

CACCI

40th Anniversary & 21st Conference

October 30 – November 2, 2006

Taipei, Taiwan

“Promoting Woman Entrepreneurship in the Region”

Speech; by

Ms. Mukta Nandini Jain, President FLO, New Delhi, India

Good afternoon

Ms. Shelley Wang, Ms. Nasreen Awal Mintoo, Dr. Manju Kalra

Prakash, Distinguished guests and invitees,

on behalf of India and my own, I would like to thank CACCI for inviting me to this 40th Anniversary and 21st CACCI Conference in Taipei the beautiful City of Taiwan.

It is a great privilege to be present at this august gathering to address on the “Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in the CACCI Region”.

Since Independence and especially since the economic reforms that started in 1991 India has made rapid progress in many areas of development. However, there is still a lot that can be done. India is the world's largest democracy with strengths in human resources that are now beginning to bear fruit. How far we will be able to tap this aspect with special reference to the women is of great interest to FLO. As we face this century we recognize the numerous challenges and opportunities that lie ahead with optimism. With increasing global trade and inter-dependence there are many areas of economic development that can benefit women in various aspects of their life. Much can be done in terms of strengthening women's leadership, their confidence, their bargaining power within and outside their homes. Their representation in policymaking and decision making in issues that concern women of different social and economic strata are some of the core areas on which FLO as a organization is directing its efforts.

Women's growth and development occurs when they have work and income security, food security, when they are healthy, are able to access childcare and provide a roof over their heads. FLO is moving in this direction of employment and self-reliance through ones own

enterprise. When women become entrepreneurs or self-employed, women become strong and visible. Their tremendous economic and social contributions become recognized.

Most of the women involved in self-employment face certain challenges like low level of skill, local raw materials, and marketing and finance facilities. In India FLO has tried to address this issue of low levels of skills by providing regular workshops on skill enhancement. This has led to women from various lifestyles to enter into active businesses of their own. They are no longer dependent on someone else, but on the contrary are able to provide job opportunities to other women and men. They understand better the problems faced by other women, they manage families and are continuously multi tasking.

As an example Lijjat Papad, which started on a cottage level, became a symbol of economic enfranchisement for women. Lijjat is an enterprise managed solely by women. The prime reason for its success can be attributed to adherence to some core principles and practices by its members and by laying great stress on maintaining quality. They believed and practiced principles of co-operation and collective ownership in the process built an institution that can

compete and survive in a fiercely competitive market on its own strength. It is gradual up scaling of a cottage industry through a systematic production process, with a keen eye for detail leading to high quality standards, timeliness and creating a market, which was carved out through systematic brand building over the years. Cash only sales ensure ready availability of funds, which are required in the business for rapid and continuous growth. A daily record of sales and payments gives a tremendous sense of discipline to both workers and managers and must be developed and evolved to the level of an ethic. Despite the effort required it must be treated as routine and not exceptional. All this will ensure women to be in a position to manage changing times and allow them to explore new and emerging markets. When women without any formal training can manage a successful enterprise, it supports the notion that entrepreneurship is acquired asset and can always be attained.

Decentralized production methodology works well for women. It ensures that women do not have to leave their homes for work and allows them flexible working schedule, enabling them to discharge other household responsibilities. This ensure larger participation of women in economic activity. Men are also less hostile to women

working at home for extra income rather than traveling to a workplace. Not all enterprises may be suitable to such situations of decentralized production but the ones like food, clothes etc. will face greater success.

We must also look at women in developing countries and tap on their intuitive intelligence and self-learning skills to develop and enable them to realize their potential. Lijjat is a living example of truly homegrown model based on the belief that all women are highly entrepreneurial and only seek an enabling environment to realize their full potential. Responding to market demand, consistent high quality, quality reliability coupled with reasonable pricing and standardization will ensure a market niche. The virtue of word of mouth publicity based on the above principles will ensure a permanent market for the homegrown entrepreneur in the face of the emerging liberalization and competition faced due the entry of multinationals with large budget.

Women entrepreneurs have made important contributions to the industrial and economic development of their respective countries and are active participants in growth and development worldwide.

Women's business can absorb a large portion of National

employment and thereby contribute significantly to the GDP. All this has led to an increasing consensus amongst researchers, policy makers, government and non-governmental- organizations that women need to be brought the forefront to be economic along with emotional partners.

We all agree that women are vital and productive workers in the world and let us join hands to take this further especially in the CACCI region. With this I would like to end and express my gratitude for having invited me on behalf of FLO and India for this meaningful discussion. In India we have come a long way but would like to learn from our neighboring countries. On behalf of FLO I take this opportunity to compliment CACCI for organizing this conference on women entrepreneurs.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Thank you and Jai hind