

[Home](#) > [Opinion & blog](#) > Policies for supporting women entrepreneurs in developing countries: the case of Tanzania

# Policies for supporting women entrepreneurs in developing countries: the case of Tanzania

18th October 2021

---

Share this content



---

**Author:** Dina Modestus Nziku, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, UK, & Colette Henry, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dundalk, Ireland.

Women entrepreneurs are becoming the fastest-growing entrepreneurial population in the world, with women's entrepreneurship in developing countries spearheading this growth. The most important dimensions of this growth include job creation, developing local economies and supporting families – often the key motivations and influencing factors of most women entrepreneurs in developing countries. While the topic of women's entrepreneurship continues to grow within academia, the policy perspective has received considerably less attention.

Few countries have developed dedicated policies and strategies that are gender-specific or focused on supporting women entrepreneurs; the majority still have general policies on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are gender blind. Where they do exist, dedicated policies for women entrepreneurs tend to focus on 'soft' support such as training, mentoring, and skills development in an attempt to fill perceived 'gaps' in women's entrepreneurial knowledge and experience.

In the case of Tanzania, we (Nziku & Henry) have attempted to prompt policy debate by addressing the following research question:

manage these at any time. To continue with our standard settings click "Accept". To find out more and manage your cookies, click "Manage cookies"

Reject all cookies

Manage cookies

## policies be (re)designed so that they are more relevant to women entrepreneurs in the Tanzanian context?

Our findings suggest that a dedicated and effective policy designed to support women's entrepreneurship is needed in Tanzania. Supporting the view that women entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group, we propose that entrepreneurship policy targeted at women needs to be formalised and contextualised to the specific geographical and cultural setting. Based on our review of current policy documentation, we offer specific recommendations for enhancing policy design and provision in Tanzania. We also identify policy areas that offer the most promise for future research. We further suggest that – in addition to theoretical development – substantive empirical work is also required to develop a real understanding of the disconnect between policies intended to support nascent women entrepreneurs and those designed to provide operational business support for existing women entrepreneurs.

The implication of our study led to three other major research questions that we invite scholars, academics, practitioners, and policymakers to reflect on, specifically in the context of women's entrepreneurship in developing countries. These are as follows:

1. What might the impact be of contextualising women's entrepreneurship policy in developing countries?
  - Exploring the impact of context on women's entrepreneurship policy development ***in other developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa***, and comparing findings with those of our Tanzanian study could yield important insights. Where possible, augmenting such evidence with qualitative case studies to provide a more in-depth understanding of how real women entrepreneurs 'do' entrepreneurship in different (and often disadvantaged) contexts could add more impact and contribute to this conversation.
2. Are there any potential impacts of positive categorisation in relation to women?
  - It is important that policymakers ***refrain from bundling women into broad disadvantaged groups with negative connotations*** that serve to further subordinate women and spotlight the notion of women as 'other' and constantly needing to be 'fixed'.

manage these at any time. To continue with our standard settings click "Accept". To find out more and manage your cookies, click "Manage cookies"

useful evidence of what does and does not work and will provide a rationale for the need to **contextualise women's entrepreneurship policy** and the benefits that can be achieved by doing so.

## Reference

Nziku, D. M. and Henry, C. (2020). "Policies for Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in Developing Countries: The Case of Tanzania". *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, 10(1), 38-58.

---

Share this content

