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Entrepreneurship: Empowerment and Development Still far-off Mark

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ABSTRACT

"Khalifer Haat, a place 12 kilometers from the district town, has much potential with the Hogla (reed) industry, if properly patronized. Most of the people among the 30,000 inhabitants of the area in some way connected with the cottage industry as their ancestral occupation as the unique species of reed is found in plenty here. At least 3,000 men were engaged in Hogla cultivation. Farmers said they did not have to toil much to cultivate Hogla; if they sowed the roots in the rainy season, the land would become huge bushes of Hogla to be reaped by the month of July. Moreover they could make tasty foods like Vapa Pitha (a kind of steamed rice cake) with the powder made from the bottom of Hogla flowers collected during July. This Hogla powder sells at Tk 25 per Kilogram. Khalifer Haat is the major market of different products made of Hogla reeds. The wholesalers export Hogla products to Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rangpur and other parts of the country from here. Some allege that the products are being smuggled to India, mainly by the Indian Khasia Adivasi women. At least 10000 women were engaged in the Hogla cottage industy. Various products could be made with Hogla reeds but the artisans made only Chatais (local mat), hand fans and brooms due to a lack of proper training. Amena Begum (50) a Hogla crafts woman, said they could make upgrade and luxury products if they were properly trained and provided with a market facility. Many NGOs are working in this region for long time but they overlook the artisans' need"

After more than three decades of national independence, the majority of women in Bangladesh is still facing tremendous gender barriers and entrapped by impoverishment. In recent years when micro-credit has been increasingly under criticism for not reaching the poorest of the poor, more questions have been raised as to whether micro-credit alone would suffice as an effective strategy for assisting women entrepreneurs to achieve business successes without the necessary physical capital and social capital, especially in terms of a growing, extensive personal and social network with long-term trusting and reliable relationships (The Daily Star July 21, 2005).

Keywords: Women in Development, Micro-Enterprise, Micro-Credit, Poverty Alleviation

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is the primary economic problem in Bangladesh. The real challenge in poverty reduction is to create conditions among the rural and urban poor so that those afflicted by poverty can steadily create assets, increase income opportunities from new or their existing activities, and retain their gains. The project focuses on rural improvised women who are the poorest of the poor, and examines how their potential economic livelihood could be improved and sustained by using of micro-entrepreneurial activities.

Despite the introduction of micro-credit in the early 1980s by the Grameen Bank and its subsequent replications, rural poverty remains a major problem for every single local council in Bangladesh. In spite of some of the successes, researchers and consultants also agree that micro-credit is not the only way to alleviate poverty in rural society. Instead, they suggest that micro-enterprise would be a better alternative as it involves a larger number of unemployed people while reducing poverty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The project define entrepreneurship as a process of innovation through the recognition of business opportunity (which requires managing the risk of business), and through the communicative and management skills to mobilize the human, financial, material, and social resources necessary to achieve the challenging goal of a competitive market.

There are, however, a range of views about what an entrepreneur actually is and does. For example, Cantillon (1680-1734) defines entrepreneurs as those who are willing to buy at certain prices (cited in Blaug, 1986), and for J.B. Say (1776-1832) entrepreneurship consists of integrating factors of production into an organization. For Smith (1776), an entrepreneur is a confused capitalist with a tendency to view economic progress as automatically increasing. The neo-classical economist Knight (1921) outlined entrepreneurship as a risk, uncertainty, and profit. According to Casson (1983), an entrepreneur is a person who specializes in making decisions about how to coordinate scarce resources, and Kirzner (1997, cf.1973) represents entrepreneurship as alertness towards profit opportunities. Rosenstein-Rodan (1957) argued that a high quantum of investment is required to build entrepreneurs and that the small size of a domestic market contributes to formulating investment for private enterprise. In contrast, Leibenstein (1957) stated that rising consumption per capita would contribute to maintenance of capital stock and that would generate sufficient net savings to

further growth. Myrdal (1957) stated that larger markets have the tendency to generate financial capital and flow into those private enterprises where cost structures and market prospects look most promising and have relative income elasticities. In contrast, Hirschman (1958) argued that underdevelopment is created by a lack of key factors such as low savings, entrepreneurship, or skilled labour. Hirschman contends that entrepreneurs should be considered as the skilled labour of a country and that they control the organizational and managerial skills that are in scarce supply. Lewis (1958) argued that casual employment could contribute to entrepreneurial development. Schumpeter (1911) has also contributed to notions of entrepreneurship. His focus was to modify economic life from the standpoint of an economic mode's dimensions towards an equilibrium, which automatically determines the price and quantity of goods. Schumpeter assumed that if one initiative changes economic life then economic growth would increase in equilibrium. Innovation explored not only the radical concept of entrepreneurial function but also emphasized the human factor at the centre of the economic development process (Khan, 2001). Schumpeter argued that social and moral status is crucial for entrepreneurial development. However, his entrepreneurial concept failed to develop concrete guidelines for how entrepreneurs should behave (Swedberg, 2000), or to incorporate sociological theories about entrepreneurial development.

Weber (1930), in contrast, used sociological perspectives to focus on the entrepreneur's personality, where charisma could entice others to follow by virtue of their extraordinary personality. Weber's legal-rational hypothesis suggests the entrepreneur should consider the product's legal right and he or she must observe the market rationally. In contrast, Lipset (1963) demonstrated that cultural values deeply affect entrepreneurial growth. Swedberg (2000) claimed that entrepreneurship can be conceptualised as a social movement that leads to economic development. Tajfel (1978) explained society as composed of social groups that stand in power and status relations to one another and identified how the group structure as important in promoting entrepreneurial activities. Social mobility in social position contributes to social creativity, hence a person who is in a lower socioeconomic position may promote their position in society through entrepreneurial activities (Turner, 1985; Worchel et al. 1998). Uquillas and Rivera (1993) noted that indigenous people have rich raw material and products for developing their economic condition (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Waldinger, Aldrich, & Ward, 1990). Wong (1988) argues that the influence of family on the internal organization especially in terms of paternalistic managerial ideology and practice of nepotistic employment and family ownership, have a positive impact on entrepreneurial development. All the above authors suggest that social and institutional settings are significant for the rise of successful entrepreneurial activities.

As the financial structure of small enterprises is predominantly equity based enterprises can face insufficient capital to expand their growth (Rahman, 1978). For example, small enterprises are often refused working capital from formal

financial institutions due to perceptions of their bad location, marketing problems, incomplete applications, and unattractive products, refusals which have led to the closure of thousands of small enterprises in Bangladesh (Khan, 1980). Hence, the rural industries of Bangladesh need collateral-free finance from formal and informal financial institutions. And, to ensure smooth financial supply they also need the restructuring of financial lending procedures (BIDS, 1981).

Habibullah (1984) has identified that credit supply is inadequate to develop small enterprises in Bangladesh. Ahmad et al. (1984) conducted an extensive study on rural industries in which they highlighted that management, innovation and initiation of rural entrepreneurs are at a very low level, Muslims who entered into business after independence have shown minimal business zeal and entrepreneurialism, there is a non-availability of raw materials, consumers' prefer foreign goods rather than homemade goods for design and quality, there is a lack of marketing agents, and rural industries have been integrated into small, medium and large industries. Yet Akhtaruddin (2000) has also identified that geographical variances, responsiveness and adoption of education, technology, and the trading profession have a positive impact on entrepreneurial development. And, interestingly, micro-entrepreneurs frequently involve their family members in production and trade transactions, which reduces unemployment in rural society (Quddus, Bijoy, Begum, & Jahangir, 1996).

More positively, Chowdhury (2005) notes that women have physically and psychologically oriented to develop small and cottage industries with indigenous raw materials. Institutional arrangements from government organizations (GOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) contribute to developing small industries in rural areas, which reduce the numbers of unemployed youths in Bangladesh (Mannan, 1993). And Rahman (1993) has identified that small enterprises set up near the capital, port or in a place where air, sea and land facilities are easily accessed more easily achieve financial success, and that credit is an important input for the development of rural small industries in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Latif and Chowdhury (1997) concluded that parental occupation, working experience, and general and technical education have an impact on the emergence of entrepreneurship.

After independence all successive governments introduced several policies for entrepreneurial development but, despite the positive views expressed above, those policies and programmes failed to develop a desirable business environment for many small entrepreneurs in Bangladesh (Saha, 1990). Private support agencies in Bangladesh are performing better than public supporting agencies to promote entrepreneurial development (Sarder, 2000). Female beneficiaries of NGO projects are facing comprehensive marketing problems in selling their products and earning money for their livelihood (Rahman, 1990). Islam (1992) has concluded that a low level of interactive components and motivational traits contributed to the closure of small firms in rural areas. Business education has not reached rural poor women in Bangladesh, which contributes to management problems in small firm closures

(Begum, 1992). A comprehensive study conducted by Quasem, Mondal, and Mahmud (1997) highlighted that the policy framework of government, legislative support, access to credit, land, raw materials, work sites, labor, low scale technology, and information contribute to the lack of success of entrepreneurial endeavors in Bangladesh. Begum (1993) noted that female entrepreneurs' ambitions, family support, and credit facilities are the main obstacles to their entrepreneurial development in Bangladesh. In subtle contrast, Saleh (1995) noted women entrepreneurs were successful in terms of sales, profitability, and number of employees but were not supported by government policies and programmes, whereas Mia (1995) concluded that failure to develop informal networks and establishing linkages with formal financial and non-financial agencies closes down small entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. Women's failure to develop informal networks is an important point as Khan (2000) noted that trust is the basic element of entrepreneurial success in Bangladesh.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research is an exploratory study on how entrepreneurship development, assist rural and urban men and women to improve their livelihood and social well-being. According to Brewer and Hunter (1989), the benefits of using multiple methods can be numerous. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. While the former derives from a positivist approach to epistemology that asserts there is an objective reality which can be expressed numerically with many quantitative approaches as a consequence being experimental in nature, and preoccupied with measurement and correlation (Glatthorn, 1998) the latter emphasize a phenomenological stance which advocates the value of sensory perception, and often focus in turn on the meanings of recurrent situations (McMillan, 1996).

There are three kinds of qualitative data (Patton, 1990, Golden-Biddle, 1997). Firstly, in-depth open-ended interviews with individuals or groups; secondly, direct observation and description of people's activities, behaviours, actions, and interactions, with this including the analysis of audio and videotaped material, written data such as excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records, as well as of personal diaries, official records, and publications; and thirdly, open-ended written responses to questionnaires. The main methods used to collect these data are case studies, participant observation, and in-depth interviews and focus groups. In the study undertaken here, all methods except the last figured centrally.

Sampling

Basically a random sampling method was employed (Ghosh, 1982; Kothari, 2003; Yong, 1960) to obtain the samples in this research. Sampling frame involved poor rural and urban people in Bangladesh who were listed as

current members of micro-finance programs among GOs and NGOs. Four agencies were purposely selected – they represent the largest NGOs in Bangladesh and they are also of varied types. The first one, BRAC, is most reputable for its social development activities. The second one, Padakhep, started their operation in the late 1990s. The third one, SWANIRVAR, is an NGO that has been working closely with the government, and the final one, the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), is a fully government funded and controlled (though officially an NGO) body for developing micro-entrepreneurs in rural Bangladesh.

The offices of the selected four NGOs then advised the researcher to research in four separate command areas close to Dhaka. They each also provided the researcher with two separate lists of their members: the first was a list of 'successful' women micro-entrepreneurs whom they defined as those who were able to meet their weekly interest payment, and sustain their enterprises over time and/or make an on-going profit, and the other was a list of 'unsuccessful' ones whose credits have been discontinued. These lists were then merged and form the basis upon which the samples were drawn.

More specifically, the following criteria were adopted when selecting the samples for this study:

- The informants must maintain a relatively lengthy relationship with the micro-credit programs in the selected NGOs for at least three years;
- They are engaged in productive (such as handicraft- and candle-making, and embroidery) rather than non-productive, or non-income generating activities;
- They are situated near the micro-credit centre;
- They are involved directly in the marketing and selling of their products.

EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STILL FAR OFF MARK

One must note that it is not easy for the rural poor, especially women, to develop even a small business, particularly when they have difficulties accessing working capital. Still, against all odds, many women in Bangladesh have become business entrepreneurs through the assistance of NGOs and government-sponsored agencies. While many did not succeed in their business, some have indicated that could achieve success, but due to cheap product supply by china, gas, electricity, costs of raw materials are high so that they were not compatible to the present market scenario.

In this study, the most striking feature was that while 65% of the respondents from rural areas were between the age of 20 and 30 years old, 60% of the respondents from urban areas were in the age bracket of 26 to 30 years old, with no-one in the 20-25 year old. This could be a sampling bias, but according to previous studies, it could mean that women in urban areas generally have better access to and more

opportunities in completing their secondary education before they embark on becoming an entrepreneur. Moreover, in earlier studies, it was also found that women who were over 25 years of age in both rural and urban areas were capable of bearing business risks and managing adverse situations (Birely, 2001; Cooper, 1973; Hill, 2001; Howell, 1972). This may mean that the younger rural women entrepreneurs in this study (those in the 20-25 age bracket), while capable of managing business problems, and were less prepared to handle business pressures because of their lack of experience. According to another study conducted by Peluso (1979), it was observed that women in the 31 to 35 age group tended to be less successful in their business endeavours when compared to the 26 to 30 age group because they were more interested in securing business deals than initiating new ventures. Other studies also found that when women entrepreneurs reached the age group of 41 to 45, they were more likely to be less innovative or take new initiatives in business because they were more involved in family matters (Borocz & Akso, 1995; Pennings, 1982; Saleh, 1995). If these observations were valid, this may mean that there will be more business successes from our urban than rural respondents.

Table I: Age Distributions of Respondents

Age Groups	Rural	Urban
20 - 25	20.0	
	(8)	
26 - 30	45.0	60.0
	(18)	(6)
31 - 35	17.5	20.0
	(7)	(2)
36 - 40	7.5	10.0
	(3)	(1)
41 - 45	10.0	10.0
	(4)	(1)
	100	100
	(n=40)	(n=10)

In general, respondents from urban areas were much better educated than those from the rural areas. While 80% of the latter had less than a high school education, and only 2.5% had obtained a B.A. degree from a tertiary educational institution, half of the respondents from the former group had an undergraduate degree. The findings are consistent with what has been found previously by other researchers (Balk, 1997; Pennings, 1982; Schuler, Syed, & Ann, 1997), that few rural women had education beyond grade 10. However, it must be noted that even given their low education, most of these women were capable of reading, writing to their suppliers and

performing some book-keeping tasks ('maintaining the ledger book') (Benavolt, 1989; Rahman, 1988). The high proportion of highly educated women entrepreneurs in the urban areas similarly reflected some earlier studies conducted by Bruce (1999), and Gundry and Harold (2001), who argued that better family support was a major reason why there were more tertiary educated than those who had only higher secondary school certificate, or secondary school certificate among the urban women entrepreneurs. Moreover, it was also found that after marriage, many women were reluctant to continue their studies (Quddus, Bijoy, Begum, & Jahangir, 1996; Roy & Chowdhury, 1994).

Table II: Education Backgrounds of Respondents

	Rural	Urban
Grade 1 to 5	35.0	
	(14)	
Grade 6 to 10	45.0	
	(18)	
SSC	10.0	20.0
	(4)	(2)
HSC	7.5	30.0
	(3)	(3)
B.A	2.5	50.0
	(1)	(5)
	100	100
	(n=40)	(n=10)

As shown in study, 97.5% of rural women entrepreneur respondents were married before they turned nineteen years old. This included 65.5% who married when they were still in puberty (11 to 14 years old) and 35% who married between 15 to 18 years old. In contrast, the urban respondents exhibited a completely different pattern – 70% married much later with 40% between 21 and 25 and 30% between 26 and 30. In addition, close to another one-third (30%) remained single. This closely reflected what other researchers found earlier (Aziz & Clarency, 1985; Nahar, 1997; Wstergaard, 1983), that urban women had more control of their own marriage and they were more interested in choosing their own partners while rural women were under much stronger pressure to get married through their family. Amin (1997) also found that in rural areas purdha and patriarchal domination were the two main reasons why rural women entrepreneurs married at a very young age and that their marriage was regarded as a form of contract rather than based on affection. Furthermore, given that rural women were frequently subject to incidents of rape, acid throwing, kidnapping, verbal abuse and other forms of harassment, most parents

did not think it was wise for women to move or travel freely in rural areas, and many preferred to marry off their daughters even when they were very young (Schuler, Syed, & Ann, 1997).

Table III: Age When Married Among Respondents

	Rural	Urban
11-14	62.5	
	(25)	
15-18	35.0	
	(14)	
19-22	2.5	
	(1)	
21-25		40.0
		(4)
26-30		30.0
		(3)
Unmarried		30.0
		(3)
	100.0	100.0
	(40)	(10)

For these reasons, Saleh (1995) concluded that as a result of early marriages, birth rates in rural areas remained high, but that also led to a high mortality rate among married women in rural society. However, it should be noted that despite their early marriage, the half of the rural respondents in this study did not give up their education until they completed Year 10.

Table IV: Education Levels of Rural Respondents and Age of Marriage

		Age when Marriage			Total
		11-14	15-18	19-22	
Education of the Entrepreneurs	Class 1 to 5	12	2		14
	Class 6 to 10	12	6		18
	SSC		4		4
	HSC	1	2		3
	B.A			1	1
Total		25	14	1	40

However, among the rural respondents, 70% had relatively small families with less than three children. This was due to the fact that they were able to negotiate with their husband to obtain consent to have smaller families. And according to earlier studies (Bruce, 1999, Schuler, Syed, & Ann, 1997), they were also those who were able to make weekly interest payments for their loans. On the other hand, those respondents who had larger families with 4 to 5 children were also women who had little say on reproductive matters and they were the ones who had difficulties in meeting the required weekly repayments.

In the urban area, discounting those who were not married, half (50%) of the total respondents were women having only 2 and none had more than three children.

Table V: Family Size of Respondents

Number of Children	Rural	Urban
None		10.0
		(1)
2	37.5	50.0
	(15)	(5)
3	32.5	10.0
	(13)	(1)
4	5.0	
	(2)	
5	25.0	
	(10)	
Not married		30.0
		(3)
Total	100.0	100.0
	(n=40)	(n=10)

For those respondents, both from rural and urban areas, who were able to make their weekly interest payments, it seemed that when they withdrew money from their loans, the amount was normally about Tk. 15,000. However they did so not just for their business endeavours, but also for supporting their children's education. On the contrary, among those respondents who had problems repaying their weekly interest, who could only withdraw a relatively small amount (between Tk. 1000 and 5000) from their credit agency in rural areas, and a slightly larger amount (between Tk. 10,000 and 12,000) in urban areas, their children were more likely to drop out from school after completing their primary education in rural areas, or secondary school examination in urban areas. They

then were ordered to help out in their family activities. This finding is consistent with what Balk (1997), Nahar (1997) and Saleh (1995) noted in their studies, concluding that there was a strong correlation between size of credit obtained and level of education of the children. They agreed that women with larger credit seemed to be able to manage their loan more effectively and thus also able to channel their profits back to their business, which, in turn, generated more profit, enabling their children to receive more education.

Table VI: Credit Size and Education Level of Children among Rural Respondents

		Education of the Children					Total
		Class 1 to 5	Class 6 to 7	Class 8 to 10	SSC	HSC	
Credit Size	1,001-5,000	10					10
	5,001-10,000	1	1				2
	10,001-12000	1	1	1	1		4
	12,001-15,000	1			1	1	3
	15000+	5	6	6	4		21
Total		18	8	7	6	1	40

Table VII: Credit Size and Education Level of Children among Urban Respondents

		Education						Total
		0	Class 1 to 5	Class 6 to 7	HSC	B A	M A	
Credit Size	10,001-12,000	1		1	1			3
	15000+	2	2	1		1	1	7
Total		3	2	2	1	1	1	10

Among the respondents, regardless of whether they were from urban or rural areas, 70% earned more than Tk. 14,000. However, among the lower income groups (below Tk. 14,000), rural respondents were more prominent with close to one-thirds (30%) making between Tk. 1 to 7,000 while at least 10% of the urban respondents were making between Tk. 7,001 and 14,000. Nonetheless, among the higher income groups (between 21,000 and 35,000), the rural respondents seemed to do significantly better with more than one-thirds (37.5%) earning more than Tk. 28,000 to 35,000 and 22.5% making between Tk. 21,000 to 28,000 per month. The urban respondents, however, seemed to have more success in earning middle level income, with 30% making between Tk. 14,000 and 21,000 TK.

Table VIII: Income Distributions of Respondents

Income	Rural	Urban
1,000-7,000	30.0	20.0
	(12)	(2)
7,001-14,000		10.0
		(1)
14,001-21,000	10.0	30.0
	(4)	(3)
21,001-28,000	22.5	20.0
	(9)	(2)
28,001-35,000	37.5	20.0
	(15)	(2)
Total	100.0	100.0
	(n=40)	(n=10)

Fatema Begum was 30 years old and had been running her business for ten years. Both her father and father-in-law were farmers. She was trained and worked as a labourer in a factory in Dhaka. Fatema Begum makes gloves for labourers with leather purchased from Hazaribagh Dhaka. She knew some leather traders when she worked in the factory, but when she started her business, she could not purchase her raw materials cheaply. She even tried to bribe a union leader with Tk. 1,000 TK asking him to introduce her to other leather retailers but she ended up having to pay cash to purchase leather at the market rate Her eldest sister's husband gave her Tk. 5,000 as initial capital, which she used to purchase a number of sewing machines, but she also had to pay an interest rate of 20%. She lived in a nuclear family because her relatives wanted to keep a distance from her and hence she did not get any assistance from them. Her husband also had conflicts with his brothers over a piece of family property and for that reason, his relatives did not communicate with them for ten years. Given their financial difficulties, her neighbours also wanted to keep their distance and did not visit them at all. After her husband's accident, his friends and her co-workers also stayed away from them for a long time.

A closer examination of the size of credit the respondents borrowed also revealed that for both rural and urban respondents who had access to a larger

amount of credit, it was more likely they were able to generate more income. This was because, typically, when respondents had more credit resources, they could invest more to increase their production, like procuring land for factory premises, purchasing machinery, providing shades for storage of products, and leasing other facilities from relatives, friends, neighbors or community groups to generate more profit. When women entrepreneurs had limited credit resources, not only were their production hampered, they also had difficulties in generating adequate income which, in turn, made them unable to repay their weekly interest payments as well as propelling them into a vicious cycle of not being able to access further loans. They eventually became entrapped by poverty (Brindley, 2005; Bruni & Barbara 2004; Erman, Sibel, & Helga, 2002; Khan, Mustaque, & Abbas, 2000).

Table IX: Credit Size and Income (Rural)

		Income				Total
		1,000-7,000	14,001-21,000	21,001-28,000	28,001-35,000	
Credit Size	1,001-5,000	10				10
	5,001-10,000	2				2
	10,001-12,000		1	3		4
	12,001-15,000			1	2	3
	Above15,000		3	5	13	21
Total		12	4	9	15	40

Table X: Credit Size and Income (Urban)

		Income					Total
		1,000-7,000	7,001-14,000	14,001-21,000	21,001-28,000	28,001-35,000	
Credit Size	10,001-12,000	2	1				3
	Above 15,000			3	2	2	7
Total		2	1	3	2	2	10

The bulk of the respondents' businesses were established after 1999. This was particularly prominent among the rural respondents, although a significant 40% of urban respondents reported they had set up their businesses between 1995 and 1998.

Table XI: Year of Establishment

	Rural	Urban
1990-1994	30.0%	10.0%
	12	1
1995-1998	7.5	40.0
	3	4
1999-2002	62.5	50.0
	25	5
Total	100.0	100.0
	40	10

Ratna Begum was 30 years old. She was married at 16 just after passing the secondary school certificate. She looked after her father-in-law's business while her husband worked in an office. She had a son and a daughter who were in years four and two. Her father was also a business owner.

I first met this wholesaler in the local market. He liked the quality of my products. From then on, we've been doing business for eight years using credit and cash. I paid him up completely before the Eid of Ramadan. I now employ twelve workers. I pay them Tk. 30,000. Threads cost Tk. 10,000 and colourings and three looms also cost up to Tk. 1 lac each. I invested 30,000 in the market and Tk. 2 lacs as working capital. Nobody introduced me to any business association, but people came to know me after I supplied good materials to people, and others came to know about me and started buying Jamdani saris from my factory.

A majority of the micro-enterprises established by the respondents seemed to be successful as many were still operating after 5 years. Although it became apparent that there were more successes within the urban respondent group, with 70% of them surviving more than 5 years, their business failure rate also seemed to be higher, with 30% of their businesses lasting for only 3 years. According to earlier studies, typically those enterprises surviving for 5 years or above were operated by entrepreneurs who were able to make their weekly interest payments (Ahmed, 2003; Begum, 1993; Mondal, Shapna, Atiquer, & Asad, 2004; Rahman, 1994).

Table XII: Business Survivals - Number of Years

	Rural	Urban
3 years	12.5%	30.0%
	5	3
4 years	15.0	
	6	
5 years	15.0	
	6	
More than 5 years	57.5	70.0
	23	7
Total	100.0	
	40	

CONCLUSION

To alleviate poverty, it is imperative to educate women and recognize their contribution to the economy. Women are being empowered in both developed and developing countries over the decades. In Bangladesh, the government has declared its Millennium Development Goals on reduction of poverty and gender discrimination, but the reality is far from the policy paper. Business women in Bangladesh are still faced with a lot of problems which bar them from investing in a big way. They don't have much information about a particular sector or subject. So in many cases women cannot invest their money, despite being interested in launching a business venture. Lack of money and cash flow problems commonly plague small businesses. Small entrepreneurs face major challenges in the expansion and growth of their enterprises. The banks and financial institutions need to think of creative ways to attract women entrepreneurs to enhance and diversify their product line and stay competitive in the market.

Women entrepreneurs got a chance in recent decades to gain self-confidence, take initiatives and prove their communication skill, the prerequisites for emerging as successful women entrepreneurs. Support from family members is also an important factor that can encourage a woman to start and get involved in business. A woman needs to learn how to handle the things concerning money market, banking, loan facilities, import and export, taxes and duties, etc. Before starting a business, a woman entrepreneur must be hard working and have the determination to overcome different social barriers both from her family and from others. In this connection the family members can play a very vital role, to create a platform for entrepreneurship development. A favorable business environment

and the success of a business venture are also equally important. Soft term loans, infrastructure, training, access to information about export and import markets, administrative support and office space with all communication facilities are the other important factors that make woman entrepreneurs feel secure to invest their money.

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