

Female Entrepreneurship and Floriculture Industry in Sri Lanka

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Women entrepreneurship is attaining increased momentum, due to the growing participation of women in the labour force, impacting economic growth, innovation and employment. Literature identifies the importance of female floriculture entrepreneurs to national development, whilst support networks assist business development. However, adequate information is not available on the issues faced by Sri Lankan women in floriculture. This research aims to identify the effect of floriculture entrepreneurship on social capital development and poverty reduction of women in Sri Lanka. Qualitative and quantitative methods are utilised, surveying a nationwide sample of 685 female floriculture growers. The initial penetration into the floriculture industry is advantageous for Sri Lankan women, sustained by low initial capital and resource requirements (i.e. land). Female growers endure difficulty attempting to gain required funds for business survival. Customers expect, admire variety, standard and quality flowers, hence finance is needed to purchase seeds, pots, nets, required infrastructure and training. Some women take loans to increase capital injection, others invest the generated income. Loans were taken if generated money has been utilised for personal/ family purposes. In addition, money saved from floriculture sales, preceding expenses, may not be sufficient to create large business investments, unlike satisfactory one-time investments from loans, resulting in business surge and noticeable outcomes. Research also identified loan applicants are successfully paying back the debt.

Sri Lankan female floriculture enjoys high rates of production utilising small land space, bounded within their own entitlement. Most women are stay at home mothers; traditions and customs inflict the woman to care for children whilst the man works. Unlike the clash between work and family, home-based floriculture production enables the women to remain at home and focus on business and family responsibilities. Women are gifted with the opportunity to provide the household with more capital and intern influencing the livelihood of the family and reducing female dependence on male for family income.

The study resulted in an in-depth view of female floriculture growers. Findings can be utilised for policy developments, implement institutional framework to expand the industry, empower women whilst eliminating poverty and introduce a network system among the growers to initiate foreign exports.

Key words: *Female entrepreneurship; Floriculture; Poverty reduction; Social capital.*