

## International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 7; Issue 10; October 2024; Page No. 28-31

Received: 12-08-2024  
Accepted: 15-09-2024

Indexed Journal  
Peer Reviewed Journal

### Entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges for women in agriculture: A study in Jorhat district of Assam

<sup>1</sup>Maitrayee Dutta and <sup>2</sup>Pallabi Bora

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D Scholar, Department of Extension Education, CA, AAU, Jorhat, Assam, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Extension Education, CA, AAU, Jorhat, Assam, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2024.v7.i10a.1185>

Corresponding Author: Maitrayee Dutta

#### Abstract

If you move a woman forward, her family will go ahead, a village will go ahead, then the nation itself will move forward and when it comes to entrepreneurship, women are one of the most important untapped resources as said by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Women entrepreneurs have been recognized as an important source of economic growth. They shape the economy, create wealth and jobs by inventing new products, processes and services. We all know that the economic development of modern women is important for any country, especially a country like India. About 70% of the population live in rural areas and relies on agriculture for food. With the help of various governmental and non-governmental agencies, growing numbers of women are joining the ranks of entrepreneurs. However, entrepreneurial women are overburdened in the existing familial and societal setup and find it increasingly difficult to balance their work and life roles. Therefore this study was initiated to explore the entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities faced by women involved in the agricultural sector. A structured schedule was prepared to determine the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector with a total of 120 women entrepreneurs of Jorhat district selected as respondents for the study. The challenges were determined with the help of Problem Confrontation Index (PCI). Based on the analysis, it was found that, it has been found that lack of time due to family burden was the first challenge faced by the respondents with PCI score of 299 and rank 1. Lack of mobility was the first important social challenge faced by the respondents with PCI score of 315. High cost of required machineries or equipments was the first important challenge faced by the women respondents with PCI score 288. Among the marketing challenges, lack of demand in the local market is the first important challenge faced by the women respondents with PCI rank I.

**Keywords:** Women, entrepreneurs, challenges, Jorhat

#### Introduction

Entrepreneurship is recognized globally as a vital and progressive concept within the business realm (Scott, 1986) <sup>[11]</sup>. It plays a crucial role in globalization and in creating diverse opportunities for future talent (Mitra, 2002) <sup>[8]</sup>. Defined as a dynamic process of generating wealth, entrepreneurship involves the intentional efforts of individuals or groups to establish and manage profit-oriented businesses that produce or distribute economic goods and services (A.H. Cole). This process not only allows individuals to become self-employed but also creates jobs for others. The individual engaged in this process is known as an "entrepreneur" (Dutta, 2016) <sup>[3]</sup>. The collective activities undertaken by entrepreneurs to launch a business are referred to as entrepreneurship. Essentially, entrepreneurship is the act of establishing a business enterprise, fostering self-employment, and driving economic growth. Small-scale entrepreneurship helps to distribute wealth more evenly, contributing to balanced economic development. In many countries, developing entrepreneurship is seen as a key strategy to promote self-employment, sustain economic growth, and enhance industry competitiveness in the context of globalization and liberalization.

Historically, entrepreneurship has been dominated by men, but times have changed, and women have emerged as some of today's most notable and inspiring entrepreneurs. Currently, women entrepreneurs make up approximately 10% of all entrepreneurs in India, with this figure steadily increasing each year. If current trends continue, it is projected that women will account for 20% of the entrepreneurial workforce within the next five years. Educating and empowering women has repeatedly demonstrated its role as a catalyst for swift socio-economic growth. Economic development and gender equality are interconnected; reducing the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, both domestically and globally, will foster national growth. (Eswari, 2019) <sup>[4]</sup>. Entrepreneurship is no longer limited to one gender; economic pressures have driven women to recognize that their families survival and their own potential depend on working alongside men (Marlow, 2002) <sup>[7]</sup>. Education has significantly boosted women's confidence and encouraged them to explore new business opportunities. However, challenges can vary greatly based on geographical context. Globally, women are often viewed as the weaker sex, both physically and emotionally, which leaves many avenues for their development as business professionals largely

unexplored and in need of attention (Wennekers, 1999)<sup>[13]</sup>. The importance of women entrepreneurs in economic development has been recognized since the 1990s in various regions. In the business world, female entrepreneurship has become a vital movement in many countries and is now accepted across different sectors. A United Nations report highlights that economic development is closely linked to women's advancement; nations that support women's progress tend to experience steady economic growth, while those that restrict women's roles often face stagnation. This study aims to examine the involvement of women in the economic upliftment of the country as a whole.

In India, entrepreneurship has historically been viewed as a male domain, with women often confined to domestic roles as housewives. They juggled multiple responsibilities at home, serving as mothers, wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law, while male family members were the primary earners. However, this dynamic began to shift as families increasingly sought additional financial support to improve their status and provide education for their children. Recognizing this need, women started to step beyond traditional boundaries, taking on equal financial and social responsibilities alongside their male counterparts (Nagamuthu *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[9]</sup>.

Today, Indian women are making significant strides in every field of income generation, from labourers to agribusiness entrepreneurs. They are engaging in various entrepreneurial activities, including crop production, poultry, and livestock production, often with the support of different government schemes (Singh *et al.*, 2022)<sup>[12]</sup>.

Women entrepreneurs in Assam face numerous challenges, with societal attitudes and support playing a vital role in their success (Dutta, 2016)<sup>[3]</sup>. The social and cultural expectations placed on women can increase their burdens, as they must balance household responsibilities with managing their businesses. Considering these factors, a study was conducted in the Jorhat district of Assam. This area is less industrially developed than others, making it an ideal setting for exploring women's entrepreneurship. The research aims

to identify the factors that motivate women to become entrepreneurs, the obstacles they encounter, as they pursue success. This study stands out in social research, providing valuable insights into the development of women's entrepreneurship.

### Methodology

The current study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. Two villages namely, Naam Deuri and Alengmora from Dhekorgorah block of Jorhat district with a total of 120 women entrepreneurs were for the study. Open-ended questions were employed to determine the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs. The collected data were meticulously tabulated and subjected to analysis using appropriate statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and rank.

### Results

In the modern day, there is a great need for women entrepreneurs. Therefore several factors are responsible for compelling the women members of the family to set up their own enterprise.

These factors suggesting their need can be broadly classified into two groups:

1. Motivational factors
2. Facilitating factors

#### Motivational factors

- Economic necessity
- Independence
- Government encouragement
- Desire for High achievement
- Does not tolerate disagreement

#### Facilitating factors

- Adequate financial facilities
- Innovative thinking
- Support and cooperation of the family

**Table 1:** Motivational and facilitating factors of women entrepreneurs

A Sl. No	Motivational factors	Women frequency		
	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree to some extent	Do not agree
1	Economic necessity	82	15	23
2	Independence	90	10	20
3	Government encouragement	85	15	20
4	Desire for High achievement	88	16	16
5	Does not tolerate disagreement	76	27	17
<b>B) Facilitating factors</b>				
1	Adequate financial facilities	94	20	6
2	Innovative thinking	98	20	2
3	Support and cooperation of the family	100	15	5

**Table 2:** Challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs which are as follows

Sl. No	Challenges	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	PCI	Rank
<b>A. Personal challenges</b>						
1	Lack of time due to family burden	74	31	15	299	I
2	Lack of self confidence	56	42	22	271	II
3	Lack of knowledge on new technology	76	25	19	297	III
4	Lack of communication with fellow farmers	85	4	21	284	IV
<b>B. Social challenges</b>						
1.	Lack of mobility	88	19	13	315	I
2.	Lack of social support	73	28	19	294	II
3.	Access to network	77	24	19	298	III
4.	Lack of support from family	62	35	23	279	IV
<b>C. Financial challenge</b>						
1.	High cost of required machine or equipment <i>etc</i>	68	32	20	288	I
2.	Lack of own capital	76	23	21	295	II
3.	Lacking institutional challenge	66	25	29	277	III
<b>Marketing challenges</b>						
1	Lack of demand in local market (same Taluka / District)	80	25	15	305	I
2	Lack of proper Transportation	76	25	19	297	II
3	Competition from huge organizations	68	32	20	288	III
4	Lack of Marketing competency	55	39	26	269	IV

From the above analysis, it has been found that lack of time due to family burden was the first challenge faced by the respondents with PCI score of 299 and rank 1, followed by lack of self confidence, skills etc. with rank II which is in line with the findings given by (Cheston and Kuhn, 2002 <sup>[2]</sup>; Akanji, 2006 <sup>[1]</sup>; Kuzilwa, 2005) <sup>[6]</sup> and lack of knowledge on new technology with rank III. Lack of communication with fellow farmers was the 4<sup>th</sup> challenge faced by the respondents with PCI 284.

Lack of mobility was the first important social challenge faced by the respondents with PCI score of 315, followed by lack of social support and lack of access to network with PCI rank of II and III respectively.

High cost of required machineries or equipments was the first important challenge faced by the women respondents with PCI score 288, followed by lack of own capital is the second important challenge among the financial challenges with PCI score of 295 and rank 2. Lack of institutional challenge is the least challenge among the financial challenge with PCI rank III.

Among the marketing challenges, lack of demand in the local market is the first important challenge faced by the women respondents with PCI rank I. Lack of proper transportation and competition from the huge market is the II and III important challenge faced with PCI rank of II and III respectively, which is in line with the findings given by (Nayyar *et al.*, 2007) <sup>[10]</sup>. Lack of marketing competency is the last important challenge among the marketing challenges with PCI score 269 and rank IV.

### Suggestions for Changing the Opportunities into Challenges

Women should recognize and adopt new strategies for achieving a balance between work and life. There needs to be ongoing efforts to inspire, encourage, and support women entrepreneurs. Mass awareness programs should be implemented to educate women about various business opportunities. Women entrepreneurs should take the time to study and understand the unique challenges they face in the business world. The government should offer training programs to enhance skills in management, leadership,

marketing, finance, production processes, profit planning, and bookkeeping. These initiatives will motivate more women to start their own businesses. Women should participate in training programs, seminars, workshops, and conferences, which can help mitigate the challenges they encounter. It's advisable for women to begin their businesses at the micro or small level and allow them to grow gradually.

Additionally, women in business should be offered soft loans and subsidies to encourage their engagement in industrial activities. Financial institutions should provide more working capital support for both small and large ventures. Educational institutions should collaborate with various governmental and non-governmental organizations to facilitate entrepreneurship development, particularly in planning business projects. (Gaur *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### Conclusion

Several research papers highlight various challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, including the struggle to balance family and career, socio-cultural barriers, a male-dominated society, low levels of education, limited access to financial support, lack of technical skills, marketing knowledge, self-confidence, and mobility issues. It's time for women to break free from the burden of housework and embrace their creativity and entrepreneurial potential. Social and political changes in India have significantly influenced women's roles in a transforming society. Government schemes, incentives, and subsidies have provided crucial support for women entrepreneurs. As more women pursue education, there is a growing awareness and desire for self-employment, leading to a shift in women's roles within society.

### References

1. Akanji OO. Microfinance as a strategy for poverty reduction. Cent Bank Nigeria Econ Financ Rev. c2006;39(4).
2. Cheston S, Kuhn L. Empowering women through microfinance: a case study of Sinapi Aba Trust, Ghana. USA: Opportunity International; c2002.

3. Dutta S. Women entrepreneurship development through self-help groups in Assam. In: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research & Practice; c2016. p. 315-318.
4. Eswari GA. A study on role of women in economic development in India. *Shanlax Int J Econ*. 2019;7(4):41-45.
5. Gaur S, Kulshreshtha V, Chaturvedi R. Challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India. *Int J Res Anal Rev*. 2018;5(3):396-403.
6. Kuzilwa J. The role of credit for small business success: a study of the National Entrepreneurship Development Fund in Tanzania. *J Entrep*. 2005;14(2):131-161.
7. Marlow S. Women and self-employment: a part of or apart from theoretical construct? *Int Entrep Manag J*. 2002;3(2):83-91.
8. Mitra R. The growth pattern of women-run enterprises: an empirical study in India. *J Dev Entrep*. 2002;7(2):217-237.
9. Nagamuthu G, Maheswari RU. Challenges constraining women entrepreneurs in the small-scale retail sector of Coimbatore district; c2018.
10. Nayyar P, Sharma A, Kishtwaria J, Rana A, Vyas N. Causes and constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial process. *J Soc Sci*. 2007;14(2):99-102.
11. Scott CE. Why women are becoming entrepreneurs. *J Small Bus Manag*. 1986;24(4):37-45.
12. Singh S, Rana A, Sharma N, Kumar M. A review on women agri-entrepreneurship: roles and opportunities in agriculture for sustainable growth in India. *Humanities*. 2022;10(2):56-67.
13. Wennekers S, Thurik R. Linking entrepreneurship to economic growth. *Small Bus Econ*. 1999;13(1):27-55.