

GIZ Gender Competition 2023- GG2 Application

Triangular Cooperation Pilot on Women Agribusiness Incubator in Malawi

Given the large informal participation of women in agriculture and enterprises in Malawi, women-centric agri-business incubators would be an important medium for their inclusion in formal economy. For this purpose, successful incubator models from India can be adapted and replicated in Malawi. Triangular Cooperation (TrC) pilot project is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, under which the Government of India and Malawi, along with various stakeholders, have come together to implement this pilot in Malawi. Key focus area of this pilot was to facilitate the development of a sustainable incubator ecosystem in Malawi by extending knowledge & technical support from India, and to establish of a proof-of-concept for an agri-business incubator model for women. These incubators will assist women to develop start-ups, which has the potential to reimagine the supply chains, support value addition, and help innovate food products to cater to demands of producers and new-age consumers.

Key Components of TrC pilot

- Develop an agri-business incubator for women entrepreneurs in Malawi.
- Build capacities of at least one local institution as Trainer of Trainers.
- Build skill competencies of at least 50 women entrepreneurs.
- Conclude policy recommendations for further agri-business incubator development.

This pilot contributes to SDG 1 (Reduction in Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth).

1. Promoting gender equality within the program / sector

In Malawi, 78% of MSMEs are in rural areas and about 74% of these are micro-enterprises. Women own 84% of micro-enterprises, most of which are independent informal enterprises (with no employees), but they are less likely to own and operate small and medium enterprises. Around 2/3rd of MSMEs operate in wholesale & retail sector, particularly selling agricultural output or fast-moving commodity goods, and further 1/4th conduct primary agricultural activities (Finscope Malawi 2019). After identification of these gender gaps through secondary research data, and discussion with the stakeholders, this TrC pilot was conceived in May 2022, with the aim of utilizing gender transformative approaches to bridge this gap. Key partners from Malawi were [Ministry of Trade and Industry](#), and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Institute ([SMEDI](#)). Indian stakeholders included Atal Innovation Mission ([AIM- NITI Aayog](#)), National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management ([MANAGE](#)) and Access Livelihoods (civil society partner). The **Green Innovation Centres for Agriculture & Food Sector** (GIC) of GIZ, provided facilitation support to this pilot. The implementation began with the 'Mindset re-orientation workshops' for women entrepreneurs. Further, in the Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions for SMEDI staff, there was a good representation of women, and the CEO of SMEDI, who is a male officer, also joined these sessions. This ensured equal representation of genders in the capacity building sessions. During the India visit of Malawi



stakeholders, women entrepreneurs were also a part of the delegation. In India, visits to various incubators were organised, including NutriHub at IIMR, CIA-MANAGE, Agri Innovation Hub (AgHub), Women Entrepreneurs Hub (WeHub) and Technology Hub (T-Hub). The delegation also visited agri-cooperatives, women cooperatives and women thrift cooperative models. All these have a strong gender component. Malawi stakeholders had a capacity building session with Access Livelihoods, where they got to learn about the gender transformative approaches adopted under the Woman Entrepreneurship Programme (WEP) of the GIC project in India. Also during the workshop, various exchanges were organized with the entrepreneurs trained by MANAGE. Where women led successful enterprises and trainees were also invited.

At the policy level workshop, representatives from AIM-NITI Aayog, MANAGE, and the Govt of Telangana held discussions on how to develop favourable policies for setting up sustainable and inclusive incubators and enterprises, as well as for developing policy frameworks that promote innovation and international cooperation. Gender equality & Inclusive policies in the MSME sector was key focus of the discussions.

Following this visit, a milestone was achieved under the pilot when SMEDI opened 'AmayiHub', the first ever Incubator for Women in Malawi in December 2022. Digital interventions were introduced, when online calls for participation was organized by SMEDI, and AmayiHub received over 380 applications for its incubation programme. Out of these, 55 women entrepreneurs were shortlisted for further training. Capacity building training for entrepreneurs organized by Indian partners in Malawi included topics like idea generation, refining validation, design thinking, prototyping, as well as marketing, networking, professional networking, digital presence strategies and pitching. In May 2023, SMEDI with AmayiHub won the **Best SME in Malawi award at 33rd Malawi International Trade Fair**, organized by the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry (MCCCI).



2. Gender as a quality feature of our work

During conceptualization of pilot & formulation of its implementation plan, stakeholders from Malawi & India, including women entrepreneurs from Malawi were an integral part of the process. It was facilitated by Gender focal persons from GIC India & GIC Malawi. The idea of setting up AmayiHub within an existing incubator is to promote equal opportunities for everyone, **regardless of gender**. As part of inclusive approach, female leadership was promoted at SMEDI by recruiting a female lead as the Head of Training Programmes. For selection of women entrepreneurs, **gender transformative intersectional lens** was used. This encouraged women participation irrespective of literacy level or their economic, cultural, and social background. Around 55 women entrepreneurs received training and incubation support under the pilot. Documentation of success stories of five women entrepreneurs, and one woman owned private incubator was done under the pilot. Triangular Cooperation approach to implementing sustainable development projects in third countries & its impacts were mentioned by Mr. Uwe Gehlen at Think20 event of G20 in India in Jan 2023. 'From Innovation to Transformation – FIT' Supra-regional Conference of Green Innovation Centres 2023, held in June, provided platform for TrC Malawi pilot to pitch the concept of Triangular co-operation & scale-up of TrC pilot in Malawi to the participants from over 14 countries.





3. Implementing feminist core principles

The TrC Malawi pilot core focus matches with the FDP's 3R's (Rights, Resources, Representation), where the need for presence of women in an important MSME sector was identified. As the key focus under pilot, women entrepreneurs were supported in getting entry into the formal economy of the country. By having more such women centric sub-incubation centres, it can cater to the requirements of women entrepreneurs. And by promoting these women-incubation centres within the existing Incubation centres, the participation from men is also encouraged, thus promoting equal opportunities for all. Intersectional lens were applied for selection of women participants in incubation programme. This model of women centric agri-incubators system itself targets dismantling of structural causes for inequality, disadvantages, and exclusions for women participating in MSME sector.

4. Cooperation

This pilot was result of cooperation between India, Germany and Malawi. It was made possible due to voluntary contribution from the partners involved.

Political Partners: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India; Ministry of Trade & Industry (MoTI), Malawi; Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany



Implementing Partners: MANAGE (Govt. institution-India), Access Livelihoods (civil society partner), AIM-NITI Aayog (Government of India); SMEDI (Govt. institution-Malawi); GIC- India and Malawi, and Fund for Triangular Cooperation with Asia (established by GIZ on behalf of BMZ)

On the political level, AIM-NITI Aayog has proposed a multifront collaboration with the Govt. of Malawi. In Malawi, the Presidential Delivery Unit, Govt. of Malawi, has shown great interest to understand challenges of SMEs and cooperatives, where the AmayiHub incubator was also discussed. A series of discussions were held between SMEDI, MoTI (Malawi), MANAGE and AIM-NITI Aayog to finalise the areas of cooperation under the proposed TrC project. As of now, a draft MoU between SMEDI and MANAGE has been formulated.

The cross-cutting issue of inclusion of youth, women & vulnerable groups is one of the Policy priority areas mentioned in Malawi's MSME policy, 2019. The challenge of inclusion of women in formal economy was a major factor on which partners from three countries came together. The project steering committee was split between key implementing partners mainly GIZ, SMEDI and MANAGE, and all partners participated in the Pilot as equals. Steering and facilitation was done by Gender Focal Points of GIC projects in India & Malawi, who supported in formulating gender indicators and sensitizing partners to keep their approach inclusive throughout the implementation. As Malawi shares developmental challenges similar to what existed in India, this collaboration has provided the Malawi stakeholders with opportunities to establish linkages with relevant institutions from India. The partner from Malawi also participated in 1st Asian Conference on Triangular Cooperation at New Delhi, India in November 2023.

5. Learning

This pilot has provided a unique platform for collaboration where the existing linkages of south-south cooperation can further be utilized with the aim of specific interventions, as this pilot focus on women entrepreneurs. It reaffirms the idea that existing global programmes across countries have immense potential for carrying out such TrC initiatives. The partners involved in this pilot also had the opportunity to collaborate on areas outside the purview of the pilot, which furthers supports the concept of Triangular Cooperation. Also, while collaborating with multiple stakeholders, self-assessment is an important tool to evaluate the progress and improvise accordingly.

6. Competition related information

Utilising the learnings from pilot, the partners have submitted a full-fledged project proposal. Under this, women focused incubators would be scaled up, along with further strengthening of capacity of SMEDI as a key anchoring institution. This initiative deserves a Gender Award, as this pilot focuses on gender aspect of representation in a sector as important as MSME. It is also a unique example of South-South and North-South Cooperation, where it offers shared ownership, mutual responsibility and ease of knowledge sharing between the partners. This award will provide a platform to promote such initiatives which are shaping the future through a 'Feminist Approach to Business'.

