



TRADE, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A PATH TO INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT



GLOBAL CONTEXT

Economic growth, as well as inclusive sustainable development, requires women's empowerment. Globalization through increased trade and investment has been associated with rising employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women. In some cases, however, it has exacerbated existing gender inequalities and worsened women's economic and social status. One key reason for this is that trade policies, as well as economic policies more generally, have long been gender-blind – they do not factor in the effects of different policies on women as a distinct and often disadvantaged group in the economy and in the society.

Mainstreaming gender in trade policy means ensuring that due consideration is given to gender inequalities and implications at every stage of the trade policy process: generating relevant evidence to inform decisions on trade policy; designing policies based on such evidence; and, later, supporting interventions on the ground to enable their successful implementation. Such an assessment helps to better understand the specific challenges and opportunities that women face from markets, to design and implement complementary policies aimed at maximizing opportunities for women and to facilitate women's access to more competitive markets.

UNCTAD has been conducting analytical work on gender and trade policy since the early 2000s. This extensive experience in accompanying and monitoring the gender dimension of trade led to the establishment in 2010 of a dedicated work programme on trade, gender and development.



WHAT ARE SOME STEPS TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING GENDER?

Programme activities are aimed at building the human and institutional capacities of key national stakeholders – policymakers and trade practitioners – to mainstream gender in trade policies. Activities encompass country and regional studies, micro-level interventions on specific issues, such as cross-border trade, a teaching package, and a trade and gender toolbox.

Country and regional studies contain an analysis of the country's or region's trade flows that identifies sectors that have been positively or negatively affected by trade and market opening, their repercussions on women, especially in the labour market and the existing scope for using trade policy – and complementary policies – as a tool for gender equality and women's empowerment. The studies also consider the bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements to which a country is a party. Country and regional studies are initiated at the request of Governments. The counterpart ministry or agency is involved throughout the process and takes ownership of the policy recommendations.

New expertise has been developed in the area of informal cross-border trade to address the challenges of women who engage in small-scale informal trade activities across borders. Through new analysis and capacity-building activities, UNCTAD has been supporting selected countries to leverage informal cross-border trade for the empowerment of women, raising informal traders' awareness about trade procedures, their rights and obligations, and the benefits of formalization, and equipping them with skills and knowledge aimed to improve their business, and ultimately, to boost trade and economy-wide development.

The teaching package on trade and gender aims to strengthen understanding of the links between trade and gender and the capacities to formulate gender-sensitive trade policies. It targets academics, policymakers and representatives of civil society involved in research, teaching, policy formulation and implementation and advocacy work on trade and gender. The teaching package consists of a training manual and online courses, namely a standard course addressed to stakeholders in all developing regions, and region-focused courses that address trade and gender issues within a specific economic grouping. The standard course contains three modules and spans seven weeks; the regional courses contain an additional teaching module and span eight weeks. UNCTAD has developed regional courses for the member countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, East African Community and Southern African Development Community. It is developing additional courses for the Southern Common Market – MERCOSUR – and Central America regions, and a topical module focused on the impact on women of technological upgrading in agriculture.

The trade and gender toolbox is the first attempt to provide a systematic framework to evaluate the impact of trade reforms on women and gender inequalities prior to their implementation. The methodology has been



applied to date to a specific trade agreement, namely the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the East African Community, and is used to assess the likely impact of the Economic Partnership Agreement, mainly through employment, on gender equality and the well-being of women in Kenya, a partner country in the East African Community. The same methodology can be used to assess the gender-related impacts of any other trade agreement or trade reform in other countries. This form of ex ante gender analysis aims to answer the question: what may happen to women if a given trade policy were implemented?

✓ RESULTS AND IMPACTS AT A GLANCE

The UNCTAD programme on trade, gender and development has been under way for almost 10 years, supporting countries in finding ways to use trade as a tool for empowering women and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. Referring to UNCTAD activities on cross-border trade, Ambassador Margret Mary Lungu Kaemba of Zambia said: *“This project is critical in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of alleviating poverty and improving the livelihoods of the women traders in our countries – and not just the women but the livelihoods of their families as well. My Government is committed to addressing the challenges these women face and working with UNCTAD on this issue.”*

UNCTAD work on the analysis of the multifaceted gender ramifications of trade has contributed to raising awareness of the importance of conducting ex ante gender impact assessments of trade agreements. Since the launch of the Trade and Gender Toolbox, the methodology has been applied by the European Commission in the sustainability impact assessments in support of the modernization of the trade pillar of the European Union–Chile Association Agreement and in the free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand to gauge the possible impacts of the agreements on women.

Recent capacity-building activities in the Pacific region have drawn stakeholders’ attention to how the technical cooperation provisions included in trade agreements – in particular of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus – can be used to strengthen women’s role in the economy. *“I am now aware that the Agreement can provide support for women to start their business and get engaged in trade”*, said a participant in the national workshop on trade and gender held in Tarawa, Kiribati, in October 2019.

Six iterations of the standard online course on trade and gender (five in English and one in French) have been offered since 2015. Iterations of region-specific courses were conducted for stakeholders in the East African Community and Southern African Development Community in 2018 and in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa in English and French in 2017 and 2019. To date, over 900 stakeholders in 138 countries have received training through UNCTAD online courses on trade and gender. Starting in 2020, the courses will also be available in Spanish.

Most participants agreed that the courses had met or exceeded their expectations and enhanced their knowledge of trade and gender links. According to the feedback received, the courses had succeeded in preparing participants to conduct their own research on the topic and/or incorporate trade and gender-based concepts into their teaching and policy-related work.



“The course was very good in all spheres. I enjoyed the course materials, tutor and fellow participants, who shared their various ideas from around the globe. I have developed new skills and ideas on the content itself and this will take me to another level in my career and aspirations. I look forward to more challenging opportunities. Thank you.”

Participant in the 2019 edition of the standard online course

“I generally expected mainly theory on the module but the practical examples and practical situations given were so valuable to me beyond what I perceived the course to be like.”

Participant in the online course devoted to the Southern African Development Community, 2018



PROGRAMME FACTS AND FIGURES

Scope: all regions

Start date: 2010

Country studies: 7

Regional studies: 6

Online courses: 11

Trade agreements analysed through the Trade and Gender Toolbox methodology: 1

Website: unctad.org/gender



Sustainable Development Goals addressed:

Directly: 5, 8

Indirectly: 1, 10, 17



DONORS/FUNDING SOURCE (2014–2019)

Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Trade Mark East Africa, United Nations Development Account