

## PART III

# **The Social Innovators: Muslim Women Entrepreneurs In Uzbekistan**

**Presented**

**by**

**Angeline Low**

Email: [Angeline.Low@uts.edu.au](mailto:Angeline.Low@uts.edu.au)

# Status of Women in Uzbekistan

- Women's participation rate in economic activity is around 66% compared to 82% for men (SSD, 2002).
- ratio of women who are employed and who have higher education is 18%  
(ratio of men who are employed and who have higher education is 17.3%)
- Only 24.4% of women hold managerial positions in government organizations.

- More women than men work in public health sector (76%)  
education, culture, art, science and scientific services sector (73%)
- Market economy  
Since independence, the transition to a market economy in Uzbekistan is slow and women are disadvantaged in the labour market
- A patriarchal society
- Women's dissatisfaction with the slow change process in Uzbekistan gave rise to women's activism  
1991- only one women's NGO  
2003- 240 women's groups/associations/NGOs  
2004- clamp down on NGOs, funds frozen

# Motivations For Business Entry

## Literature Review

- The literature on the motivation for founding a business is well established, however set in male-dominant terrain.
- There is much debate on whether women are “pushed” or “pulled” into business, but tend to overlook the experience of immigrant women.
- Ethnic entrepreneurship studies often focus on social and economic structures and on males.
- The experience of immigrant women entrepreneurs in a predominant Anglo Saxon society is not adequately explained.

# Why Women Go Into Business?

## Literature on Women's Entrepreneurship

### 1. Disenchantments over employment

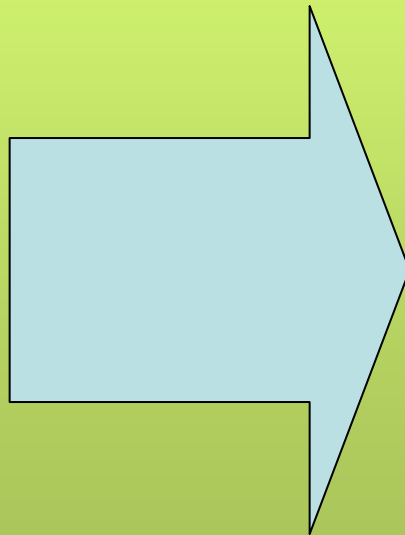
Glass ceiling

Glass walls  
challenges

Glass doors

Sticky floors  
stereotyping

Accent ceiling



Need for greater control

Need for more

Need to escape

Need to reject

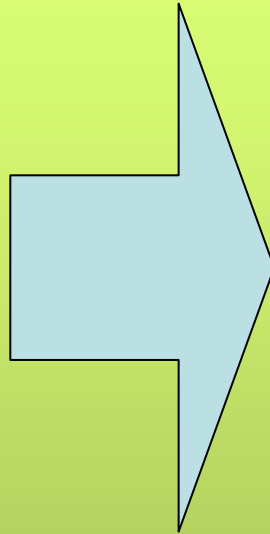
Need for flexibility

# Entrepreneurship Motivators

## Literature on Women's Entrepreneurship

### 2. Desire for Independence

Financial security  
Personal achievement  
Domestic constraints  
Autonomy



Need for greater control  
Need to escape  
Need for flexibility  
Need to reject stereotyping  
Need for more challenges

# Entrepreneurship Motivators

## GEM STUDY

### 3. OPPORTUNITY VERSUS NECESSITY



### 4. PULL VERSUS PUSH

# Research Questions

1. What motivates a group of women in Uzbekistan in starting their own businesses and creating employment for others in an environment where the economic and political structures are underdeveloped?
2. What is the relationship between entrepreneurship and social innovation amongst Uzbekistani women entrepreneurs?
3. What are the policy implications to increase women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan?

# Key Research Propositions

1. More women in Uzbekistan are pushed into entrepreneurship.
2. Social innovation is an outcome of female entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan.

# Research Method

- In depth interviews with
  - 25 Uzbek women entrepreneurs
  - 12 family members
  - Women leaders in politics and women organisations
- Interviews were conducted in Tashkent in April 2007
- Interviews were semi-structured, most questions open-ended.

# Research Method (contd)

- Recruitment of subjects: snow-balling references.

Subjects were identified through support given by senior academics at the:

National University of Uzbekistan,  
University of Oriental (Eastern) Languages, and  
University of World Languages.

A matured Research Assistant with contacts to women entrepreneurs was recruited to coordinate the interviews.

# The Sample

## Age Groups

- > 60 yrs old 4
- 50- 59 yrs old 10
- 40-49 yrs old 8
- 30-39 yrs old 2
- Under 30 1

Significance: most experienced Soviet era and received Soviet education

# The Sample

## Education

The UMWEs in the sample are highly qualified

First university degree 19

Doctorates 4

Vocational 2

Qualifications of this group of women include medicine (western and medieval), gynaecology-obstetrics, law, philosophy, science, chemistry, bacteriology, physics, architecture, cinematography, polygraph, engineering, linguistics and economics.

# Types of Businesses

## **No resemblance:**

the business that they first established and the business they own at the time of the study, often bear no resemblance to their tertiary qualifications and little to their work history.

***This finding is significant.***

# Types of Businesses

A sampling of the businesses that this group of women are engaged in include:

dress making, sale of cosmetics, hairdressing, interior designing, medical services, medical centres, tuition and coaching centres, bakeries and manufacturing of confectioneries, publishing, magazines, book retailing, stationery stores, property development, mobile phone services and to the import of consumer and industrial products.

***This finding is significant.***

# Types of Businesses

*This finding is significant. Why?*

**It suggests career dislocation,  
labour market barriers and  
blocked mobility**

Gender issues is often overlooked in entrepreneurship studies, especially in marginalised groups

# Why go into business?

- answers were not straightforward
- reasons clouded in revelations of other events in their lives.
- none of the women gave a single answer to the research question.
- the personal and financial risks were not even considered or calculated nor thought to be insurmountable when they first decided to open a business.

# **Why go into business?**

Reasons are complex and often multi-linear.

Each reason is interrelated with the next, but common themes emerged when analysing the interviews.

# Necessity vs Opportunity an over-simplification?

the reasons for entry into entrepreneurship are as diverse as the group of women themselves.

## **Necessity or opportunity?**

**For UMWEs reasons are intersectional  
and are complex**

# Necessity vs Opportunity an over-simplification?

*Important finding:*

Necessity entrepreneurship in the case of the UMWEs is not because of lack of employment options,

but more because of low pay in employment that they are not able to financially support themselves and their families.

# Reasons Why Uzbekistan Women Decide To Start a Business

Reasons For Going Into Business	Manifestation of Reason	
Self-Actualisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I work for my own enjoyment</li> <li>- I want to be independent</li> <li>- I want to realize myself</li> <li>- I wanted to find my own way</li> </ul>	
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to give my children a good education</li> <li>- to support my family</li> <li>- to earn more money for my children</li> <li>- to provide employment for family</li> </ul>	
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- we were poor</li> <li>- we started our lives from zero</li> <li>- I want to make money</li> <li>- they discriminated against me</li> <li>- my salary is not enough</li> <li>- even though I worked in a high position, my income was low</li> </ul>	
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it is an opportunity to start business in post Soviet</li> <li>- after my country went independent I decided to take the opportunity</li> <li>- I found how to make money</li> </ul>	
Social Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is the aim of my life to help other people</li> <li>- I want to provide handicapped women with free services</li> </ul>	

# **Intersections of Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation**

## **THREE CASE STUDIES**

to demonstrate the intersections of one or more of the seven reasons given so as to explain the diversities and complexities in entrepreneurship and social innovation of the UMWEs.

# **CASE ONE: Masuda's Experience**

## **Intersections of**

- Self-Actualisation
- Social Contribution
- Family

# CASE ONE: Masuda

## Intersections of Self-Actualisation, Social Contribution and Family:

- A teacher... became a publisher of a lifestyle & celebrity magazine (print and online)
- **Social Innovation through:**
  1. the power to influence changes in social values and norms in her country – using her magazine to educate and influence... build social capital
  2. the power to overcome cultural barriers at home

***women's entrepreneurship impacts on family and marital relationships and potentially socially reconstructs gender roles at home.***

# **CASE TWO: Shariza's Experience**

## **Intersections of**

- Self-Actualisation
- Social Contribution
- Policies
- Economy

**CASE TWO: Shariza's Experience**  
**Intersections of Self-Actualisation, Social Contribution, Policies**  
**and Economy:**

- A university graduate in Economics and with more than thirty other training certificates
- adviser to the Foreign Economics Relations Minister
- founder of a businesswomen's association
- operates one of the largest bread factories in Uzbekistan

**CASE TWO: Shariza's Experience**  
**Intersections of Self-Actualisation, Social**  
**Contribution, Policies and Economy:**

**Class resource shapes entrepreneurship**  
**Social innovation requires vision and leadership**

“I wanted to set up the bakery to provide employment to the poor people in my *Mahallah* (community)”

“they are proud to work here, they have dignity”

“I am happy to give jobs to the handicapped. Now even my handicapped staff has the financial means to get married and to support their families of their own as a result.”

**In her bakery, half of her employees (35) have physical disabilities.**

# **CASE THREE: Shahlo's Experience**

## **Intersections of**

- Poverty
- Labour Market Barriers
- Wealth Creation
- Self-Actualisation

## **CASE THREE: Shahlo's Experience**

### **Intersections of Poverty, Labour Market Barriers, Wealth Creation and Self-Actualisation**

- a qualified medical doctor
- wants to be an entrepreneur with the aim to make money as “doctor’s salary is very low and you can’t get another job”
- moved with husband from a small town to the capital city
- At the time they were poor. “We had to start our new life from zero, no house and we needed money”.
- While she worked, she directed her husband to start a business, but the ideas were mainly hers.
- She started her business from buying goods from people who bought them on their overseas trips and sold to her. “I did not have the money to pay them” she said, but “I paid after the goods were sold.”
- reflective of the state of the economy at the time where under the Soviet rule

## **CASE THREE: Shahlo's Experience**

### **Intersections of Poverty, Labour Market Barriers, Wealth Creation and Self-Actualisation**

- resigned from her job and took over the business fulltime from her husband.
- Today she employs 25 people.
- The wealth created from her business is able to support her children's education in the USA and asset accumulation.
- Today, she owns two office premises, shop houses and is a leading distributor in her industry.

## **CASE THREE: Shahlo's Experience**

### **Intersections of Poverty, Labour Market Barriers, Wealth Creation and Self-Actualisation**

Shahlo is able not only to improve the educational opportunities for her children, but also to help some of her more able staff to start up their own businesses.

**“If you want to be prosperous, you must never forget your past”**

**Shahlo proclaimed that she had successfully trained 15 new women entrepreneurs.**

“When I first employ the person, I say to her, you should stay with me for at least two years, you can learn everything and when you want to start your own business, I will help you.”

# Policy Implications

- Encourage and support women's entrepreneurship
- Encourage and support more women to participate in social innovation through their entrepreneurship, to build social and community capital at higher levels

# Future Research

- Comparative studies of different groups of women
- Comparative study of women in other countries
- Comparative study of males and females
- Longitudinal approach

# Concluding Remarks

More research is needed to recognise  
the social innovation and contribution  
of female entrepreneurs  
in the  
entrepreneurship literature

# Acknowledgment

This presentation speaks for the many women in Uzbekistan whose voices are not heard in the entrepreneurship literature and their socio-economic contributions overlooked.

*I wish to thank UTS for funding this research under the Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow Award and to my Academic Advisers, Prof Jock Collins, Prof Jenny Onyx and Prof Louise Edwards for their support and encouragement to push the boundary of knowledge.*

# My current research projects:

The Change Leaders: Muslim Women  
Entrepreneurs in Australia and Uzbekistan  
(funded by UTS Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow Award)

The Change Leaders: Muslim Women  
Entrepreneurs in Australia and Canada  
(funded by UTS Early Career Researcher Grant)

[Angeline.Low@uts.edu.au](mailto:Angeline.Low@uts.edu.au)

# Thank You's

- The Academy of the Humanities for the Visiting Scholarship 2009 awarded to Prof Gulkhumor Tuychieva
- The UTS Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre for hosting Prof Tuychieva and Dr Angeline Low (UTS-CCS) for facilitating the Speaking Circuit.
- UNIFEM and The Australian Institute of International Affairs, NSW,
- The Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, Australian National University,
- The National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies Australia, University of Melbourne, and
- The School of Social Science, The University of Queensland