepreneurship and traditional sectors, which primarily includes retail and service.

## Insights and lessons learned from ILO Women’s Entrepreneurship Development

Supporting women entrepreneurs’ associations can improve advocacy and services for women entrepreneurs. Developing a supportive environment for women’s entrepreneurship is important to women’s success. This includes helping women to deal with their multiple roles and involving men, families, and communities (as appropriate) in women’s entrepreneurship. Training in skills may not be enough, as many women lack confidence and belief in their entrepreneurial abilities. One answer is to bundle services such as combining business training with financial education, access to suitable credit and access to networks for women entrepreneurs through strategic partnerships and networking.

According to the World Bank, women-owned firms are growing at more than double the rate of all other firms, contribute nearly $3 trillion to the economy and are directly responsible for 23 million jobs. In developing countries, female entrepreneurship is also increasing—there are about 8 million to 10 million formal small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with at least one female owner. While the number of women operating their own business is increasing globally, women continue to face huge obstacles that stunt the growth of their businesses, such as lack of capital, strict social constraints, and limited time and skill.

In Kenya, while women are making major strides in educational attainment at primary and secondary levels, they often lack the combination of education, vocational and technical skills, and work experience needed to support the development of highly productive businesses (TVET initiative).

# Determinants for advancing steady growth

To address the challenges women entrepreneurs face, improving the level of business acumen and skill that a MSME owner has can be the key to their ongoing success. Offering training, resources and support to women entrepreneurs helps to grow and sustain their businesses. For example, training on how to keep track of accounts, handle taxes and understand compliance rules and regulations can enable focus on strategy and the long-range success of a business from writing a business plan to targeting specific markets, along with product innovation within business clusters.

Most business skills training for women-owned businesses include elements such as soft skills and life skills, flexibility, gender-sensitization of family and community, and networking.