



Caribbean Gender Equality Knowledge Exchange Lab

Convened by:



# Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy Operations

Webinar Summary Action Brief, July 2024



# Steps and options to mainstream gender into trade policy operations

## Introduction

This webinar summary action brief is part of a series of documents published by the Caribbean Gender Equality Knowledge Exchange Lab. It focuses on key actions identified during the Webinar to mainstream gender equality in trade policy operations.

The webinar presentations focused on tangible steps policymakers and stakeholders can use to mainstream gender into trade policy. The International Trade Centre (ITC) facilitated the training exercise based on the guide *From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women*<sup>1</sup> published by the ITC. This resource provides policymakers in the trade sector with practical steps on how to mainstream gender equality into trade sector policies, programmes and initiatives. It also includes recommendations for a gender-responsive action plan and monitoring and evaluation framework.

## Setting the Context

### Key Definitions:

**Gender:** Social (as opposed to biological) differences between women and men. These differences have been acquired and are changeable over time, with wide variations both within and between cultures. Other variables such as ethnicity, caste, class, age and ability intersect with gender differences.

**Sex:** refers to the biological differences between men and women that are universal and usually determined at birth.

**Gender Equality:** means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by gender roles. This means that the different behaviours, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued. It means that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by gender roles. This means that the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

**Gender roles:** refer to the cultural and societal responsibilities assigned to men and women as well as the power dynamics between them. These roles can be classified as egalitarian, which exemplifies a belief in equality and shared responsibilities, or traditional, whereby the belief is that women should hold responsibility for all domestic matters whereas men are the breadwinners and head of the household. These traditional roles place women in an unequal position relative to men in their intimate relationships and broader society<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [ITC Making Trade Policy Work for Women.pdf \(shetradec.com\)](https://www.shetradec.com/~/media/ITC/TradePolicyWorkforWomen.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Caribbean/Attachments/Publications/2021/20210209%20Grenada%20Life%20Experience%20Report%2018%20for%20digital.pdf>

**Gender Equity:** refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men.

**Gender Analysis:** refers to the variety of methods used to understand the relationships between men and women, their access to resources, their activities and the constraints they face relative to each other.

**Gender Mainstreaming:** refers to the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all policies, strategies and activities at all levels and at all stages. This means considering both men's and women's wishes, needs and experience in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and efforts.

## A case for gender equality and business:

1. **Improve quality and quantity of outputs-** Investing in women's skills and supporting their access to resources can improve the quality and/or output of women's work. More women-led businesses exporting leads to increase in foreign exchange and revenues.
2. **Reduce Poverty-** Gender equality is smart economics and can make a significant contribution to poverty reduction and shared economics (World Bank Gender Strategy 2016 -2023).
3. **Increase national GDP-** Across the world, countries are losing \$160 trillion in wealth because of differences in lifetime earnings between women and men.

## Women and Trade:

The results of trade and gender are gender-specific and the roles that women play are important factors for consideration in policymaking especially given that;

1. Globally only one in five exporting firms is owned and /or managed by a woman.
2. Women-led companies directly participating in international trade tend to be smaller firms engaged in exports only.
3. Women and men own and manage companies in different export sectors.
4. Women and men employees are often located in different sectors.
5. Women-led exporting companies tend to employ proportionally more women.

## Key Actions to mainstream gender equality in trade policy operations

### **Action #1: Situate Policy Decisions on Trade within the Normative Frameworks & State Obligations on Gender Equality**

As outlined by UN Women MCO Caribbean during the webinar, several international agreements exist outlining a normative framework and state obligations to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade. Some key agreements on gender equality linked to trade include:

- i. **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979 | OHCHR](#)

- CEDAW promotes the elimination of all forms of discrimination, including harmful practices that affect women’s participation in trade. CEDAW requires countries to integrate a gender perspective into all policies and programmes including analysing the gender-differentiated impacts of trade policies and ensuring that they do not disproportionately harm women.
- ii. **The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)<sup>4</sup>**
- The BPfA notes the responsibility of governments to ensure that national policies related to international and regional trade agreements do not have an adverse impact on women’s new and traditional economic activities, as well as mandating the creation of non-discriminatory support services including investment funds for women’s businesses.
- iii. **The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)<sup>5</sup>**
- The ABAS reaffirms the importance of respect for all human rights, gender equality, women’s empowerment and reducing inequalities. It also promotes enabling business environments for private sector investment, entrepreneurship, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and enterprise development.
  - **The Gender Equality Forum Communique<sup>6</sup>** and the ABAS serve as a roadmap for action in achieving sustainable development and a tool for advocacy, aiming to guide stakeholders in their efforts to promote gender equality including within the context of international trade.

## Action #2: Centre Academic Theorising as a tool for policymaking on trade and gender equality

Academic theorising is an important tool for policymaking, in that, it helps provide social, economic, political and cultural context which is vital in determining appropriate policy solutions. Consider the following when integrating academic theorising to assess and advance gender responsive trade policies:

- i. **Study the phenomena** – how do we study our region? The women and trade dynamic must be characterised by the region’s unique experiences and must be creative while we operate in less than perfect conditions for data collection.
- ii. **Synthesise the knowledge** – recognise that the Caribbean does not exist in a vacuum, but rather it needs to be situated across global literature. Additionally, international systems need to be domesticated to see how women and other vulnerable groups interact and are affected by them at local levels.
- iii. **Strategise** – Learn and adopt lessons from other regions that are organising and amplifying their work internationally on gender and trade such as; Latin America and Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

<sup>5</sup> [SIDS4 - Co-Chairs FINAL.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [gender\\_equality\\_forum\\_communique-sids4-final.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#)

## Action #3: Implement the ITC Five Steps from its guidance document on gender and trade<sup>1</sup> above<sup>7</sup>

### Step 1: Review Trade Policy and Trade Support Options

#### Trade Policy Options:

- i. Taking advantage of policy space at the WTO
- ii. Supporting the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade  
Harnessing Aid for Trade

Governments can use Aid for Trade to make trade policy more inclusive, involve women in infrastructure, transport, energy projects and thus help distribute the benefits of trade equally among women and men.

Issue	Activity
Trade Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Gender-awareness training and tools</li><li>▪ Gender-sensitive customs reforms</li><li>▪ Collection of gender-disaggregated data.</li></ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Training for women in traditionally male-dominated industries e.g. construction, transport, energy</li><li>▪ Involve more women in both project design and implementation phases.</li><li>▪ Workshops on gender-responsive financial, energy and transport policies.</li></ul>
Productive capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Training for women entrepreneurs in sectors of export interest i.e. tourism, textile, agriculture.</li><li>▪ Providing grants / loans to women farmers and entrepreneurs</li><li>▪ Training for women to develop supervisory and management skills.</li></ul>

<sup>7</sup> Action #3 provides a summary of the five steps on the ITC guide **From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women** as presented during the webinar. The full guidance document which includes tools for each step can be found at: [ITC\\_Making\\_Trade\\_Policy\\_Work\\_for\\_Women.pdf \(shetrades.com\)](https://www.shetrades.com/ITC_Making_Trade_Policy_Work_for_Women.pdf)

**iii. Enhancing Gender Considerations in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)<sup>8</sup>**

- This affirms commitment of parties to reduce gender inequality through trade policies and agreements and helps distribute the benefits of trade equally among women and men.

Recommendations	Rationale
Include gender equality in the preamble of a new trade agreement or a renegotiated agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The preamble of an agreement is where the aims of members are first articulated which has both legal and symbolic value.</li> </ul>
Emphasize women's access to education and skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highlighting women's access to education and skills development and moving towards specific commitments is an important step in helping women engage in the opportunities created by the trade agreement.</li> </ul>

**iv. Optimising trade liberalisation through Gender Impact Assessments**

- Prior (*ex-ante*) assessments allow for the optimisation of trade reforms to support inclusive trade, assist policymakers in avoiding ineffective trade policies, and allow policymakers to calibrate supporting measures to mitigate potential negative effects of a given policy.
- Post (*ex-post*) assessment unpacks the effects of a trade policy intervention following its implementation to control and improve outcomes.

**v. Implementing organisational changes**

Recommendations	Practical Steps
Improve gender balance and work opportunities for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid tokenism or the symbolic appointments of women to senior positions.</li> <li>▪ Adopt a gender-parity strategy for all staff.</li> </ul>
Enhance gender awareness and gender mainstreaming capacity of all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organise departmental training on gender sensitivity</li> <li>▪ Incorporate and monitor gender targets within departments</li> </ul>
Appoint Gender focal points who will advocate for gender equality in and outside of organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clarify the mandate of the focal point (scope and scale of responsibility)</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> A Free Trade Agreement is an international agreement between two or more countries where they agree on certain obligations that affect trade in goods and services, and protections for investors and intellectual property rights among other topics. The main goal of FTAs, is to reduce or eliminate barriers to trade and investment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide adequate financing arrangements to support the work of GFPs.</li> </ul>
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### Trade Support Options:

- vi. **Empowering women through export promotion and SME development**
  - Identify effective trade and investment support institutions and incorporate gender concerns in operational plans and budgets.
- vii. **Leveraging government procurement**
  - Developed governments spend 12% of global GDP on public contracts, yet women-led businesses account for only 1% of public procurement.
  - What are the benefits? Encourages more and diverse competition. Promotes gender equality and increases value for money and innovation.
- viii. **Mobilising corporate partnerships**

## Step 2: Collect and use better data to shape policies

Gender data is lacking and fragmented, making it difficult to understand barriers that need to be addressed for women to benefit equally. Consider the following options to improve data collection:

### Option 1: Roll out firm-level business surveys

These surveys answer different questions specific to women-led businesses and help to fill data gaps and give policymakers a more holistic and comprehensive understand of the composition and needs of women-led businesses in the country. Sample questions include:

- **What are the characteristics of women-led business in the country?**
  - Size of companies (annual turnover, number of employees etc.)
  - Women's role as owners, managers and employees?
  - What types of goods and services do they produce?
- **Which markets do women-led business serve?**
  - Domestic markets: Private markets. Public procurement markets.
  - International Markets.
- **What is the extend of women-led businesses participation in international trade?**
  - Which are the main destination countries?
  - To what extent do they rely on international trade?
  - What are the key challenges facing Women-Owned Businesses when access foreign markets?

### Option 2: Assess the policy ecosystem

Assessing the policy-ecosystem is another important tool that policymakers can leverage in identifying gaps and barriers which need to be addressed to advance gender equality considerations.



**SheTrades Outlook**<sup>9</sup> is an online tool launched in 2020 to help assess, monitor and improve the policy landscape for women in trade. It maps the environment for women in trade, examines data gaps and identifies areas for potential inclusive policy reform. The Outlook tool also has a repository of good practices for users to adopt.

### **Step 3: Engage and Coordinate with relevant stakeholders**

Engaging and coordinating with all relevant stakeholders is crucial to improving intragovernmental coordination. It is also important to engage women entrepreneurs and producers. This includes ensuring that policy consultations include women, especially those in the informal economy and not represented by unions and business associations. This can be facilitated through the use of small working groups and participatory techniques.

### **Step 4: Design and implement a gender-responsive action plan**

To ensure a well-designed action plan, the following should be considered:

- Tackle specific issues
- Ensure stakeholders have capacity to successfully implement activities
- Ensure that key stakeholders are involved
- Allocate resources to ensure sustainability of activities
- Include clear and measurable indicators.

### **Step 5: Design and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework**

Creating and implementing a robust M&E Framework should centre on answering three questions:

1. What results do you expect the policy/programme to generate?
2. How will the results be achieved?
3. How will you know when you have achieved the results?

**It is also important to define the results chain:**

**Inputs -> Activities -> Outputs -> Outcomes -> Impacts**

**Choose SMART Indicators:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

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<sup>9</sup> [SheTrades Outlook](#)



## About the Caribbean Gender Equality Knowledge Exchange Lab

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean are co-conveners of the Lab which allows for the exchange of best practices, ideas and offer support the region's institutions including national gender machineries and other governmental representatives, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, private sector, academia and faith-based and youth organizations.

The Lab is part of CDB's broader commitment to promote capacity-building, technical assistance and financing to client countries to achieve gender equality and strengthen their overall capacity to achieve sustainable development.

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