

Chapter 21

Women Entrepreneurship and Rural Development: Solutions From DAWN Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the relationship between women's entrepreneurship and rural development within the framework of feminist and postcolonial theories. It highlights the shortcomings of mainstream economic approaches and development theories, emphasizing the importance of alternative perspectives that take into account the unique challenges faced by women, particularly in the Global South. The DAWN network works for gender equality and sustainable development by combining feminist and postcolonial perspectives. The chapter highlights the importance of supporting women's entrepreneurship in rural development and the need for strategies that take into account local conditions and gender dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The welfare of citizens remains a fundamental concern for states, regardless of the economic system - whether liberal or command system. In developing countries, the “development challenge” is typically analyzed through economic, social and human development frameworks. Development challenges have deeply affected disadvantaged groups such as the poor, migrants, women and children (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Various solutions are needed to improve the economic and social situation of these groups, especially for women, who are often marginalized. While traditional development focuses on economic growth, feminist and postcolonial critiques emphasize that development needs to be more comprehensive, addressing social and cultural contexts (Escobar, 1995; Mohanty, 2003).

Mainstream development approaches often generalize solutions, leading to the exclusion of local and marginalized groups. Post-development scholars advocate for localized and diverse development approaches that empower local communities to define their own development processes (Escobar, 1995). These approaches criticize mainstream methods for erasing cultural diversity and imposing Western-centered development models (Nandy, 2010). In particular, the intersection of feminist and postcolonial

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critiques in development theory offers insights into how mainstream economic discourse marginalizes women and populations of the global South by associating them with irrationality and sentimentality, thereby excluding them from knowledge production (Wajcman, 1991).

Consistent with feminist perspectives, postcolonial criticism also emphasizes the imperialist nature of Western science and economics, where the scientific revolution is said to have contributed to racial and gendered hierarchies (Harding, 1986). This leads to the perpetuation of social inequalities through economic policies in which neoliberalism has played an important role, especially since the 1980s. Neoliberal policies have further increased social inequalities, especially in developing countries (Harvey, 2005).

DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) represents an important organization that combines postcolonial and feminist perspectives to offer alternative frameworks for development. Founded in 1984, DAWN focuses on gender equality, sustainable development and social justice in the global South. The organization advocates for grassroots development strategies, recognizing the importance of women's entrepreneurship in rural development as a tool for empowering women and promoting local growth (ESCAP, 2021).

In rural development, mainstream development approaches often fall short. More localized strategies that emphasize women's empowerment through entrepreneurship are crucial to promote sustainable development. As Ellis and Biggs (2001) suggest, rural development should be seen as a region-specific practice rather than one that fits universal development models. DAWN's vision aligns with this by promoting policies that develop women's capabilities and leadership, thereby improving their communities.

As a result, the integration of feminist and postcolonial perspectives into development theory provides a more inclusive and locally focused approach to rural development, while offering valuable insights into the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women. DAWN exemplifies how these perspectives can intersect to create sustainable and equitable development strategies that challenge mainstream economic approaches (Bhambra, 2007).

In this framework, firstly, rural development strategies and the conceptual and theoretical differences between mainstream development approaches and rural development will be discussed. Afterwards, DAWN's views will be introduced in the context of post-development conceptions, and solution strategies for rural development and women's entrepreneurship will be discussed from DAWN perspective.

A Historical Overview of Mainstream and Rural Development Concepts

In the context of mainstream development, it is a common practice to support policies that aim to elevate the status of third world countries to a level commensurate with that of developed countries, while simultaneously pursuing economic growth. One might argue that this phenomenon can be traced back to the economic growth-oriented economic policies that were globally influential from the second half of the 18th century until the Second World War. During this period, which corresponds to the construction process of modern economics, it can be argued that the discipline of economics became an independent social science, establishing its own disciplinary boundaries. In other words, there is a clear relationship between the construction of modern economics and the motivation for economic growth. While the expression of economic indicators in quantifiable terms has become more prevalent in the context of neo-classical economics, it can be argued that the scientific revolution that has shaped economic thought since the mid-18th century finds its counterpart in the classical economics approach. In this context, it

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