

## ≈ SUMMARY ≈

**INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GENDER ISSUES:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION***Gido Mapunda**School of Management, University of South Australia***Principal Topic**

Indigenous communities are under increasing internal and external pressure to build ample and sustainable business enterprises to better provide economic development for its peoples (Pearson, 2000). There is pressure from within these societies in that citizens are now more aware than ever before of how other people in other parts of the world live – advanced technology, itself a product of innovation, has helped create an awareness that people elsewhere have more robust economies and hence better lifestyles. There is also external pressure to the extent that external financial institutions and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations impose conditions on these societies. Most importantly, there is that natural human desire for people to improve their wellbeing and enjoy better standards of living.

The paper argues that individuals and groups in traditional societies should focus on sustainable economic development, which has to take into account gender factors and that there are enterprise and innovation implications. To that end, the paper examines the evolution of grassroots small business initiatives in South Australia and Tanzania, with Special focus on the role of women in Indigenous business enterprises and the processes that facilitate successful entrepreneurship.

I argue that, issues of gender and in particular, the role of women in Indigenous entrepreneurship and business enterprise operation is an area that has not been given due emphasis. In the case of women involvement and contribution, there is an argument for more attention, especially in view of the fact that two thirds of the world's population live in developing countries and that more than 51% of the population is women.

The developing world, comprising primarily traditional societies, is perceived by developed economies as largely unproductive and un-enterprising. Can talking up the role and contribution of women entrepreneurs help change the situation? In many of the robust economies around the world Women are increasingly establishing themselves as capable business operators and entrepreneurs. Are there similar signs in Indigenous societies?

At another level, it can be argued that, in examining Indigenous entrepreneurship there may be some specific types of business ventures whereby Indigenous entrepreneurs can have a competitive advantage. For example, as owners and custodians of Indigenous cultural resources and heritage, they may be able to influence and determine how these resources are used. In addition, within the Australian and Tanzanian communities there is now a growing realisation and recognition of the distinctive roles and contributions that male and female entrepreneurs can make to the growth of small business enterprises and how in turn, the business sector can be used to serve the economic development and social advancement needs of Indigenous peoples.

## **Methodology**

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three entrepreneurs in South Australia and one entrepreneur in Tanzania, which collected data on the development and operation of these enterprises and which provided a narrative used to extrapolate the success factors, problems and challenges encountered, as well as the crucial decision-making moments and their outcomes.

Data from interviews and the examination of government policy was used to develop a multiple narrative able to facilitate the identification of success, barriers and challenges encountered.

A similar approach to the above was applied to the Tanzanian case study. A comparative analysis of the outcomes of the case studies from the two study areas was also undertaken.

## **Results and Implications**

The study will build on an earlier investigation by the researcher in the area of Indigenous entrepreneurship, exploring enterprise and innovation implications, gender dynamics and Indigenous economic development in general. Three key outcomes are:

1. Identify success factors and challenges encountered
2. Training and support mechanisms
3. The impact of relationships and support mechanisms in the establishment of business enterprises.

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