

## Impact of Entrepreneurship on Economic Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs in Assam

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### ABSTRACT

*Entrepreneurship development through micro enterprise is an important factor for development of a nation. The movement of entrepreneurship promotion and development in the past few decades has gone a long way in North East India, particularly in the state of Assam. Moreover, North East is seen as a region where more women are involved in income generating activity than women of the other parts of the country. Women play an important role in the development of our country. Therefore, entrepreneurship development among women is a global issue. It is important for development of a family and social progress. This investigation was carried out in the state of Assam. Data were collected through interview method using structured interview schedule for selecting the sample of 120 women entrepreneurs engaged in the area of food processing and preservation.*

**Key words:** Entrepreneurship; Women; Entrepreneur;

In this dynamic world, women entrepreneurs are considered as a significant contributor for sustained economic development and social progress. They have become important players in the entrepreneurial landscape because micro enterprise is an effective instrument for economic development. Moreover, micro enterprises are small undertakings run by individuals or groups who take up the responsibility of managing the business and the family. These enterprises are based on certain characteristics like low capital, low technology, low risk and one or a few workers. Micro enterprises are also considered as an effective way of becoming economic independent, thus helps any one to achieve the predetermined goals. It also gives opportunity to lead a better life. There are evidences to believe that countries which have proportionately higher percentage of entrepreneurs in their population have developed much faster as compared to countries, which have lesser percentage of them in the society. It has been also accepted that entrepreneurship development through micro enterprise is an economic venture by which a large number of people can be changed upward within a short period of time especially from the point of view of employment generation. It is also true that an entrepreneur

is an agent of economic development of a country.

Therefore, women entrepreneurs need to be studied separately as they are recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. Besides it has been observed that number of women entrepreneurs are high in Assam than the national average and hence in today's scenario of developing nation like India, the growth of women entrepreneurship is very crucial for not only economic but also for social upliftment of the country. Hence, the present investigation is planned to have an insight of "Impact of entrepreneurship on economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Assam" with following objective-

- i. To study the status of enterprises run by women entrepreneurs.
- ii. To assess the impact of micro enterprise on economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

### METHODOLOGY

On the basis of advocacy services, training facilities, support services provided to the prospective and continuing entrepreneurs different organizations such as District Industrial and Commerce Centre (DICC), Micro Medium and Small Enterprise (MSME) and Indian

Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) were selected to collect the list of registered as well as unregistered women entrepreneurs for this investigation. The list of registered micro women entrepreneurs was collected from District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC) of the selected districts. On the other hand, the list of unregistered women entrepreneurs was collected from Micro, Medium and Small Enterprise (MSME) and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE). Final list of entrepreneurs was collected from these organizations which included both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs. This investigation was carried out in the state of Assam including three districts namely Kamrup, Lakhimpur and Jorhat district. Simple random sampling method was adopted for selection of the districts and proportionate random sampling method was adopted for selection of the respondents. Thus total number of sample was 120 which included both registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs engaged in the area of food processing and preservation. The research design adopted for the present study was exploratory and descriptive.

The collected data was coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The statistical techniques used for analysis of data were-Frequency and Percentage, Mean Score and Critical Randomized Design (CRD Analysis).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Proprietorship of business:* The data presented in the Table 1 reflected that all the respondents i.e. (100.00%) started their business by own proprietorship in the area of food processing and preservation. The findings can be supported with the findings of Reddy (2012). Majority of respondents believed that own engagement is very much essential for a business activity rather than a group involvement to achieve the business goals.

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to information of enterprise (N=120)**

Attributes	No.	%
<i>Proprietorship of business</i>		
Own proprietorship	120	100.0
Partnership	-	
<i>Ownership of Land</i>		
Own	114	95.00
Rented	6	5.00
<i>Source of fund</i>		
Assistance from funding agency	12	10.00
Own capital	108	90.00
Both	-	

*Ownership of Land:* It is interesting to note from the Table 1 that high majority of the respondents operated their business from own land wherever they were engaged in the enterprise area of food processing and preservation (95.00%). This findings reflected the intelligent decision making ability of the respondents to start business from their own house or land to save the rent fare because they preferred own land as a suitable place to manage both household as well as entrepreneurial activities.

*Source of fund:* Table 1 reflected that majority of the respondents started their business by investing own capital i.e. 90.00 per cent. This was followed by assistance getting from funding agencies which was 10.00 per cent. This finding can be supported with the findings of Janaki *et al.* (2013) where it was reported women entrepreneurs of Tamil Nadu preferred to invest own fund to start the business.

*Use of different machineries:* The data presented in the Table 2 highlighted the varied use of machineries in the area of food processing and preservation. The data revealed that more than half of the respondents (69.17%) used *Dheki* and cutter (34.17%) to prepare raw materials for preparation of products. This variation in machineries in this area might be due to amount of investment and also the type of products varies from respondent to respondent in the three selected districts.

**Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to use of different machineries (N=120)**

Category of enterprise	Machineries	No.	%
Food processing and preservation	Cutter	41	34.17
	Mixer	39	32.50
	Syrup mixing tank	11	9.16
	Sealing machine	37	30.83
	Weighting machine	12	10.00
	<i>Ural</i>	33	27.50
	<i>Dheki</i>	83	69.17

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to sources of raw material (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Retail Market	96	80.00
Wholesale market	15	12.50
Retail and Wholesale market	9	7.50

*Source of raw material:* The data furnished in the Table 3 showed that more than majority of the respondents (80.00%) selected retail market and a small per cent of

respondents (12.50%) selected wholesale market. It can be concluded from the findings that respondents selected different sources to buy raw materials according to their capabilities of production.

*Rice based products:* It can be observed from the Table 4 that a high majority of the respondents (95.00%) engaged in preparation of pitha (traditional cake). Nearly an equal per cent (93.33%) were found to be engaged in production of laddu while nearly three-fourth of the respondents (74.17%) prepared rice flour, followed by rice flake with 65.83 per cent. Puffed rice, kumolsawal and sandohguri was prepared by 51.57 per cent, 42.50 per cent and 40.00 per cent in the area of food processing and preservation. Moreover, raw materials required for preparation of rice products are easily available at reasonable price in the sampled area that inspired them to engage in the preparation of these processed items.

*Mustard products:* It is clear from the Table 4 that 37.50 per cent and 35.83 per cent of the respondents engaged in preparation of kharoli as well as kahundi in the area of food processing and preservation. Mustard products are mostly preferred by urban customers hence respondents included these items in their enterprises for gainful earning.

**Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to different products of Food processing and preservation (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
<i>Rice based</i>		
Laru/laddu	112	93.33
Pitha	114	95.00
Rice flour	89	74.17
Rice flake	79	65.83
Puffed rice	62	51.67
Kumolsawal	51	42.50
Sandohguri	48	40.00
<i>Mustard products</i>		
Kharoli	45	37.50
Kahundi	43	35.83
<i>Fruits / Vegetables</i>		
Jam	13	10.83
Jelly	13	10.83
Squash	13	10.83
Pickle	37	30.83

*Multiple response*

*Fruits / Vegetables products:* Table 4 also shows that a sizeable per cent of the respondents (30.83%) used to prepare different types of pickle and an equal per

cent of the respondents (10.83%) prepared jam, jelly and squash. The respondents prepared this product with locally available fruits and vegetables. Moreover, it demands special training to prepare preserved items such as jam, jelly and squash, so untrained respondents did not dare to prepare these items in large quantity that is why a very few respondents engaged in the production of preserved items and sold the products in the local market.

*Engagement of employee:* The data in the Table 5 indicated that a sizeable per cent of the respondents (40.00%) engaged daily wage labourer followed by regular employee (38.33%) and contractual employee (21.67%). This finding reflected that respondents commonly engaged employee on the basis of their production since it helps employee having no income and also to earn their living in a small way.

**Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to engagement of employees**

Category	No.	%
Regular	46	38.33
Contractual	26	21.67
Daily wage labourer	48	40.00

*Working hours of employees:* The data highlighted that less than half of the employees (45.83%) spent maximum 8 hours followed by 4-6 hours with 22.50 per cent. The longer hours of involvement could be most of the employees involved in during festivals time such as Bihu, Puja, Diwali and so on which required more time to produce different products in large scale.

**Table 6. Distribution of respondents according to working hours of employee (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
>4 hour	15	12.50
4-6 hour	27	22.50
6-8 hour	23	19.17
More than 8 hours	55	45.83

**Table 7. Distribution of respondents according to mode of payment to employee (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Daily	34	28.33
Weekly	7	5.83
Monthly	79	65.84

*Mode of payment:* The data in the Table 7 on mode of payment to employee shows that a large (65.84%) majority of the respondents selected monthly mode followed by daily mode of payment with 28.33 per cent.

This might be due to the fact that workers may prefer to take the money on monthly basis so that they can utilize in some useful works.

*Basis of selecting employee:* The data presented in the Table 8 highlighted that a large majority of the respondent selected employees on the basis of their experience (83.33%). This was followed by 3.33 per cent for the respondents. Because experience in the same line of activity encouraged employee for getting hold of a new idea for the present business.

**Table 8. Distributions of respondents according to basis of selecting employee (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Experience	100	83.33
Professional training	4	3.33
Educational qualification	5	4.17
All (Experience + Professional training + Edu. qualification)	11	9.17

*Basis of payment to employees:* Table 9 highlights that a large per cent of respondents (75.83%) paid employees on the basis of type of work they were allotted while 15.00 per cent paid according to pre and post production type of work followed by same amount of pay for different works with 9.17 per cent.

**Table 9. Distributions of respondents according to basis of payment to employee (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Type of work (production)	91	75.83
Varies with type of work (pre and post production)	18	15.00
Same for all	11	9.17

**Table 10: Distributions of respondents according to marketing of products (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Self	110	91.67
Middle man	4	3.33
Employee	6	5.00

*Marketing of products:* It is very interesting to note from the Table 10 that a large majority of respondents (91.67%) sold their products by themselves, while 5.00 per cent and 3.33 per cent engaged their employees and middle man to sell different processed and preserved products respectively. Financial benefit seemed to be a key factor for every business which was deeply realized by most of the respondents that influenced them to sale different products by themselves.

*Form of marketing:* It is observed from the Table 11 that a high majority of the respondents (93.33%) chosen retail form of marketing to sale processed and preserved products. A very small per cent of the respondents (2.50%) chosen wholesale and combined form of retail and wholesale marketing. This finding clearly indicated that respondent got economic security as well as generate surplus income by marketing their products in retail form.

**Table 11. Distribution of respondents according to form of marketing (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Retail	112	93.33
Wholesale	5	4.17
Retail and wholesale	3	2.50

*Place of selling:* The data in the same Table 12 also highlights that less than majority of the respondents (45.00%) selected expo/ trade fair to sale their products. Only 6.67 per cent selected outside Assam for selling their products. Most of the respondents were habitual to sale their products in an expo as they considered this as a targeted place for their products to earn profits.

**Table 12. Distributions of respondents according to place of selling (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Own village	18	15.00
Outside village	40	33.33
Outside Assam	8	6.67
Expo/Trade fair	54	45.00

*Mode of transportation:* The data with regard to the mode of transportation is presented in Table 13 indicated that more than half of the respondents used public transport (81.67%) to market their products. This was followed by private transport i.e. 18.33 per cent. Hence majority of respondents selected this mode of transportation as a cheapest way to market different products.

**Table 13. Distributions of respondents according to mode of transportation (N=120)**

Category	No.	%
Public transport	98	81.67
Private transport	22	18.33

*Impact of micro enterprise on economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs:* To assess the impact of micro enterprise on economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs, Completely Randomized Design

**Table 14. Impact of micro enterprise on different aspects of economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs**

Economic factors	Mean index
Control over income	25.00
Purchase of household property	11.00
Involvement in household decisions	19.00
Availing loan	12.00
Repayment of loan	10.00
Engagement of labour	16.50
Opening of own account	25.00
Operating the account	17.50
Contribution in education	13.50
Contribution in health	12.00
Contribution in food	17.00
Contribution in clothing	39.50
Contribution in ceremonies	8.00
SEm	9.56
CD	17.02

Analysis (CRD) was used which reflected the maximum influencing factors in the area of food processing and preservation were contribution in clothing, control over income and opening of own account followed by involvement in household decisions, operating of own account and contribution in food. This finding revealed that after becoming an entrepreneur women became economically empowered to control of their income, able to contribute in household decision, purchase of household property, opening and operating own account,

contribution towards education, health and clothing and also in social functions.

## CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurs have increasingly played an important role in spurring job creation and economic development. Therefore, growth of women business owners and their needs cannot be overlooked. There is a large scope for entrepreneurial involvement as it provides employment, generates income, wealth and act as a key force for economic growth of a region. So it is necessary to encourage women to enter in the gainful profession of entrepreneurship. Because entrepreneurship plays an eminent role in creating an employment opportunity for rural communities. The findings of this study have implications for entrepreneurs as well as the policymakers who work for the improvement of entrepreneurs. The study also concludes that there was an increase in self-confidence, self-reliance and independence of rural women due to involvement in the entrepreneurial and other activities. Now women entrepreneurs are aware of opportunities available to them, but there is scope for further improvement in it. The economic status of the women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development and therefore it becomes imperative for the government to frame policies for development of entrepreneurship among women.

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