



Socio-Economic Research and Applications (SERAP)

Women/Social Entrepreneurs in Fragile, Conflict and Violent Areas

This newsletter aims to highlight the situation of women and social entrepreneurs in Fragile, Conflicted, and Violent (FCV) areas. These areas are under threat of economic regression and subjected to challenges such as insecurity, poor health, a challenging environment, and so on. We have summarized some recent publications on the topic to highlight women's experiences in these areas and emphasize the need for potentially scalable interventions that could help build their resilience.

Fragile, Conflict, and Violent settings (FCV) are considered the most challenging areas for sustainable development in developing countries. Countries living under FCV conditions are subjected to all kinds of stress based on their economic circumstances, health, security, etc. It is reported that over 2 billion people are living in FCV countries, representing near 28.5% of the global population. Furthermore, recent projections indicate that around 60% of the world's poorest people will become part of FCV areas by 2030. There is, therefore, an urgent need to discuss and implement efficient policies to build populations' resilience. In these regions, socio-economic structures are under stress, and the economic pressure is exacerbated due to millions of people being thrown into the poverty cycle. Such conditions are expected to cause a reduction of GDP growth by 2% per year and a steady increase of unemployment that would cause conditions to worsen.

The most affected demographic in FCV zones is women. As men are forced to flee the country or join rebellious forces, women are left with no choice but to take up their roles as breadwinners. As a result, women are pioneers in the entrepreneurship atmosphere across the Middle East, especially in areas recovering from conflicts. Their contributions have created new opportunities for economic reconstruction and social reconciliation. In 2017, the study "Entrepreneurship in Conflicts" showed a steady increase of women entrepreneurs in Syria, growing from 4.4% to 24.4%. The "Women's Entrepreneurship Report" in MENA indicates that women entrepreneurs offer more innovative solutions than their male counterparts. It also shows that women entrepreneurs have about 30% more international outreach than their male counterparts. Yet despite their contributions, women are still subject to threats and violent attacks in their daily life. FCV environments compromise entrepreneurial possibilities and can affect their productivity over time. The World Bank's cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) training has indicated that of 234 entrepreneurs in their sample, 35% qualify for the diagnosis of clinical depression. The uncertainty under which female entrepreneurs navigate their lives is eroding their capacity for productivity.

There is an urgent need to develop initiatives that could help address these issues. Female entrepreneurship is considered a central avenue of empowerment and personal development. Due to women's contribution both in family settings and in wider society, their participation in the workforce as social entrepreneurs could prove to be instrumental in the circumstances endured by the wider community in general, and other women. Women's participation could therefore be a decisive factors in bringing peace to FCV areas.

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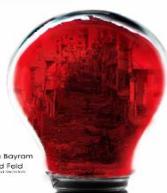
Recommendations

1. Activities to link business activities among micro-entrepreneurs for the creation of a peer network. This will allow women to voice their ideas and concerns in a safe environment, surrounded by other women.
2. Introduce business development programs to refine and improve business dealings, so women can learn from other professionals and incorporate their suggestions into their businesses.
3. Campaign for a dedicated and inclusive economic sector that facilitates women and minorities. Their input and involvement could have transformative potential, which could aid the country's economy.

RECENT ARTICLES AND REPORTS ON WOMEN/SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN FCVs

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN CONFLICT ZONES

INSIGHTS ON THE STARTUPS IN SYRIA



By Anasat Sulaim Bayram
Foreword by Brad Feld
January 2017

“Entrepreneurship in Conflict Zones” is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive contribution to highlighting the experiences and need of Syrian entrepreneurs in the country. It identifies the characteristics and problems of entrepreneurship in Syria and tries to draw up a list of possible solution.

The report draws on data from a study examining Syrian entrepreneurs’ views and experiences over a period of 12 months of research, during which 268 interviews were conducted. The study also includes an open discussion and series of interviews with entrepreneurial experts and insights from local startups. Prior to the conflict, few steps had been taken to assist the Syrian entrepreneurial ecosystem, which had real potential for growth. However, after 2011, startups have faced numerous challenges that restricted that potential. [Read more...](#)



Entrepreneurs in fragile, conflict and violence-affected countries face unique mental health challenges

Fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) have become the most pressing threats to economic development. Over 2 billion people live in FCV countries, and it is expected that by 2030 nearly 50 to 60 percent of the world’s poorest people will live in areas affected by conflict. This can pose significant socio-economic challenges, including reducing gross domestic product growth by two percentage points per year and driving youth to join rebellions due to conflict-driven unemployment.

FCV countries work to reduce the risk of violence and help build resilience by creating economic opportunities through jobs, which can decrease poverty, increase productivity, and build social cohesion.

[Read more...](#)



An Exploratory Study on Social Entrepreneurship, Empowerment and Peace Process. The Case of Colombian Women Victims of the Armed Conflict: The Colombian armed conflict is the oldest internal confrontation in the entire

American continent and has placed Colombia as one of the countries in the world with the highest volume of internally displaced persons. By their initiative, women not resigning themselves to this state of affairs work from passive victims to survivors and agents of change. To achieve this, they hold on to social entrepreneurship as a possible vehicle and alternative for empowerment and personal development. The union with other women and the support of their families are crucial factors to reach this purpose [Read More...](#)



Changing Gender Realities in MENA: Fostering Social Entrepreneurship: Women are leading the rapid growth of social entrepreneurship in the middle east, often in areas in or recovering from

violent conflict. Cooperation amongst entrepreneurs is creating unique opportunities for economic growth, community building, and reconciliation. Young women are exploring new value chains and expanding market niches. In fact, according to the Women’s Entrepreneurship Report, women entrepreneurs in MENA are 60% more likely than their male counterparts to offer innovative solutions, and about 30% have international reach – again, exceeding male-led enterprises. [Read more...](#)



Supporting And Celebrating Women Entrepreneurship In Conflict Zones: A 2017 study, titled 'Entrepreneurship in Conflict Zones', highlights that the participation of female entrepreneurs in Syria has grown from an estimated low base of 4.4% to 24.4%. This is due to the

“new role played by many women as chief breadwinners of the family, while many men have been forced to either flee or engage in the armed conflict.”

They assume even greater responsibility in managing the household budget when men are killed or afflicted by severe psychosocial issues with the loss of productive income. They need help on the spot and in a form that allows them the flexibility to make their own decisions about what goods and services to buy. Cash is the overwhelming preference due to its liquidity. Hence they travel dangerous distances to collect it, [Read more...](#)



Supporting Women Entrepreneurship in Conflict Ridden States: Violent conflicts have increased dramatically in the last decade, where more countries in 2016 experienced violent conflict than at any

point in almost 30 years. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace (2020, p. 4), the gap between the least and most peaceful countries is growing. The Middle East and North Africa region remains the world’s least peaceful region for the sixth consecutive year. In contexts of violent conflict, many women become entrepreneurs out of necessity, where they face burdensome challenges in starting and operating their businesses. The relevant growing research body reports how women entrepreneurs in these contexts demonstrate high levels of resilience in navigating the economic, social, and political barriers in their conflict-ridden states. We adopted a qualitative approach and conducted in-depth semi-structured individual interviews with women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine within our research. [Read more...](#)



Women's Empowerment Arising from Violent Conflict and Recover:

This report by USAID explores the life stories of 125 women who have lived through violent

political conflict in four middle-income countries. The report qualitatively assesses the factors shaping women’s empowerment and community recovery after conflict to support broad recommendations for interventions in the post-conflict period. The study found that women living in communities directly affected by violent political conflict rated more highly on empowerment measures than women who did not experience conflict. Secondly, once the violence ceased, the communities that experienced the most rapid recovery were characterized by more empowered women. [Read more](#)



Africa's Women mean Business:

Working in the automotive industry—or running a business—is not commonplace for women in Namibia. But it is starting to become more common as Sunny-Girl joins a growing

number of women micro-entrepreneurs being helped by corporate-funded training initiatives. At Mina Auto Repair in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, Sunny-Girl specializes in panel beating and painting, and she loves her job. “That is how I grew up. I love to deal with cars,” she says. And while her customers appreciate the great work she does, some are surprised and impressed by the fact that this is her business—especially because she is a woman. “They feel proud of me because I’m doing [something] different from other women.” [Read more](#)



The Acceleration of Women-Owned Micro-Enterprises

(AWOME) program focuses on providing women-owned micro-enterprises with

knowledge and skills in the areas of **marketing, record keeping, stock management, costing and business planning.** The key objective of the AWOME program is to equip women micro-enterprises with business management and life skills to build their confidence and capacity to operate and grow successful micro-enterprises. The program provides training to enhance understanding of business concepts, including accessing markets, generating income, creating jobs, and decision-making, communication and negotiation skills. [Read more](#)



Plastic waste is a frequent blot on Kenya’s beautiful landscapes.

Despite a government ban on the use of plastic bags, which came into force in 2007 when Kenya was

producing 48 million of them, the plastic of all kinds and shapes litters the land or piles up in open tips. Founded by Lorna Rutto in 2010, EcoPost collects this plastic waste and manufactures fencing posts from it.

We can recover and use all of these for our posts.’ This initiative has paved the way for eco-conscious entrepreneurs to invest in businesses that are sustainable and eco-friendly. [Read more](#)



There seems to be a stronger focus on entrepreneurship within conflict zones and in refugee camps in the past few years. One of such entrepreneurs focused on reviving the economy is 37-year-old Lara Shaheen, who founded [Jasmine House](#), which provides economic opportunities for Syrian refugee women in Jordan. “when I came here [Jordan], I started going with volunteers to the refugee camps to help them. And when I went there, I saw ladies making soup and sewing wool to create blankets and other stuff for their children because they didn't have enough money to buy them.,” says Shaheen, describing her idea for Jasmine House. She has trained around 1,000 women to date, and she states proudly, “We are producers, not refugees.” [Read more](#)



The [Zinadagii Shoista](#) (‘Living with dignity’) project aims to build a socio-economic environment that empowers women and protects them from sexual and gender-based violence in Tajikistan. By fostering financial independence and giving families the tools to resolve their conflicts through discussion and understanding, we help Tajik women to contribute to the family economically and be seen as valued members of society. This, in turn, allows communities to change their attitudes and challenges the social norms of violence against women and girls. The combined approach of tackling harmful social norms and promoting economic empowerment has resulted in a decrease in sexual, physical, and emotional violence, improved family relations, and increased livelihoods. Women’s earnings have increased 4-fold, and the percentage of women involved in the project who have reported experiencing violence has decreased from 64% to 33%. [Read more](#)

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