

An Assessment of Government Entrepreneurship Programs for Women in Sabah Malaysia

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Abstract : In Asia, particularly in Malaysia women entrepreneurs contribute substantially to economic growth. This paper presents a review of the women entrepreneurs' program, focusing on the Creating Millionaires among Young Women Entrepreneurs (CREAM@YWE) program in Sabah Malaysia, which aims to accelerate entrepreneurship among young women in Sabah Malaysia. Entrepreneurs are seen as essential for growth, job creation and social progress and the virtues of small business for Sabah Maju Jaya (SMJ), the Sabah state government Sabah State development plan for the year 2021-2025. SMJ guides the direction of the government's policies and programs, further guiding the implementation in a planned and strategic manner to achieve targets and goals that coincide with the development needs of the state. One of the government's agenda is to put its efforts more strongly to ensure that women entrepreneurs are well supported and enhanced. Thus, The CreaM@YWE Program was developed in 2018 with the main objective is to producing competitive young women entrepreneurs in Sabah and achieving 'millionaire' status. CreaM@YWE Program is an innovation process specifically developed to accelerate the entrepreneurship sector, particularly for women entrepreneurs in Sabah, by incorporating strategic partnerships and collaborations with government agencies and industry players. Being the first of its kind in Sabah, this project is providing a supportive ecosystem, including six months of intensive courses guided through 'hands-holding', collaborations with strategic partners and easy access to government assistance. Since its inception, the program has significantly impacted society's wellbeing, particularly in empowering young women entrepreneurs in Sabah for the past six years and has produced many successful women entrepreneurs with 'millionaire' status. Generally, improving women's enterprise sector in Malaysia needs an overall enabling environment that allows development opportunities for women entrepreneurs including access to resources and support services. Since achieving the goal of women's entrepreneurship policy requires effective partnerships and inclusiveness, Cream @YWE Program has managed to practice these in assisting small entrepreneurs among young women in Sabah in accessing public goods and business opportunities. This proves that achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment. Thus, this paper presents how Cream@YWE Program has been supporting Sabah young women entrepreneurs by reforming the business environment to help create opportunities for women, while addressing the few existing gender-specific hurdles.

Keywords : entrepreneurship programs, women, sabah, Malaysia

Conference Title : ICWDSD 2024 : International Conference on Women Deliver: Sustainable Development

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : December 09-10, 2024