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SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Skills Development Training Among Women Hospitality Industry Entrepreneurs in South Sudan



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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a women's skills development training program in basic hospitality skills that was designed and facilitated with the cooperation of a multinational donor and its partners with an objective of promoting entrepreneurship among women in post war South Sudan. A brief review of the entrepreneurship development literature from an international donor perspective is conducted along with a discussion of the entrepreneurship program as a targeted approach for empowering and sustaining women's economic situation in South Sudan. Emphasis is placed on women Small Scale Enterprises (SSE) entrepreneurs and current involvement of multinational assistance agencies to regenerate hospitality skills training in a poor country after decades of devastation civil political conflict.

KEY WORDS: *hospitality, restaurant, women, South Sudan, Africa, small scale enterprises, skills development training, multinational*

Introduction

The general literature on economic development in Africa is replete with prognosis on the continent's future regarding poverty eradication. For example, it has been suggested by (Somavia, 2007) that the number of people working in extreme poverty in Africa will increase by 20% by 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, 55% of the population lives on less than \$1 a day and 80% on less than \$2 a day (Somavia, 2007). Given these grim economic

predictions, entrepreneurship has been identified as one solution to improving economic conditions (Nieman, 2001). However, as previous research has shown, women are very often excluded from participation in entrepreneurial activities.

On the African continent, there is currently a growing recognition that in the current urgent pursuit of development, women, although still a minority in the business world, possess real entrepreneurial potential and are an important resource for economic growth and job creation. Further, there is growing awareness that the development process can be significantly enhanced if more women could be encouraged to become entrepreneurs and need to be supported. However, the issue of skills shortage has been central to these discussions. While many other factors such as credit constraints, business environment and infrastructure bottlenecks have dominated the discussion on obstacles facing new firms in Africa, skill shortages (both on the side of workers and entrepreneurs) have received less attention. (Brixiova, 2010)

While there are there are many cottage and small scale industries existing in Africa today (see Table 2), the hospitality/tourism industry exhibits tremendous potential as a means of achieving poverty reduction is related since very few of the least developed countries in the world have significant levels of receipts from international trade (Blake, et.al, 2008). This is especially the case in sub Saharan Africa where most of the main generators of GNP businesses are classified as Small Scale Enterprises (SSEs) - officially defined as having less than fifty employees (Hansom, 1992). Some qualitative characteristics that define this sector include: just-in-time production for direct sale of product to consumers, lack of specialization in the labor force, poor or non-existent book keeping and heavy employment of family members (Hansom, 1992). It is estimated that the number of SSEs in many developing countries far exceed the number of medium or larger firms and accounts for between 40 and 90 percent of non-government employment (Gartner, 1999). Further, in the majority of these countries (which are mainly in sub-Saharan Africa), receipts from these activities are less than 5% of GDP (World Bank, 2010).

Purpose

This paper examines a post war women's skills development training program in basic hospitality skills that was designed and facilitated by the

author with the cooperation of a multinational donor and its partners with an objective of promoting entrepreneurship among women in post-war Southern Sudan. A brief review of the literature pertaining to skills development and women's entrepreneurship development from an international donor perspective is conducted along with a discussion of the skills training program as a targeted approach for empowering and sustaining women's' entrepreneurship in South Sudan.

Gender Considerations in Development in Africa

While there are variations of gender disparities in many developing countries around the world, the gender gap in Africa is even wider and the situation is more complex due to the cultural and traditional context which is anchored in beliefs, norms and practices which breed discrimination and "feminized" poverty (Drine & Grach, 2011).

Thus, the importance of taking gender into account in the continent's development cannot be overemphasized - an assertion that has been supported by research. For example, a recent study by the organization *InterAction* found that "... gender mainstreaming confirmed that addressing the issues of both men and women can directly confront poverty and bring about profound cultural change in gender roles, labor distribution, and harmful practices. In its proven ability to dramatically improve the lives of both women and men, gender mainstreaming can lead to tangible, enhanced, and more sustainable outcomes for women – and men – in resource poor communities with conservative religious and cultural traditions that oppress women and girls."(<http://www.interaction.org>).

Barriers to Women in South Sudan's Development

South Sudan, officially the Republic of South Sudan and previously known as Southern Sudan, is a landlocked country in east-central Africa that is part of the United Nations sub region of Eastern Africa, bordered by Ethiopia to the east, Kenya to the southeast, Uganda to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southwest, the Central African Republic to the west and the Republic of Sudan to the north (www.wikipedia.com).

Prior to obtaining formal independence in July, 2011, Sudan had been in a protracted civil war for over 40 of the past 50 years of its independence

from Britain. Although there was a brief truce from 1972-1983 due to the Addis Ababa Peace Accord, the next civil war broke out in 1983 and lasted for over 21 years, after which another peace accord between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Army (SPLMA) and the Government of Sudan (GOS) was signed on January 9th, 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya. The impact and consequences of the civil war have been destructive and distressing to Sudan in general and South Sudan and other war-affected regions in particular. Due to the war, national resources had been diverted to war efforts and as a result, socio economic destitution and disrupted administrative and governance structures and systems in the region have emerged.

Given the fact that women constitute over 50% of the South Sudan population, their participation in leadership and decision-making process of the country is very meager. The low level of female education, lack of confidence and self-esteem as well as cultural norms and unwritten laws that discriminate against women and their reproductive roles overburden their active productive capacity and participation. In addition, access to and control of resources are among the reasons that hinder women's participation in decision making and their participation in the overall leadership procedures at all levels.

Community organizations and civil society groups that advocate for women's participation in leadership have their own leadership structures that are male dominated or managed by men. As a result, most do not have adequate capacity and skills to increase the participation of women in the decision making either. Table 1 highlights some of the actual and potential constraints faced by women in many Sub-Saharan countries in general and in South Sudan in particular.

Although the post-war constitution of the South Sudan has an affirmative action clause that allows for the full participation of women at all levels, the institutional apparatus do not have the necessary capacity, skill and resources to advance women's development issues. Strong institutions such as network and lobby groups that should advocate and strengthen women's leadership roles do not exist and if they do, they have no capacity to manage the situation in South Sudan, and as a result there is a general lack of public awareness about women's capability and productivity.

Table 1: Barriers to Participation of Women in Economic Activities in South Sudan

Lack of human capital
Lack of finance, credit
Lack of organization. Exclusion by organized formal sector interests
Location – far from tourism sites
Lack of market power. No ownership/control over resources of market value.
No bargaining power with investors
Regulations and red tape. Exclusion from registered and promoted categories of tourism facility/service
Inadequate access to tourist market
Limited capacity to meet requirements of tourism market
Under-development of domestic/regional/independent tourism by comparison with international tourism
Government support targeted to formal sector
New tourism opportunities conflict with existing livelihood strategies

Source: Adapted from Ashley, (2000)

Skills Development, Hospitality & Tourism Capacity Building of SSEs

The issue of skills shortage and development has been central to the discussions on economic growth and development in Africa. Although tourism is increasingly viewed as a means to generate foreign exchange (Richter, 1985), promote employment development and ultimately, stimulate economic growth, the issue of skills and lack thereof in the tourism and hospitality industry has attracted some considerable attention among researchers. Many scholars, for example, (Baum et al. 1997; Thomas & Long, 2001; Szivas et al., 2003; Kaplan, 2004a, b; Marchante et al., 2005) are in general agreement that there is a shortage of skills in the tourism and hospitality industries and that the labor supply and development of skills are critical for the development and growth of the tourism industry. However, the issue of skills shortage assumes paramount importance for African countries in particular that are currently recognizing that tourism can be an important driver of poverty reduction and economic growth for their economies.

Various researchers have extolled the value of entrepreneurial skills training as a precursor to successful tourism industry development and local economic regeneration. For example, Thomas and Long (2001) have argued

that the supply and utilization of skills development for the hospitality is an issue of key importance. The crux of their argument centers around the fact that many small enterprises (particularly in developing countries) operate in 'low skill/low quality' equilibrium. The authors conclude that for regeneration to be fully realized, providers must provide appropriate skills as well as the infrastructure to deliver them.

Since the percentage of hospitality industry jobs filled by women in developing countries varies from over 60% in some countries to under 10%, it can be argued that the service nature of the industry and high proportion of low-skilled domestic-type jobs can help to increase accessibility to women. Often, women are most involved in informal sector activities, particularly hawking (Shah, 2000). Consequently, the sole purpose of the training delineated in this paper was to empower women and enable them to play a more active and effective role in entrepreneurship and decision-making process in small scale hospitality business levels South Sudan.

Multinational Organizations and Development in Sudan

A host of multinational institutions exist today that support tourism development in one form or another (Hawkins and Mann (2006)). One of the most common sources of multinational assistance for SSEs is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is focused mainly on productive investment, infrastructure and SSE development in least developing countries. USAID has undertaken approximately 123 projects in 72 countries since 2000—that support Agency objectives of conserving natural resources, stimulating economic development, and alleviating poverty (www.usaid.gov). In addition, many of the sub-contracting agencies of the USAID do currently or at some point have some component of hospitality/tourism development as part of their portfolio – for example, International Relief and Development (IRD), International Business & Technical Consultants, Inc. (IBTCI), Winrock International and Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA). The latter is implementing Agriculture Market and Development Program in South Sudan. The aim of the program is to support private sector development in post-war Sudan as well as build the capacity of the infant government of South Sudan (GOSS) to create enabling environment that would facilitate private sector development and reintegration of persons affected by the 21 year conflict.

Category of SSEs	Current type	Comments
Handicraft	- hand craft work is limited. Lots of handicraft items from Ugandan and Kenya are being offered in the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities exist to develop the following handicraft products from within: Baskets, hats, mats, kitchen accessories, and novelty items. This is an industry with potential to benefit women
Woodcraft (wood carving)	- A good number of furniture cottages exist in the town. Major products are house, office and school furniture - Few produce religious status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand for wood products is huge due to surging demand for materials for construction.
Metal craft/ Metalworking/Fabricating shops	- Traditional kitchen accessories, - Architectural products (gates, window frames, window rods, metal sign post) Generally metal preparation, welding and assembling works are on rise according to sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand for metal craft is high but supply is limited due to availability of scrap metals, high cost of production and limited technical know-how are some of the problems identified. This industry has the potential to employ returnees and persons affected by war
Garments/Embroidery	- There are small group of women who are involved embroidery that the team visited. Their products include Sweaters, hats, Sacks, African wears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is another sector with potential to benefit women. Production is small often based on demand. Quality is an issue. Lack of product development and competition from products from Uganda impedes development domestically
Tourism/ Hospitality	Guest houses, restaurant and bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management is a cross-cutting problem. Tourism/Hospitality sector employs many women compared to other enterprises

To achieve its strategic objectives, the program draws expertise from its consortium members and past experience and relies on volunteer assignments from within the region and overseas, as well as Sudanese in

diaspora. Since its commencement, VEGA/AMED program has facilitated numerous volunteers from US, Australia, Canada and other nations of Africa who have provided valuable technical assistance to the government, as well as public and private institutions in South Sudan. Currently the program covers the geographical towns of Juba, Wau and Malakal which are considered returnee hot spots.

The Project

The South Sudan skills training program was a multi-year technical assistance grant made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of International Development (USAID), aimed at providing structural support and understanding of effective training for improving female entrepreneurship after the civil war. The training primarily aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of those women leaders who were already in leadership/management positions and at the same time build the confidence of those aspiring for leadership positions in the hospitality sector, particularly the restaurant industry. In addition, this training was to groom young women to become leaders in order to be able to champion the women's cause and eventually boost the overall percentage of women participation in SSEs decision making in the hospitality and tourism tertiary sector in the country. Table 2 highlights some of the potential positive impacts of this sector on aspects of livelihoods, especially for women.

Table 2: Existing Cottage and small-scale industries in South Sudan

Category of SSEs	Current type	Comments
Handicraft	- hand craft work is limited. Lots of handicraft items from Ugandan and Kenya are being offered in the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities exist to develop the following handicraft products from within: Baskets, hats, mats, kitchen accessories, and novelty items. This is an industry with potential to benefit women
Woodcraft (wood carving)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A good number of furniture cottages exist in the town. Major products are house, office and school furniture - Few produce religious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand for wood products is huge due to surging demand for materials for construction.

Metal craft/ Metalworking/Fabricating shops	status - Traditional kitchen accessories, - Architectural products(gates, window frames, window rods, metal sign post) Generally metal preparation, welding and assembling works are on rise according to sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demand for metal craft is high but supply is limited due to availability of scrap metals, high cost of production and limited technical know-how are some of the problems identified. This industry has the potential to employ returnees and persons affected by war
Garments/Embroidery	-There are small group of women who are involved embroidery that the team visited. Their products include Sweaters, hats, Sacks, African wears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is another sector with potential to benefit women. Production is small often based on demand. Quality is an issue. Lack of product development and competition from products from Uganda impedes development domestically
Tourism/ Hospitality	Guest houses, restaurant and bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management is a cross-cutting problem. Tourism/Hospitality sector employs many women compared to other enterprises

The project consisted of a collaboration that included Winrock International and Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) and women leaders from the Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO) - a grassroots organization with multiple partners in several projects, including operation of three restaurants.

The first phase of this project included the establishment of an advisory board in South Sudan as a point of reference for program planning and management. The board consisted of community representatives from the previously mentioned Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO) and local staff of the VEGA office in South Sudan. The initial task was to develop a protocol for interviewing and selecting participants for the training program that would include women entrepreneurs from the pre-identified geographic areas of towns of Juba, Wau and Malakal which were considered returnee hot spots by the government. A selection committee interviewed more than thirty five candidates who represented a cross-section of women working in the three restaurants owned by WSHDO. From this

process, twenty individuals were chosen to participate in the training program in Juba.

The second phase consisted of on-site visits by the trainer and the program organizers with the objective of apprising participants an opportunity to closely examine the facilities being used for business operations as well as observe them in action in order to determine the handicaps that existed so that proper development training tools and topics could be developed to meet those needs. Since a lack of sustainable financing mechanism was deemed to be part of the constraints to developing entrepreneurial talent among women in post-war Sudan, a corollary objective was to assess the financial needs of the selected women who intended to seek funding for owning and operating their own personal restaurants as well as those who were employed in WSHDO owned restaurants. The visit uncovered other cross-cutting observations such as product development constraints, lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills and access to market and market information. However, lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills were cited by most respondents as the two main major factors contributing to business failures in the areas visited. Specifically, the consensus was to build capacity among the twenty women leaders by offering practical training in hospitality management skills to enable them to operate locally owned restaurants and future guest houses in a profitable manner. Thus, in addition to learning about the various guiding principles of operating a successful restaurant, they had several opportunities to join actual training sessions for prospective entrepreneurs.

Phase three of the project entailed the actual training process, which consisted of classroom meetings, and field trips. The topics covered and approaches used during the three weeks of intensive training are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Training Methodology for Skills Training in South Sudan

Activity	Approach	Topics
One-day orientation workshop with 20 restaurant workers/entrepreneurs from the three pilot areas) Juba, Wau and Malakal)	Discussion & Identification of current project needs and discuss topics to be covered during the training process	1. Overview of the hospitality services in South Sudan

Activity	Approach	Topics
Week 1 Class Meeting	Use of a paid interpreter to translate lecture and demonstrations from Arabic to English	<p>2. Safety and sanitation issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of factors that affect the growth of pathogens • Identification of methods for preventing biological contamination. • Steps to proper hand washing, and when hands should be washed. • Identification of proper personal cleanliness practices and appropriate work attire. • Identification of ways to handle ready-to-eat food safely. • Discussion of proper procedures for storing food. • Discussion of proper procedures for holding, cooling, and reheating food. • Identification of ways to handle food ready for service. • Outlining proper procedures for preparing and serving food for off-site service. • Discussion of proper procedures for cleaning and sanitizing tools and equipment
Week 2	Use of a paid interpreter to translate lecture and demonstrations from Arabic to English	<p>3. Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of the importance of customer service to the restaurant and foodservice industry. • Greeting guests • How to make a good first impression on customers. • Identification of ways to identify customer needs. • Service set up • Taking food orders • Serving the meal <p>4. Cost control in Restaurant Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of types of costs

Activity	Approach	Topics
Week 3	Use of a paid interpreter to translate lecture and demonstrations from Arabic to English	<p>incurred by a foodservice business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposes of a budget. • Identification of cost control <p>5. Entrepreneurship and business skills training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of business planning, • Budgeting • How to analyze Food & Beverage business opportunities in the area.

Field Trips to 3 internationally operated restaurants in Juba

Program Evaluation

Impacts

As previously stated, the Skills Development Training among Women Hospitality Industry Entrepreneurs in South Sudan consisted of three week training in Juba, Sudan. The training included 20 participants representing several grassroots women's organizations represented by leaders from the Women Self Help Development Organization (WSHDO). During the last day of training, the participants were given a program evaluation to assess the immediate impact of the program. The evaluation included four closed-ended questions using Likert-type scaled responses. As illustrated in Table 4, the final evaluation was completed by all participants (N =20).

Table 4: Pre and Post Hospitality Skill Levels (N = 20)

Pre-Hospitality Skill Level	n	%
Very poor	10	50
Poor	3	15
Average	3	15
Good	2	10
Excellent	2	10
TOTAL	20	100

Post-Hospitality Skill Level		
Very poor	1	5
Poor	1	5
Average	3	15
Good	9	45
Excellent	6	30
TOTAL	20	100

Prior to the implementation of this project, the aspect that was missing from business development dimensions for women was a clear understanding basic hospitality skills suitable to operate small restaurants as workers and entrepreneurs. As table 4 indicates, prior to the training, over 50% of the participants rated their ability to operate a restaurant as either very poor or poor, whilst another 25% self-rated themselves as possessing good to excellent basic skills. However, by the end of the training, over 70% of the participants rated their ability to successfully implement the newly acquired training skills at between good and excellent. These statistics underscore a significant change in the participants' self-rated ability before and after the training.

Discussion and Conclusion

Aside from the immediate impacts observed from the training exercise and described above, after an analysis of the core problems identified by the research team, an integrated intervention approach that took into consideration the diversity and magnitude of the challenges faced by SSEs in the region culminated in technical and financial involvement of USAID through the implementing sub agency of VEGA.

As in most businesses, appropriate training provides a very important contribution factors to success and growth. Given the service nature of the industry and high proportion of low-skilled domestic-type jobs among many women in Africa and other developing countries, this type of skills training can help to increase accessibility to women and overcome one of the major barriers to growth and entrepreneurship. Hence the need for the design and delivery of specific business and technical training programs by national and regional institutions responsible for fostering the growth of women-owned businesses in developing countries. As this project has demonstrated, priority must be given to skills training, the development of customer service programs, networking skills in order to serve local needs as well as

the burgeoning inbound international tourists and investors traveling to African countries in the foreseeable future.

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Treninzi za razvijanje veština među preduzetnicama u ugostiteljskoj industriji u Južnom Sudanu

A P S T R A K T

Ovaj rad ispituje trening program razvijanja osnovnih ugostiteljskih veština kod žena. Ovaj program je dizajniran i sproveden u saradnji sa multinacionalnim donatorima i njihovim partnerima sa ciljem promocije preduzetništva među ženama u posleratnom južnom Sudanu. Dat je kratak pregled literature na temu razvoja preduzetništva iz perspektive internacionalnog donatora kao i diskusija o programu preduzetništva koji za ciljnu grupu ima žene i osnaživanje i održavanje ekonomske situacije žena u južnom Sudanu. Akcenat je stavljen posebno na preduzetnice malih preduzeća i trenutnu ulogu multinacionalnih agencija za pomoć u sprovođenju treninga za razvijanje ugostiteljskih veština u siromašnoj zemlji nakon decenija razarajućih civilnih i političkih konflikata.

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