

# A Gender Analytical Framework

for the agreements and work  
of the World Trade Organization



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# About the paper

This report supports the World Trade Organization (WTO) Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender by offering an analytical framework outlining trade and trade-related impacts on women (and men) through the employment, consumption and public provision channels. It presents a step-by-step approach to integrate gender concerns in various WTO operations.

The paper finds that a multi-pronged approach is needed to strengthen commitment to gender equality during trade analysis, negotiations and policy implementation. This entails building capacity, raising public awareness, coordination among policymakers in different ministries and an engaged dialogue among policymakers, researchers, civil society and women's groups at every stage.

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# Foreword

Gender equality is fundamental. Without equality, economies cannot grow to their full potential and societies cannot fully rebuild.

Equality isn't a 'nice to have' in a communique or a speech. It's an all-hands-on-deck effort to transform society and create a more just society – to dig into and improve underlying structures, institutions and rules.

We now know that policies are powerful instruments to increase the participation of businesses in international value chains and the benefits they accrue. We know that these opportunities and benefits differ for women and men.

It has taken time and many years of patient effort by a dedicated group of women and men around the world – but the tide is turning. Trade policies are finally beginning to respond to gender equality.

The fact that 127 countries have joined the 2017 Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment is a testament to the growing recognition that trade needs to be central to advancing women's participation in trade and achieving our collective commitments under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.

The establishment of the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender was an additional step to bring gender equality within the work of the WTO. The challenge for many governments is how to translate political will into practical guidelines and recommendations across WTO agreements and processes.

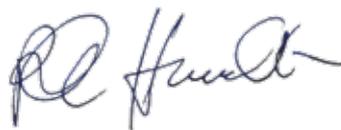
This publication answers that challenge. It responds to the call from policymakers for a practical guide to create WTO rules and processes that are more inclusive. Gender mainstreaming ensures that trade and trade-related policies promote opportunities that are more equitable rather than perpetuate inequalities.

This guide offers a tool to mainstream gender across many aspects of the WTO. It presents several options on negotiations, implementation and monitoring issues, among others.

I would like to thank the European Commission for its longstanding support of the International Trade Centre's work on women and trade over the past decade and the SheTrades Initiative, which made this publication possible.

The International Trade Centre will continue to do its part by helping policymakers make their trade strategies more inclusive, through specialized toolkits, publications and online policy tools.

Our hope is that this knowledge sparks thought, commitment and action within the trade and development community.



Pamela Coke-Hamilton  
Executive Director  
International Trade Centre

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# Acronyms

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, and all references to tons are to metric tons.

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
GPA	Government Procurement Agreement
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IFD	Investment Facilitation for Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
WTO	World Trade Organization

# Executive summary

This paper provides a step-by-step guide for integrating gender equality concerns in various operations of World Trade Organization (WTO). It begins by establishing a common understanding of key concepts and principles through which trade policies may affect the economic empowerment of women. It then provides an example of questions, divided into six steps, to help policymakers operationalize a gender lens in their work at various junctures of a WTO agreement.

The first step to apply a gender lens to trade policy involves clearly defining concepts and principles and proposing a rigorous analytical framework for examining a particular agreement or reform. This guide takes a broad view of the economy as comprising both paid market activities and unpaid care activities that promote human capacity development, without which economic growth is not sustainable.

It defines the economic empowerment of women as an improvement in the ability of marginalized women to make choices and a widening in the range and quality of income-earning opportunities available to them. It

explains that facilitating empowerment through trade is not simply about including women in international trade activities per se. It must involve improving their terms of inclusion in international value chains and other trade-related employment opportunities.

It must also involve considering how trade rules and regulations affect gender dynamics in other spheres of economic and social life. For international trade to be conducive to women's economic empowerment, the focus of policy must be especially on supporting women who are marginalized due to their socioeconomic circumstances, the stage in their life cycle (e.g. mothers of young children), where they live (e.g. remote rural areas) or other barriers they face (e.g. women with disabilities).

The analytical framework outlined in this guide considers three distinct channels through which trade-related changes in prices, regulations and production structures can differently affect different groups of women and men: the employment channel, the consumption channel and the public provision channel.



Gender-differentiated employment effects from trade expansion and liberalization are to be expected, because of the different distribution of women and men across tradable and non-tradable sectors, employment statuses and occupations, combined with limited substitutability between female and male labour due to gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation. Gender-differentiated intra-household consumption effects are likely to occur because women and men, younger and older people, have different decision-making power and different needs – for healthcare and nutrition, for example.

In relation to food and nutrition, gender-differentiated impacts may arise because of prevailing norms assigning women primary responsibility for purchasing and preparing food. Finally, gender-differentiated public provision effects may occur if trade agreements and related policy changes affect terms of access to social services and their quality. This is because women tend to make more use of public services given their lower incomes and their greater responsibilities for unpaid care.

Assessing whether trade and trade rules are gender-equitable requires paying attention to the conditions under which trade-related processes affect women (and men) in their multiple roles: as workers, business owners, producers (included under 'employment effects'), consumers, care providers and users of services (included under 'consumption' and 'public provision' effects).

Everyone – both women and men – plays various roles that inevitably overlap: a producer may also be a trader and most women and men undertaking any form of paid or unpaid work are also consumers of market goods and rights-holders entitled to public services. There is likely to be interaction between roles, and the effects of trade for each individual woman (or man) are likely to involve gains in some dimensions and losses in others.



# Chapter 1

## Objectives

This guide provides a map with concrete suggestions for integrating gender equality concerns in various operations of the World Trade Organization (WTO), ranging from agreements and negotiations to reviewing national trade policy and monitoring to building the trade capacity of developing economies.

The overarching objective is twofold:

- To strengthen the capacity of the WTO to facilitate women's economic empowerment through trade-related initiatives.
- To ensure that global trade rule-setting does not inadvertently undermine the pursuit of gender equality commitments by national governments (for example, by undermining women's economic livelihoods and/or limiting policy space for future government action to promote the full realization of women's economic and other rights).

The rest of this guide is structured into two parts:

- The first, which includes Chapters 2 and 3, clarifies key definitions and basic principles for how trade policies can empower women economically and outlines a conceptual framework to assess the potential gender-differentiated effects of trade.
- The second part, seen in Chapter 4, offers examples of questions that should be asked at every stage of design and implementation to operationalize a gender lens throughout the various stages of a WTO agreement – from ex-ante assessments, legal frameworks and mechanisms for voice and representation to Aid for Trade and selecting indicators for monitoring and evaluation. It is important to note, however, that this guide offers concrete suggestions and a roadmap, but does not delve into the details of any specific trade policy area.

The sample of questions offered in Chapter 4 is subdivided into six steps as follows:

- The first step involves asking questions on the full range of gender implications that the proposed trade policy or agreement may have, guided by the principles outlined in the first part of this guide.

- The second step involves examining whether the rules included in the agreement are likely to affect domestic laws, regulations and other policies important to protect and promote women's rights.
- The third step is about finding mechanisms to ensure that the voices of women's groups, civil society organizations and gender focal points in ministries are given adequate weight during negotiations, and that greater diversity of civil society representation in trade decision-making arenas is ensured.
- The fourth step requires establishing mechanisms and setting out targets and indicators to monitor progress on gender equality objectives during implementation of trade agreements and policies, and identifying complementary national and local policies needed to ensure that the benefits of the trade measure are equitably shared.
- The fifth step aims to mainstream a gender perspective across all areas of Aid for Trade and ensure that women's multiple roles are accounted for in the design and implementation of programmes on the ground.
- Finally, the sixth step involves collecting relevant data to examine the full range of mechanisms through which trade can facilitate or hinder women's economic empowerment, selecting appropriate indicators to monitor implementation and women's inclusion in decision-making processes, and selecting teams with the right gender expertise to undertake assessments and monitoring.

Each step is illustrated with selected findings from four technical papers that have applied the gender lens framework to the topics of government procurement, e-commerce, trade facilitation and investment facilitation for development.

Chapter 5 concludes by recapitulating the three channels that underpin the analytical framework – the employment, consumption and public provision channels – as well as the six groups of questions that will help policymakers operationalize a gender lens across their work on WTO agreements.

# Chapter 2

## Defining women's economic empowerment and implications for policy focus

### Definition

Many international organizations have adopted the language of women's economic empowerment, but definitions and policy emphasis vary across institutions. In the academic literature, efforts to conceptualize women's empowerment, and even to measure it, are countless.

This guide draws on seminal work by Amartya Sen and Naila Kabeer<sup>1</sup> and adopts the definition of empowerment as an improvement in the ability of marginalized women to make choices, and in the range of livelihood options they can choose from, thus leading to their greater well-being. In Kabeer's words, empowerment is the '... expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them'.

The policy significance of this definition is that it demands attention to the living conditions of women who are disadvantaged. Implicitly, this also means recognizing that women are not a homogeneous category and that the nature and extent of disadvantage is context-specific. This definition also emphasizes policies that widen the range and quality of income-earning opportunities available to women and go beyond, providing them with a means of survival.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that structural inequality cannot be challenged by simply enabling access to material resources at the level of individual women. Changes across different institutions and spheres of society are needed.

This guide takes a broad view of the economy as comprising both paid market activities and unpaid care activities that promote human capacity development, without which economic growth is not sustainable. It focuses on women's economic empowerment,

but acknowledges that the expansion of the rights, resources and capacity of women to make decisions and act independently (reflecting their empowerment) takes place in the economic, social and political spheres simultaneously.

As Kabeer notes, the distinction between economic and non-economic empowerment, and between 'the economic' and 'the social' more broadly, are false dichotomies.<sup>2</sup>

### Economic empowerment: Process and women's terms of inclusion in trade

Economic empowerment is a complex process and one that cannot be achieved by market participation alone.

The literature usually conceptualizes empowerment as a set of interrelated steps involving greater access to material (e.g. food, land, finance), human (e.g. knowledge, skills) and social resources (e.g. inclusive networks and institutions); changes in the terms on which resources are acquired (e.g. women have access to social protection in their own right rather than having to rely on a husband's income); greater decision-making and bargaining power; and, ultimately, a change in the structural causes of inequality (e.g. changes in economic practices that discriminate against women in paid work).<sup>3</sup>

Thus, facilitating women's empowerment through trade is not simply about including them in international trade activities per se. It involves improving their terms of inclusion in international value chains and other trade-related employment opportunities. It also involves considering how trade rules and regulations affects gender dynamics in other spheres of economic and social life.

1 Kabeer, N. (1999). 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment,' *Development and Change*. 30(3): pp. 435–64; Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf Double Day.

2 Kabeer, N. (2017). 'Economic versus Non-Economic Empowerment: Is It a False Dichotomy?' Blog. Accessed 5 December 2022. <http://seepnetwork.org/Blog-Post/Economic-versus-Non-Economic-Empowerment-Is-it-a-False-Dichotomy>.

3 Kabeer, N. (1999), op. cit.

## Women: Not a homogeneous category

Gender intersects with other sources of vulnerability such as race or ethnicity, migration status, place of residence and income or education level. It is therefore important to understand how changes in trade rules, and the flow of internationally traded goods and services, affect the distribution of economic resources and opportunities along all these dimensions of inequality.

For international trade to be conducive to women's economic empowerment, the focus of policy should be on especially supporting women who are further marginalized because of where they live (for example, remote rural areas), their socioeconomic circumstances or the stage in their life cycle (for example, mothers of young children).

## Trade and investment agreements affect most women and involve multiple dimensions

It is important to acknowledge that trade-related processes affect most women (and men), even when they are not directly involved in production and/or trading activities aimed at international markets. Gender implications of trade and investment agreements involve multiple dimensions, including not only changes in employment opportunities and livelihood options, but also availability of goods and services for consumption, changes in taxation structure, domestic regulations and public provision of care.

All of these should be considered when setting policy priorities to achieve goals of gender equality and economic inclusion.

## Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a path towards gender equality

Gender equality and women's empowerment are related. Gender equality means substantive equality in rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all women and men. The need to promote women's empowerment stems from the fact that gender equality has not yet been achieved and inequalities and discrimination persist in different domains.

This is true for most countries, although the extent of gender inequality and the form it takes vary by income level and socioeconomic context. For example, women's ownership rights tend to be weaker in low-income economies, but gender wage gaps remain significant in both low-income and high-income countries. High maternal mortality rates are a problem in countries with poor physical and health infrastructure, but violence against women and girls remains pervasive across countries in different stages of development, as well as across classes within countries.

In the words of UN Women:

*Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, and by doing unpaid care work at home. But they also remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Gender discrimination means that women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions. It curtails access to economic assets such as land and loans. It limits participation in shaping economic and social policies. And, because women perform the bulk of household work, they often have little time left to pursue economic opportunities.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> UN Women (n.d.). Economic Empowerment. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment>.



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## Global trade rules: International, regional and national commitment to gender equality

Many law and policy frameworks in support of gender equality exist at the international, regional and national levels. International commitments favouring women's economic empowerment include 'hard law' instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and several International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions supporting gender equality, as well as 'soft law' instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Regional commitments supporting gender equality include the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and SDGs. Virtually all national governments have

endorsed one or more of these international and regional instruments. They have also localized these gender equality commitments through their constitutions and a range of national and subnational laws, regulations and policies.

Trade and investment commitments should be designed to respect and support international, regional and national commitments to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. It is necessary to ensure that international trade rules – and the economic activities that flow from them – do not undermine international and regional commitments and domestic laws and policies that trading countries have put in place to protect and promote women's economic and other rights.

We acknowledge that these objectives require concerted efforts at many policy levels and by many actors, and cannot be achieved by trade-related actions alone.

# Chapter 3

## Key elements of an analytical framework: Trade policy and gender inequalities

Trade policies are implemented in economic structures with distinct gender patterns, and hence invariably have gender-differentiated effects. This is now documented by a rich body of literature.<sup>5</sup> Different groups of women and men face different economic opportunities and constraints and are assigned multiple but differing roles and responsibilities in both the domain of the market economy and the domain of unpaid care provisioning.

These differences mean the benefits of trade and investment agreements for women and men, and their ability to adjust to possible negative effects resulting from their implementation, are also likely to vary. Gender effects (and the potential 'winners' and 'losers' of trade reform) are also likely to vary by a country's economic structure and stage of development.

A framework frequently used to examine the distributional effects of trade liberalization identifies three distinct channels through which trade-related changes in prices, regulations and production structures can variously affect different groups of women and men.<sup>6</sup>

These are the **employment channel** (sectors that expand or contract may involve different kinds of workers and business owners), the **consumption channel** (changes in relative prices, range and quality of goods and services affect socioeconomic groups differently, due to different consumption needs) and the **public provision channel** (changes in the terms of access to social services and their quality are likely to have group-specific effects).

Gender and trade analysis should therefore consider gender distributional effects likely to result not only from job/business creation and destruction across production subsectors employing women and men to different degrees, but also from possible changes in the availability and quality of goods and services for consumption and care provision.

A comprehensive assessment would also take account of gender implications of trade-related topics such

as intellectual property, domestic services regulation, procurement, e-commerce and similar emerging regulatory issues. This chapter considers, in turn, employment, intra-household consumption, and public provision channels. Some considerations on information and communication technologies (ICT) as a cross-cutting issue are also included. It provides selected empirical evidence from low- and middle-income countries to substantiate the main points.

### Employment effects

Gender-differentiated employment effects from greater trade openness are to be expected because of the different distribution of women and men across tradable and non-tradable sectors and employment statuses (most notably self-employment vs wage work), combined with limited substitutability between female and male labour due to gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation. Trade expansion and liberalization lead to changes in the structure of production, with sectors producing for export likely to expand and those sensitive to import competition likely to contract.

This, in turn, may cause changes in the level and distribution of employment between different categories of workers, based on gender, skill, geographical location and employment status. Changes in the regulatory environment often associated with production for world markets can also be important determinants of the quality and security of trade-related employment. Small-scale producers and low-skilled workers (many of whom are women) frequently bear the brunt (e.g. women small farmers' lack of resources and difficulties in complying with internationally oriented food standard requirements).

In many developing countries, women working in manufacturing are heavily concentrated in the ready-made garment and food-processing sectors, usually in low-skilled positions and with limited opportunities

5 Menon, N., and Rodgers, Y. (2021) 'International Trade and Women Workers in the Global South' in Berik, G., & Kongar, E. (Eds.). (2021). *The Routledge Handbook of Feminist Economics* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429020612>; van Staveren, I., Elson, D., Grown, C., and Cagatay, N., Eds. (2007). *The Feminist Economics of Trade*, Routledge: London; Williams, M. (2004). *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System: A handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders*. The Commonwealth Secretariat: London.

6 Fontana, M. (2003). 'The Gender Effects of Trade Liberalization in Developing Countries: A Review of the Literature.' Sussex Discussion Paper in Economics; Bussolo, M., and De Hoyos, R.E., Eds. (2009) *Gender Aspects of the Trade and Poverty Nexus: A Macro-Micro Approach*. Palgrave and McMillan for the World Bank: Washington D.C.

for training and promotion.<sup>7</sup> Gender-based hierarchical segregation also tends to prevail in services enabled by manufacturing and/or facilitated by the development of new technologies such as jobs in the ICT sector.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, women are usually the majority of small-scale producers in agriculture, who tend to be disproportionately hurt by increased food imports and find it difficult to become independently involved in international value chains.<sup>9</sup>

Recent cross-country data analysis confirms that gender-based labour market segregation is remarkably persistent, not only in low- and middle-income countries, but also in high-income ones. In their household survey-based cross-country analysis of 69 countries in 1980–2011, Borrowman and Klasen (2019 and 2020) find that trade openness did little to erode such segregation. More specifically, they find that trade openness, measured as exports as a share of gross domestic product, has minimal (positive) impact on sectoral segregation and even increases occupational segregation.<sup>10</sup>

Women who work as business owners and/or own-account producers need more than just their own labour to be able to participate in export-oriented production. To achieve competitive advantage, they also need access to finance, technology, social networks, markets and freedom from other demands on their time. Social and gender inequalities structure access to and use of these crucial resources, often to the disadvantage of women.

Women's enterprise promotion policies and programmes in recent years have recognized and tried to address these issues, both domestically and in relation to trade, through Aid for Trade initiatives, for example. The evidence so far, however, suggests that women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) still struggle to run profitable businesses.

Furthermore, women small-scale producers in both agriculture and non-agricultural sectors might be particularly vulnerable to competition from low-cost imports produced by large companies. In many

countries, women-led businesses remain concentrated in low-profit retail and services activities and are unable to break into higher-profit male-dominated sectors.<sup>11</sup>

## Intra-household consumption effects

Trade induces changes in the relative prices of goods and services and can alter the range and quality of products available in a country. These changes have different impacts on different groups of households and, importantly, different individuals within households. The effects will vary depending on households' spending baskets and individual household members' command over household resources. Gender norms will shape which items are purchased for the benefit of specific household members.

Because women and men, and younger and older people, have different decision-making power and different needs (for example, for healthcare and nutrition), trade-induced changes in consumption goods and use of services will not affect them in the same way. In relation to food and nutrition, for example, gender-differentiated impacts may arise because of prevailing norms assigning women primary responsibility for buying and preparing food. Moreover, in some societies, when food is scarce and/or expensive, priority in terms of who eats first is often given to men and boys.<sup>12</sup>

The potential for cheaper food imports to help poor women better meet the consumption needs of their families, as well as their own, is often taken for granted but not always realized.<sup>13</sup> Whether women in poor households benefit from cheaper imported food depends on whether households are net producers or consumers of agricultural goods, the quality of the food imported and the gender norms governing intra-household food allocation.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, close attention should be paid to the impact of trade rules on food safety, the environment and access to affordable medicines (e.g. under the WTO

7 ILO (2018). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. ILO: Geneva.

8 Stiaritz, C., and Reis, J.G., Eds. (2013). *Global Value Chains, Economic Upgrading and Gender: Case Studies of Horticulture, Tourism and Call Center Industries*. The World Bank: Washington D.C.

9 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development and International Labour Organization (2010). *Gender Dimensions of Agricultural and Rural Employment: Differentiated Pathways out of Poverty* FAO, IFAD and ILO: Rome

10 Borrowman, Mary, and Klasen, Stephan (2020). 'Drivers of Gendered Sectoral and Occupational Segregation in Developing Countries,' *Feminist Economics*, 26:2, 62–94; ILO (2019). *A quantum leap for gender equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*. ILO: Geneva.

11 Goldstein, M., et al. (2019). 'Tackling the Global Profitarchy: Gender and the Choice of Business Sector,' Policy Research Working Paper 8865, World Bank.

12 Narayanan, S., Lentz, E., Fontana, M., De, A., and Kulkarni, B. (2019). 'Developing the Women's Empowerment in Nutrition Index in Two States of India.' *Food Policy*, vol 89 (December): 101780. doi:10.1016/j.foodpol.2019.101780.

13 Studies assessing the gender effects of cheaper imports are few and usually based on weak data and methodologies. For instance, De Pretis-Chauvin and Porto limit their analysis to a non-representative sample of female headed households (reported in World Bank and World Trade Organization (2020). *Women and Trade: The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality*. World Bank: Washington, D.C.).

14 Ibid.

Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), which have a gender dimension.<sup>15</sup>

New tools and data are needed to enable assessment of the intra-household gender effects likely to be associated with these measures. Within the domain of what is possible with existing data, methodological approaches that focus on detailed country-level price analysis of items such as staple foods, medicines, clothing and electrical equipment, and that differentiate by household groups with varied care needs, are more fruitful than approaches that use aggregate cross-country analysis and broad-brush categories of male-headed and female-headed households.

## Public provision effects

A frequent concern has been that trade liberalization can reduce tariff revenues – a significant source of tax revenue for some developing countries. If the drop in revenue then results in lower government spending on social services, this will likely have a disproportionately negative impact on vulnerable women. This is because women use more social services, given their lower incomes and their greater responsibilities for unpaid care and household work. However, women may use other public services (such as support for small businesses and technical training) less than men because of access barriers.

If governments manage to replace import tariffs with alternative indirect taxes (i.e. to compensate for lost revenue), these are still likely to have gender-differentiated effects.<sup>16</sup> It is important that measures avoid tariff cuts having a regressive impact, i.e. improving consumption of well-off households while making goods and services consumed by vulnerable groups, especially women, less affordable. In sum, government spending allocations should be informed by a concern for socioeconomic inequality in line with SDG principles and it is important that international trade commitments are aligned with these objectives.

A related issue relevant to trade and investment agreements seeking to liberalize not only goods, but also services and investment, concerns possible effects

on the terms of access to, and quality of, basic services. For example, in high- and middle-income countries, increasing the share of paid private health services for the elderly is likely to negatively affect women more than men.

Women tend to live longer but be poorer than men. In addition, they play a greater role as care providers for other family members even in their old age and may be called on to carry an even larger burden in this respect where care services become less affordable.<sup>17</sup> In low-income countries, the privatization of water provision has been identified as an area with potentially negative gender implications, as it is women and girls who are overwhelmingly tasked with collecting and treating water in contexts where access to water on household premises is limited.<sup>18</sup>

## Access to information and communication technologies

Trade-related technological diffusion might also affect gender inequality. Much emphasis has recently been put on the potential of ICT to enable greater inclusion of women in international trade, as traders and entrepreneurs (e.g. World Bank and the WTO, 2020). This, too, is not straightforward.

Widely cited examples include the use of mobile phones for money transactions and for running businesses, the digitalization of customs clearance or similar transactions (assumed to reduce the risk of dealing with corrupt officials), involvement in e-commerce and even greater opportunities to access educational and health services through digital platforms.<sup>19</sup>

This perspective highlights the potential for cyberspace to facilitate more equitable gender relations by helping women overcome difficulties related to their restricted physical mobility and by redressing power imbalances likely to surface in their face-to-face interactions with men, especially in public spaces.<sup>20</sup>

Yet empirical research also illustrates challenges for women in using ICT, mainly related to constraints such as limited digital literacy, financial resources and

15 See, for example, Heinrich Boll Foundation's paper series on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership at <https://www.boell.de/en/tags/ttip>.

16 Grown, C., and Valodia, I. (2010). *Taxation and Gender Equity: A Comparative Analysis of Direct and Indirect Taxes in Developing and Developed Countries*, London: Routledge.

17 Horstead, K., and Bluestone, K. (2018). *Who cares? Why older women's economic empowerment matters for the Sustainable Development Goals*. Age International.

18 Bakker, I. (2015). 'Towards Gendered Global Economic Governance: a three-dimensional analysis of social forces' in Gill, S. (ed.) (2015) *Critical Perspectives on the Crisis in Global Governance*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York.

19 World Bank and WTO (2020), op. cit.; Madianou, M., and Miller, D. (2011). 'Mobile Phone Parenting: Reconfiguring Relationships between Filipina Migrant Mothers and Their Left-behind Children,' *New Media & Society*, 13(3), pp. 457–470.

20 Wajcman, J. (2009). 'Feminist Theories of Technology,' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34(1), pp. 143–152.

continued gender bias in technological developments.<sup>21</sup> Affordability, literacy and digital skills, as well as safety and security concerns, are the main barriers cited by women for not owning a mobile phone and/or using the internet.<sup>22</sup> Emerging evidence suggests that women are more vulnerable to exploitation from e-commerce platforms and to online fraud, and are also more subject to online sexual harassment.<sup>23</sup>

In summary, assessing whether trade and trade rules are gender-equitable requires giving attention to the conditions under which trade-related processes affect women (and men) in their multiple roles: as workers, business owners, producers (as discussed under 'employment effects'), consumers, care providers and users of public services (as discussed under 'consumption' and 'public provision' effects).

It is important to note that everyone, both women and men, plays various roles that inevitably overlap: a producer may also be a trader and most women and men undertaking any form of paid or unpaid work are also consumers of market goods and rights-holders entitled to public services.

This multiplicity of roles has more relevance for women's situations, however, because of their main caregiving responsibilities and other biases, as discussed in this

chapter and summarized in Box 1. There is likely to be interaction between roles, and the effects of trade for each individual woman (or man) are likely to involve gains in some dimensions and losses in others.

The formulation of trade policies must take account of these complexities. Trade policies have the potential to reduce gender inequalities in labour markets when they contribute to the creation of better job opportunities for women in higher value-added sectors from which they were previously excluded. However, there is a risk that trade policies will perpetuate gender inequalities if they instead encourage export strategies centred around a limited number of traditionally low value-added female-dominated sectors, or they lead to the crowding-out of small-scale producers, including women-led enterprises.

Trade policies can offer opportunities to redress unequal gender patterns within households by, for instance, improving the affordability of food, medicines and household goods needed for well-being. However, they can exacerbate both gender and income inequalities if they reduce the availability or affordability of basic services such as water, electricity and healthcare. The next chapter suggests how this gender lens approach to trade policy could be operationalized in the context of the WTO's areas of work.

### Box 1: Economic roles and gender bias

- Both women and men hold a variety of overlapping economic roles and responsibilities. Juggling between multiple roles characterizes women's lives more than men's.
- Trade policies affect women and men in all these multiple roles, often with contradictory effects.
- As workers, women tend to be clustered in fewer jobs and occupations than men and are more likely to be found in precarious forms of paid employment.
- As producers and business owners, women face restricted access to productive resources and networks, have weaker bargaining power than men and are more likely to be exposed to harassment.
- Women's responsibilities and use of resources within households tend to be more restricted.
- As care providers, women bear the heavier burden of unpaid housework as well as primary responsibility for food purchase and preparation.
- Disadvantaged women are especially vulnerable to cuts in public services and other measures that reduce the availability of collective goods (e.g. food, medicines) for household well-being

21 Buskens, I., and Webb, A. (2009). African Women and ICT. London: Zed Books; Elnaggar, A. (2008). 'Toward gender equal access to ICT.' Information Technology for Development, 14(4), pp. 280–293.

22 The most recent Mobile Gender Gap Report notes that, although women's mobile phone ownership has increased in low- and middle- income countries in the last decade, a mobile gender gap persists everywhere (e.g. in South Asia, women are 28% less likely than men to own a mobile and 58% less likely to use mobile internet). The report further notes that even when women own a mobile phone, they use a smaller range of mobile services.

23 See Vogels, Emily (January 2021). The State of Online Harassment, Pew Research Centre. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>. Also Canadian Women's Foundation (2019). 'The Facts About Online Hate and Cyberviolence Against Women and Girls in Canada,' <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/online-hate-and-cyberviolence/>, and Council of Europe (n.d.). 'Cyberviolence Against Women,' <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cyberviolence/cyberviolence-against-women>.

# Chapter 4

## Ensuring consistency between WTO rules and countries' gender pledges

Integrating gender equality concerns in WTO agreements and processes involves several interrelated steps. First, it requires understanding the full range of gender effects that a proposed trade policy or agreement may provoke and carrying out comprehensive economic and regulatory assessments accordingly. Decisions on a) specific aspects/dimensions to target, b) relevant theoretical frameworks and methodologies, and c) data to be used, need to inform this analysis.

To achieve best outcomes, sound and transparent criteria must be in place to ensure inclusive consultations at each stage of design and implementation. It is also important to ensure that the research teams responsible for carrying out consultations and assessments have well-combined and diverse relevant skills, including expertise in gender analysis. At a later stage, carefully choosing indicators to monitor gender effects during implementation, and mechanisms to ensure that implementation is carried out in gender-responsive ways, is important.

Promoting complementary policies and programmes to maximize benefits and mitigate negative impacts, especially for low-income women (through targeted Aid for Trade initiatives, for example) is crucial. In this chapter, the steps to operationalize the framework are organized around six pillars with accompanying questions.<sup>24</sup> Insights obtained from the application of the framework to trade facilitation, e-commerce, government procurement and investment facilitation are used to further illustrate specific points.

### An economic perspective

When considering a specific agreement or negotiation, attention should be paid to its objectives regarding trade obstacles that it proposes to reduce or eliminate, and rule-setting. The starting point for the assessment includes an explanation of the channels through which changes in the selected policy area are likely to have gender implications, guided by the principles outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 of this guide.

These principles are: a) consider gender effects in all spheres, beyond narrowly defined production and employment, and include consumption of goods and services for care provision, when possible and relevant; b) focus on the most disadvantaged and highlight differences in needs and challenges faced by different groups of women; and c) pay attention to women's terms of participation in trade, not to participation in trade per se.

Given the specific policy area being examined, consider channels of impact and gender implications related to women's multiple roles. Identify domains of inequality and sectors for further investigation. Do these effects vary depending on a country's economic structure and level of income? Which aspects are well understood and documented? What is the relevant literature? Where are the knowledge gaps? What sort of studies are needed to fill them?

It is important to resist concluding there is no gender effect simply because existing evidence and research are limited.

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<sup>24</sup> The questions suggested in the following pages are indicative and can be modified and/or extended as needed to be most relevant to the specific policy area that is examined.



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**Table 1** shows selected examples of how trade measures could reduce or reinforce gender inequalities in different settings.

Trade policy can reduce or reinforce gender inequalities		What kind of policies, safeguards and rules are needed to maximize opportunities and avoid negative effects, protect disadvantaged women and facilitate their empowerment?
Women as wage workers	+	Creates stable jobs with good working conditions for women
	-	Maintains or even increases gender-based occupational segregation and gender wage gaps
Women as producers and entrepreneurs	+	Creates opportunities for women-led SMEs in markets and sectors previously dominated by men-led businesses
	-	Large-scale export-oriented agricultural production displaces small food producers, many of whom are women
Women as caregivers	+	Improves affordability and quality of food and other household goods
	-	Undermines delivery of social services such as childcare and healthcare, to the detriment of disadvantaged women
Women as consumers	+	Facilitates access to financial and telecom services of value to poor women
	-	Limits access to affordable medicines
Women as users of public services	+	Governments can widen tax bases through formal job generation and use additional revenues to finance gender-responsive social protection systems
	-	The involvement of foreign companies in the provision of essential services could have undesired effects if companies do not align with SDG principles (e.g. failure to supply water to poor communities in remote areas)

## Box 2: Example of questions to be explored

- Which aspects and dimensions of the relevant trade policy area need to be investigated? Is the impact of the measure going to be especially felt in specific sectors and/or across different nodes of an international value chain? What are the economy-wide effects (e.g. balance of payment and exchange rate) with potential gender implications in a country?
- What is the gender composition of employment in sectors likely to contract or expand in a country? Are different groups of workers (by gender, skill, migration status) going to be affected differently and why? What is the share of women wage workers and women business owners in the working population? What barriers do they face in accessing stable and well-paid jobs? Is the agreement/negotiation likely to change opportunities for adequate livelihoods for women vis-à-vis men? Which groups of women producers or entrepreneurs are likely to be dislocated? Are working conditions going to change? What type of employment conditions are likely to become prevalent (part-time vs full-time, casual vs stable contracts)?
- Which groups of women are likely to benefit from these changes? What complementary national or local policies are needed to maximize their opportunities?
- Which country-specific factors will shape these changes (income level, economic structure – for example, agricultural-based economy vs industrializing economy)?
- How will access to goods and services for consumption and household well-being be affected? Will disadvantaged socioeconomic groups (e.g. poor households in remote rural areas) feel negative effects more strongly? Are different members of a household likely to experience the change differently (e.g. nutritional status of women and men of different age)?
- How much time do women in low-income households spend on unpaid housework and care provision? Does this limit the range of paid employment opportunities to which they have access? Do planned investments in trade-related physical infrastructure such as roads, transport and logistics integrate gender equality concerns?
- Do working women and, especially, women small business owners, have access to affordable childcare? Does the lack of care services affect women's ability to access well-paid jobs generated by trade and/or training opportunities? What proportion of social sector spending supports gender equality? Is it likely to be protected in the event of trade-related changes in government revenue?
- Which of the above questions should be prioritized in future research? Who decides the methodology and research questions to be included in an impact assessment? Are scoping exercises to ascertain the quality and range of available gender statistics promoted? Does the team responsible for conducting this impact assessment have the right mix of skills and expertise (including gender expertise)? Which methodologies are most appropriate for these investigations?

The study on trade facilitation focuses almost exclusively on opportunities and barriers faced by women small-business owners who are involved in cross-border trade as, evidently, this group of women is the most directly affected by the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The study also considers employment opportunities for women in government and transport and logistics firms. However, it highlights the need to undertake additional research to better understand the effects that changes in trade facilitation might have on local food security, and hence on women's roles as care providers and consumers.

Furthermore, the study offers a detailed description of women traders' socioeconomic circumstances in

different countries and provides a useful list of factors that could enable a safe trading environment for them. These include the availability of adequate sanitation and care-provision facilities at border crossing points and cross-border markets, which are particularly important for women traders, many of whom must take their children with them when they work.

The study on **investment facilitation** distinguishes between effects on women as wage workers employed by large companies and women as business owners. It further distinguishes between women-owned firms as potential foreign investors and women working in firms in the country where the investment takes place.

Assessments of gender-differentiated employment effects should not only look simply at the numbers of women employed in businesses related to foreign direct investment, the paper notes. They should also include decent work indicators that can capture the quality of their employment. The study also points to the need for additional research on unpaid care workloads of women and men, and their implications for women's participation in business activities.

Lastly, the study on **public procurement** explores both public provision effects and employment effects. It notes that gender-differentiated effects of government procurement are likely to be related to the level and composition of public spending on social services and infrastructure that support women's economic empowerment in a country (e.g. health, care, education, water and sanitation). This spending should be protected. Not only would people's general well-being be reduced without these services, but women's ability to take advantage of employment opportunities created by trade would be undermined.

Regarding employment effects, the study distinguishes between women working in government procurement agencies, women-owned businesses bidding for government procurement contracts and women employed in large companies winning procurement contracts. It provides a detailed list of reasons explaining low levels of women-owned SMEs bidding for government procurement contracts in most countries.

## A legal perspective

As noted in Chapter 2, many law and policy frameworks that support gender equality exist at the international, regional and national levels, and almost all national governments have endorsed international or regional instruments and promulgated national and subnational laws, regulations and policies to protect and promote women's rights. Trade and investment agreements should be designed to respect and support these international and national commitments. Important questions to be asked therefore include:

- Does the agreement/negotiation provide adequate safeguarding mechanisms to protect and promote labour rights?
- Does the agreement/negotiation provide adequate safeguarding mechanisms for consumer rights?
- Does the agreement/negotiation provide adequate safeguarding mechanisms for disadvantaged groups likely to be negatively affected (even if no explicit reference is made to women)?

- How is the agreement/negotiation likely to affect the availability and affordability of food, medicine and basic services for women, men, children and other dependents in a household?
- Are the rules included in the agreement/negotiation likely to affect domestic laws, regulations or policies important to protect and promote the rights of women (including subsidies, quotas, preferences and protections for women workers and producers and women-led businesses)?
- Are there provisions to protect and promote access to employment opportunities for groups in which disadvantaged women predominate?

## Insights from the companion technical papers

The four technical studies present a mix of cases, including two where WTO trade agreements are already in place and the focus is on implementation (government procurement and trade facilitation), and two where negotiation of draft texts is ongoing at the WTO (e-commerce and investment facilitation).

Gender was not considered at all in the negotiation of the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) or the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). There is little attention to gender issues so far in the current Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce and the negotiation of a possible agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD). However, the studies identify opportunities for more gender-inclusive implementation of the GPA and TFA, and for more explicit attention to gender in the draft IFD:

- The government procurement study considers various ways for state parties to the GPA to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, through the use of 'most advantageous tender' criteria to evaluate bids (incorporating non-economic criteria related to gender equality).
- The trade facilitation study acknowledges that measures to simplify trade are typically designed with big commercial trading companies in mind and that complying with trade procedures and formalities is more onerous for small businesses (including women-led firms). In principle, the TFA's emphasis on streamlining and better publicizing trade procedures could help women-led trading firms, but only if state parties implement their TFA commitments with the needs and constraints of SMEs (including women-led businesses) in mind.

This points to the need for trade facilitation reforms, including digitalization efforts, to be designed through consultation with women's business associations representing both registered and non-registered businesses. It also underscores the need for complementary measures to ensure that trade policy allows for flexibilities for SMEs and to help women-led SMEs increase their trade knowledge, digital skills and levels of compliance.

- Although gender issues have not featured prominently in the IFD negotiations, the investment facilitation study recommends several ways to incorporate gender considerations in the draft text.

These include referencing CEDAW and relevant ILO conventions in the recitals to the agreement; confirming the right of state parties to regulate to achieve gender equality and other legitimate policy objectives; including gender equality among the standards of 'responsible business conduct' to be endorsed by the state parties and followed by investors and enterprises in their territories; providing for gender balance in national implementation committees, agencies and focal points; and providing for the collection of gender-disaggregated data to monitor implementation of the agreement.

## Representation of women's interests in negotiation and implementation processes

Trade policymaking should be inclusive to economically empower women and promote greater gender equality through trade-related processes. This requires giving more weight to the voices of women's groups, trade unions and civil society organizations and ensuring greater diversity of civil society representation in trade decision-making arenas both in the WTO and at the national level. Questions to be asked can include:

- What measures are in place to ensure substantive representation of women's interests from a variety of backgrounds, at both the negotiation and the implementation stage?
- Are trade unions and consumer groups adequately represented in stakeholder consultations? How well do these organizations articulate women's needs?
- Are women's business associations, cooperatives and other organizations included? Do they adequately represent the full range of women's roles as workers, producers, business owners, care providers and consumers? Are they consulted during

implementation and monitoring, as well as during negotiations?

- Is the WTO, or individual members, keeping track of groups that are being consulted during negotiations, both in the WTO and at the national level?
- Is the national ministry (or other focal agency) for gender equality and women's empowerment included in consultations as well as trade policy development?
- Are proposals addressing gender equality concerns being submitted and discussed? If not, why is this the case? Are there mechanisms that can facilitate greater representation of issues relevant to women's economic empowerment in trade talks?
- Is training on the gender implications of trade offered to government officials and negotiators?
- What is the expertise and gender composition of teams undertaking monitoring and implementation?

## Insights from the companion technical papers

All four studies call for better representation of women's interests and gender expertise in trade negotiation and implementation processes. This extends to committees, working groups and various implementing bodies both within the WTO and at national levels.

Proposals include the following:

- Add gender to the agendas of the WTO's Government Procurement Committee and Trade Facilitation Committee.
- Increase the gender expertise within national investment promotion agencies, trade facilitation committees and government procurement agencies or committees, and offer training on gender equality to all members.
- Increase the participation of national gender focal agencies, women's business associations, cooperatives, labor unions and other civil society organizations in national consultation mechanisms on investment promotion, trade facilitation and government procurement.
- Help women traders to create their own organizations.
- Further strengthen women's representation and attention to gender issues in Joint Statement Initiative working groups on e-commerce.



## Implement and monitor WTO agreements through a gender lens: Trade policy

Ensuring that WTO agreements are implemented and monitored through a gender lens requires asking questions such as:

- Do review mechanisms for the relevant trade area or agreement (for instance, trade policy reviews and Aid for Trade questionnaires) include objectives of inclusion and gender equality?
- Are targets and indicators to monitor progress on gender equality objectives explicitly set out? How are they defined and conceptualized? How detailed are they?
- Do the chosen indicators capture terms of women's inclusion rather than simply counting numbers of women and men in various sectors and activities (see subsection 4.6). Are clear guidelines available to help with the choice of relevant indicators?
- Are indicators disaggregated by gender as well as other relevant social categories?

- What is the expertise and gender composition of teams undertaking implementation and monitoring? Are training sessions on gender-aware approaches offered to analysts and statisticians undertaking monitoring and evaluation?

Trade policies for gender equality and development require a holistic approach. Active policy coordination between different ministries and government departments is therefore vital to ensure that complementary policies on issues such as skill development, the labour market, social and physical infrastructure, and credit are both adequate and gender-responsive:

- Which complementary laws, policies and/or programmes are needed to ensure the equitable distribution of expected benefits from trade agreements?
- Which complementary laws, policies and/or programmes are needed to minimize negative impacts on gender equality?

### Box 3: Possible questions for trade policy reviews and Aid for Trade questionnaires

Sample questions for trade policy reviews could include:

- What are the gender characteristics of the sector(s) under analysis (e.g. consider the gender composition of the workforce and business owners, and unpaid care responsibilities of participants in the sector)?
- What are the positive and negative gender impacts of trade liberalization in the sector(s) under analysis? Have these impacts been considered in the context of the three transmission channels discussed in this paper (i.e. employment, consumption and public provision channels)?
- Is the national gender ministry or other gender focal agency included in national trade policy discussions? Do national trade regulatory and trade promotion bodies have gender focal points? Do these entities routinely engage or employ gender experts (e.g. during policymaking, implementation, or monitoring and evaluation)? Do these entities regularly consult with women's organizations (including women's business associations, and cooperatives)?
- Are trade-related policies and programmes gender-responsive? Have any ex-ante and/or ex-post assessments been conducted to determine their gender impacts? How could trade policies and programmes be modified to better address gender concerns?
- What complementary policies or programmes are needed to ensure that the benefits from trade accrue more equitably (especially to low-income women)? Do any such policies or programmes already exist?
- What gender-related data are available or absent for the sector(s) under analysis? What processes have been put in place to address the lack of gender-disaggregated data? Are data sets nationally comparable? What mechanisms exist to promote evidence-based policymaking?

Sample questions for Aid for Trade questionnaires could include:

- What proportion of the donor country's trade-related aid or technical assistance directly supports gender equality in the implementation of partner countries' trade policies or trade agreements (e.g. Does the aid or technical assistance include training or coaching of trade officials and negotiators so they are sufficiently equipped to develop, implement and monitor gender-responsive policies and programmes? Does the aid or technical assistance support gender impact assessments of trade policies or programmes?)?
- What proportion of the donor country's trade-related aid or technical assistance indirectly promotes gender equality in trade-related sectors through support for complementary measures (such as provision of training and other resources to women-led businesses to enable them to participate in cross-border trade)?

### Insights from the companion technical papers

The four companion papers offer suggestions to improve the gender-responsiveness of implementation and monitoring. These suggestions include:

- Set up special committees to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the relevant trade-related agreements.
- Organize independently run gender audits.
- Train civil servants on how to conduct gender-aware ex-ante and ex-post assessments.
- Promote workplace diversity and better representation of women in trade regulation and trade promotion agencies.
- Encourage and protect women whistleblowers.
- Simplify and better publicize trade regulations and government procurement rules and processes for the benefit of SMEs (including those led by women).

Recommendations on complementary policies include:

- Extend digital networks to rural areas and make digital devices more accessible.
- Introduce measures to increase online safety.
- Offer skills training for women in both traditional and non-traditional industrial sectors supported by foreign direct investment.
- Facilitate women's access to apprenticeships.
- Improve access to financial services for women traders and women-owned SMEs.
- Provide proper sanitation facilities and other infrastructure at cross-border markets.

- Create reliable mechanisms for women to report abuse and harassment.
- Offer across-the-board provision of childcare services for both women wage workers and women-owned SMEs.

## Aid for Trade

The Aid for Trade initiative provides resources (funding and technical assistance) to low-income countries and, in particular, the least developed countries. Its main objective is to help them overcome structural constraints that undermine their ability to take advantage of opportunities and to ensure that the benefits from trade are distributed fairly.

While donors and partner countries have increasingly focused on women's economic empowerment in Aid for Trade, the main target for gender-related interventions tends to be limited to women's enterprises. Moreover, the results framework under the Enhanced Integrated Framework – the only Aid for Trade initiative exclusively dedicated to least developed countries – only began to include gender indicators in 2019, suggesting there is potential for improvement.

A good way to strengthen the gender dimension of Aid for Trade would involve mainstreaming a gender perspective across all areas (for example, rural electrification, transport, ICT and skill development) and not just in projects that specifically target women's economic empowerment.

It is also important to distinguish between aid for direct gender mainstreaming (such as gender training/capacity building for trade officials, gender and trade assessments) and aid for complementary measures to ensure more equitable benefits from trade policies (including digital literacy training and other resources for SMEs, promotion of science, technology, engineering and math education for girls).

Improving the Aid for Trade gender dimension also means making sure the design and implementation of programmes on the ground account for women's multiple roles (for example, by providing childcare for women attending skill training). Questions could include:

- How can Aid for Trade be used to build women's capacities and reduce the barriers they face in relation to the specific trade agreement reform that is being analysed? Which sectors or policy areas should be prioritized in Aid for Trade to ensure that women are not left behind? Are any gender aspects

of binding constraints being neglected? How are Aid for Trade priorities likely to vary depending on the gender structure of a particular economy?

- What share of Aid for Trade resources is specifically allocated to promote the economic empowerment of women? Is this limited to women entrepreneurs or does it extend to other categories of workers and producers? Is the level of these resources adequate? Are there mechanisms to regularly monitor such allocations?
- To what extent do general Aid for Trade initiatives that do not explicitly target women (for example, general support to selected economic sectors, both in the area of building productive capacity and trade-related economic infrastructure) nonetheless integrate a gender equality perspective? What indicators are used to monitor the extent to which a gender perspective is indeed integrated (see also section 4.4)?
- To what extent are the national gender focal agency, gender experts and women's groups involved in consultations around Aid for Trade priorities and in national Enhanced Integrated Framework steering committees?

## Insights from the companion technical papers

The four companion papers proposed initiatives that Aid for Trade could prioritize to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of trade policy. These include:

- Training and capacity building to help women-owned/led businesses and women's cooperatives attract international investment.
- Strengthening governments' capacity to conduct inspections and reporting to ensure gender-responsive implementation of investment agreements.
- Capacity-building programmes for women-owned businesses to help them prepare tenders for government procurement contracts.
- Training on data collection and analysis of different aspects of government procurement and trade facilitation.
- Improving women-owned/led SMEs' access to national procurement regulations and platforms.
- Using infrastructure investment to improve safety of border crossings and facilities.

## Strengthen gender data and evidence

Good data are the foundation of good planning and are essential to adequately monitor the kind of trade interventions discussed in this guide. Indicators and their measurement reflect not only technical decisions, but also policy priorities. If economic data analysis is to contribute to gender-equitable policymaking, great care should be put into the choice of relevant variables.

For example, deciding to measure women's paid employment only in terms of employment-to-population ratios says nothing about the quality of women's jobs. Tracking changes in the gender composition employment status, across occupations and sectors and in the level of earnings, demonstrates a greater concern for the terms of women's inclusion in trade-related jobs.

Questions to consider in relation to the specific agreement or trade policy area that is investigated include:

- What statistics and indicators are used to assess the gender effects of trade? Are existing data able

to capture quality as well as quantity (for example, terms and conditions of loans available to women-led SMEs, not just whether they can borrow)? Do they cover the full range of factors and dimensions that can facilitate or hinder women's economic empowerment? Is qualitative evidence used to inform decisions on, and validate, quantitative analysis?

- Are the indicators used to monitor implementation disaggregated by gender? Do they capture relevant dimensions of gender (in)equality?
- Are there indicators to measure and monitor the extent of women's inclusion in consultations and decision-making processes?
- What is the expertise and gender composition of teams undertaking assessments and monitoring? Are those responsible for monitoring and implementation receiving adequate training in gender analysis?
- How can existing WTO databases and tools (for instance, Aid for Trade questionnaires and trade policy reviews) be used to encourage better gender-aware analysis of existing data as well as production of new and more comprehensive gender statistics?

### Box 4: Steps to consider when bridging gender data gaps

Below is a non-exhaustive list of steps to consider when policymakers seek to close gender data gaps related to trade-related activities. Special consideration must be given to cross-cutting issues (e.g. time poverty, access to internet or finance, level of literacy) and topic-specific data requirements (e.g. sectors).

- Assess whether there is a nationally adopted set of definitions and criteria that pertain to gender and trade (e.g. is there a national definition of a women-owned/led business?).
- Map out existing gender-disaggregated data (e.g. buyers and sellers on e-commerce platforms, bidders for public sectors).
- Determine whether gender-disaggregated data exist based on the production, consumption and employment channels (e.g. what do women buy or sell on e-commerce platforms? Do women tend to concentrate in a specific tier of the sector's value chain?).
- Assess the resources needed to fill these data gaps and determine who will drive the process (e.g. national standards bodies, procurement authorities, digital platforms).
- Establish monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress.



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### Insights from the companion technical papers

Following are some suggestions from the four technical papers to improve gender data and evidence:

- Strengthen efforts to harmonize definitions and data on women-owned and women-led businesses and cooperatives.
- Encourage the use of international standards across various organizations and promote greater compatibility between trade data, on one hand, and labour and enterprise survey data, on the other (for instance, via linked employee–employer surveys).
- Promote special surveys on women traders and better documentation of the barriers they face.
- Study the impact of improved trade facilitation on women's employment opportunities and household

consumption of essential goods (for example, food security in communities in cross-border regions).

- Systematically collect gender-disaggregated data on SMEs that submit tenders for government procurement contracts and along different tiers of the supply chain (that is, to include subcontractors).
- Improve collection and analysis of data on women's and men's unpaid care work, the availability of care services and the extent to which this affects women's employment options in trade-related sectors.
- Strengthen rules that govern data collection and data privacy in digital platforms.

Technical assistance on data collection and analysis is important to boost the capacity of low- and middle-income countries, and it deserves to be prioritized in Aid for Trade initiatives.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusions

This guide presents a step-by-step approach to integrate gender equality concerns in various WTO operations. It provides key definitions and identifies core principles required for trade policies to support the economic empowerment of women. It also outlines a conceptual framework for examining the gender-differentiated effects of trade that distinguish three main channels of transmission: the employment channel, the consumption channel and the public provision channel.

The analysis explains that gender-differentiated employment effects from trade expansion and liberalization are to be expected. This is due to the different distribution of women and men across tradable and non-tradable sectors, employment statuses and occupations, combined with limited substitutability between female and male labour due to gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation. Gender-differentiated intra-household consumption effects are likely to occur because different groups of women and

men have different decision-making power and different needs, for healthcare and nutrition, for example.

Finally, gender-differentiated public provision effects may occur if trade agreements and related policy changes affect terms of access to social services and their quality. This is because women tend to make more use of public services given their lower incomes and their greater responsibilities for unpaid care.

The guide does not aim to provide an exhaustive treatment of issues. It simply offers a roadmap, together with several concrete steps for operationalizing a gender lens throughout the various stages of a WTO agreement – from ex-ante assessments to legal frameworks, to mechanisms for voice and representation, to Aid for Trade, to selecting indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

To this end, the second part of the guide suggests lists of questions organized in six groups. The first group





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of questions aims to help researchers capture the full range of gender effects of a proposed trade reform or agreement. The second group is about examining whether the rules included in the agreement are likely to affect domestic laws, regulations and other policies important to protect and promote women's rights.

The third group of questions seeks to ensure that women's groups, civil society organizations and gender focal points in ministries are given an adequate voice. The fourth set offers suggestions on targets and indicators to monitor progress on gender equality objectives during implementation of trade agreements. It also stresses the importance of complementary national and local policies.

The fifth set of questions is designed to support the mainstreaming of a gender perspective across all areas of Aid for Trade and ensure that women's multiple roles are accounted for in the design and implementation of programmes on the ground. The sixth and final group of questions offers general guidance on relevant data for ex-ante and ex-post assessments as well as indicators to monitor women's inclusion in decision-making processes.

In sum, strengthening commitment to gender equality in the practice of trade analysis, negotiations and policy implementation requires a multi-pronged approach. It entails building capacity, raising public awareness, coordination among policymakers in different ministries and an engaged dialogue among policymakers, researchers, civil society and women's groups at every stage.

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- International Trade Centre (2020). Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements. ITC, Geneva. <https://intracen.org/resources/publications/mainstreaming-gender-in-free-trade-agreements>
- International Trade Centre (2020). Making Public Procurement Work for Women. ITC, Geneva. <https://intracen.org/resources/publications/making-public-procurement-work-for-women>
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