


Trade Policies in Eastern and Southern Africa

Springboard or Barrier to Women's Economic Development?



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Abstract

Trade has an important role in growth and development. Trade policies affect men and women differently due to several factors including prevailing societal gender inequalities in terms of access to and control of economic and social resources, decision-making ability and gendered division of labour. Yet trade policies and agreements are often assumed to be gender neutral and fail to recognise the gender dimension. The World Trade Organisation (WTO), the global body for regulation of trade related activities, is often blamed for being “gender blind”. Until the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11), when almost three-fourth of the nations has endorsed a Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment (JDTWEE), seeking women’s economic empowerment by expeditiously removing barriers to their participation in trade. Although several countries and organisations have already showed their reservations concerning the JDTWEE and the ulterior motive for the inclusion of gender issues in WTO agenda, JDTWEE is nevertheless a welcome first step towards bringing gender equality in trade, hence supporting overall socioeconomic development through trade.

The paper explores the present status of gender mainstreaming in trade policies of prominent regional blocks (COMESA, EAC and SADC) and four country policies (Malawi, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Kenya) from Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as discuss the potential implications of gender mainstreaming for trade in these regions. Further, through analysing the current state of play, the paper comes up with specific suggestions to prepare national and regional entities to reduce the negative impacts of trade liberalisation on women and use trade as a mean to achieve gender equality. The recommendations will also provide the policymakers with some way forward in relation to gender mainstreaming in their regional integration programmes and participate in trade and gender activities in their respective countries, regional blocks as well as WTO, as and when required.

Abbreviations

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
AU	African Union
CCBT	Charter for Cross-Border Trade
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DDA	Doha Development Agenda
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
EU	European Union
FEMCOM	Federation of National Associations of Women in Business
FTA	Free Trade Area
GAS	Gender Audit Study
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GMS	Gender Mainstreaming strategy
ICBT	Informal Cross-Border Trade
IGC	International Gender Champions
JDTWEE	Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic empowerment
MC	Ministerial Conference
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MTSP	Medium Term Strategic Plan

NTP	National Trade Policy
PTA	Preferential Trade Area
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RESTRAP	Regional Strategy and Strategic Action on Mainstreaming Gender in Agriculture and Climate Change
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGDI	Southern Africa Gender and Development Index
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STR	Simplified Trade Regime
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RoO	Rules of Origin
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TIDs	Trade information desks
TIWG	Trade Impact Working Group
TPRs	Trade Policy Reviews
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEEF	Women Economic Empowerment Fund
WEEP	Women's Economic Empowerment Platform
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Introduction

Since time immemorial, international trade has played an important role in socioeconomic development of many countries in the world. African continent has also benefited from growing inter and intra-regional trade, particularly in the last two decades. Regional trade is important for Africa as it can help the continent in diversifying their economies, enhancing food and energy security, spurring job creation and poverty reduction (Damon & Jeuring, 2009). The establishment of several regional groups such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) etc. has accelerated the volume of regional trade. Many “new” areas of trade, such as trade in services, can help the continent to diversify its export basket, going beyond a few minerals, textiles and clothing and agro-products. Functioning regional groups can play a major role in promoting trade expansion by reducing all kinds of barriers to it. On another note, it is estimated that women would play much larger role in these emerging sectors, in addition to traditional sectors.

The role of women in African trade is enshrined as producers of tradable goods, as cross-border traders and as managers or owners of firms involved in trade. About 90 percent of small-scale traders across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are women (Brenton and Isik, 2012), particularly informal, producing and selling major crops such as cassava, maize, cotton and rice (Anjinho, N., and N. Rankin. 2008). According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

(UNCTAD), women comprise about 70-80 percent of informal cross border traders across sub-Saharan Africa¹. Women in these countries are also providing cross-border services such as education, health and professional services including legal and financial (Puri 2004). Thus, the role of women is not restricted to delivering food and energy at the household level, but also in generating jobs for an increasing number of young people, alleviating poverty and promoting a shared prosperity (Banerjee, A. 2010).

Yet they face more challenges in conducting trade related activities compared to their male compatriots. For example, while crossing the border, women often suffer various physical harassment and abuse, including beatings, verbal insults, stripping, sexual harassment, and even rape. Despite their large contribution to the respective national economies through trade, policymakers often overlook the role of women and seem unable to address the specific challenges they faced in their trade related activities. Societal stereotypes and perceptions considering female traders such as “petit traders” rather than as legitimate business women (Ityavyar S.D., 2013) prevent women from realising their full potential. Social bias toward women which mandates them to perform household chores and taking care of large families leave them very little time to spend on conducting/developing their trading activities. Many women even consider to stop exercising commercial activities rather than going against the family tradition. As a matter of fact, domestic violence can ensue when women devote time to

1

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1675>

exporting and to intermediary business activities rather than to household responsibilities (Ndumbe, 2013).

Trade policies are often assumed to be gender neutral and expected to deliver similar development opportunities for both male and female (Paas 2008). However, due to the difference in their roles in society and in the economy, distributional outcomes of trade vary largely between women and men (World Bank 2012). Sengendo and Tumushabe (2002), in their study on trade liberalisation in Uganda, found out that increased income from export has caused the society to shift towards export crops, causing land speculation and loss of common-property land, forcing women to be dependent on private-property owning men. According to UNCTAD (2009), women workers in Export Promotion Zones (EPZs) are paid 20 to 50 percent less than men. This has increased the overall wage gap between women and men and reinforced the gender bias in the labour market. There are many other studies which showed how trade liberalisation has accentuated gender inequalities and women's economic and social status.

Trade liberalisation can lead to import expansion and displacement of domestic production, thereby eliminating jobs in sectors where women were the principal stakeholders. Moreover, employment opportunities for women created by trade can also be confined to the low-skilled, low-paying jobs. For example, in agriculture, women's participation can be restricted to lower-value subsistence crops instead of cash crop for export. This will narrow their opportunity to benefit from value addition and commercial opportunities due

to trade expansion. It is important for policymakers to link women to export market. In Kenya, the phasing out of Multifibre Arrangement² created volatility in textile demand. Due to unpredictable and flexible market, women became a larger part of the seasonal workforce. While in the immediate aftermath of MFA phase out, Kenya increased their exports to Europe and Central Asia, women started facing longer working hours and harsher conditions. Employment in textile sector consequently became more suitable for younger and single women, and women comprising 60-70% of the textile workforce in Kenya suffered. Similar situations were observed in Lesotho, Uganda and many other countries (Ayoki M., 2017).

Besides, tariff reductions and the elimination of import licensing requirements generally results in reduced tax revenue collected from tariffs on imported goods. This could indirectly compound any existing gender inequalities by limiting governments' discretion to introduce women-centric policies. There is evidence that poor women and girls are disproportionately affected by reduced public spending, especially in social sectors such as health and education.

Finally, women are not a homogenous group and, therefore, trade policies may impact them differently based on their income, socioeconomic conditions, educational level, labour market dynamics, etc. One key reason for this laxity among policymakers towards gender segregation of trade policies is the unavailability of gender-disaggregated data and information which can inform on the true contribution of women. Absence of adequate participation of women traders and rural producers in the trade policy

² The Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA) provided the framework for international trade in textiles and garments from 1974 through 2004. MFA was used to impose quotas on the amount developing countries could export to developed countries. It expired on 1 January 2005.

(https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/textile/textintro_e.htm)

discussions also hamper their chance of getting heard.

As African continent is further opening their economies, there is a need to assess the impact of trade liberalisation on gender equality. This will assist African policy makers to effectively mobilise responses to crises and to exploit emerging opportunities, as well as to find solutions to break down the barriers to women's full participation in

development through trade. This will work as springboard for women economic empowerment leading to increased income, saving and investment.

SECTION 1

Gender-sensitive Trade Policies: The WTO Scene

Since its inception in 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with trade rules between nations. The primary purpose of the WTO is to ensure open and fair trade for the benefit of all, including women. Although in different WTO summits, the trade-gender nexus has been acknowledged, different agreements of WTO and the accompanying strategies have failed to integrate this gendered perspective. This is mostly under the assumption that market opening and free trade would bring equal opportunity to both genders (Frohmann A. 2017). Moreover, net economic benefit and market-based criteria of measuring international trade fails to capture the societal imbalances that can result from international trade (Paas, 2008). As a matter of fact, article XX of GATT, which deals with reconciliation of trade- and non-trade-related norms in the trade context, doesn't speak about the women's rights. Even Doha Development Agenda (DDA) which takes into consideration several other key social issues such as food security, biodiversity, job creation, environmental protection, was surprisingly silent on gender.

However, gender issues have been addressed in the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) by a number of countries. For example,

In EU-Mexico FTA signed in 1997, gender equality is regarded as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in development cooperation between the parties. EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, in its preamble states the respect of

the parties for international conventions on women's rights, and recommends that "systematic account shall be taken of the situation of women and gender issues in all political, economic and social areas." In its chapter on thematic and cross-cutting issues, it mandates that technical cooperation should create the appropriate framework to "integrate a gender-sensitive approach and concerns at every level of development cooperation including macroeconomic policies, strategies and operation; and encourage the adoption of specific positive measures in favour of women."

The chapter on trade and gender in recently concluded Chile-Canada FTA and Chile-Uruguay FTA provide a framework for the development of gender-focused indicators and obligates both sides to share experiences in designing programmes to encourage women's participation. It recognises the importance of gender mainstreaming for achieving inclusive economic growth, as well as the key role that gender equality policies can play in fostering socio-economic development. Both FTAs include provisions for activities that can enable women benefit from international trade such as skills enhancement, financial inclusion, agency and leadership, entrepreneurship and access to science, and technology and innovation. They also call for the establishment of trade and gender committees to operationalize the relevant chapters of the agreements.

Certainly mere inclusion of gender chapter won't produce gender equality and the chapters require

considerable improvement to bring in gender equality. For example: (i) The gender provisions of the FTA are not legally enforceable yet; (ii) Dispute resolutions mechanisms are not applicable for the trade and gender chapter; and (iii) Potential impacts of trade liberalisation due to these specific agreements on women's well-being and economic empowerment are overlooked.

Nevertheless, these developments should be considered as a welcome start as they raise the profile of gender equality issues in the trade discourse and encourage broader participation by civil society and the private sector in the implementation of agreements. They also enhance cooperation between parties to the agreements on issues of immediate relevance to women and last but not least, they strengthen capacity-building, crucial particularly in the context of developing countries.

1.1 Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment

On December 2017, the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During the conference which took place under the auspices of the International Gender Champions-Geneva (IGC), almost three-fourth of the nations have endorsed a Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic empowerment (JDTWEE), seeking women's economic empowerment by expeditiously removing barriers to their participation in trade. JDTWEE is an initiative of the Trade Impact Working Group (TIWG), a network with the objective of breaking down the gender barriers to trade. TIWG is made of several WTO member states and international organisations, spearheaded by the governments of Sierra Leone

and Iceland, alongside the International Trade Centre-a joint UN-WTO agency.

JDTWEE provides the global framework and a point of reference for countries to ensure gender equal access in trade through recognition of the crucial role that inclusive trade can play in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. By propelling economic growth and development, gender sensitive trade policy can positively influence women equality, which in turn can lead to poverty reduction and economic growth. JDTWEE also acknowledged the importance of improving women's access to finance for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finally, JDTWEE emphasised the need to develop evidence-based interventions that address the range of barriers limiting women's opportunities in the trade activities and participation in the economy.

Through this declaration, WTO member countries have agreed to take steps primarily on six areas which are meant to encourage women's participation in world economy via trade. They are: (i) Gender-Based Analysis of Trade Policy; (ii) Enhancing Women Entrepreneurs Participation in Public Procurement; (iii) Connecting Women Entrepreneurs to International Value Chains; (iv) Promoting Financial Inclusion for Women; (v) Women and Trade in Trade Agreements; and (vi) Women in Digital Trade.

The members have also agreed to share the methods and procedures for the collection of gender disaggregated data, the use of indicators, monitoring and evaluation methodologies and the analysis of gender-focused statistics related to trade. The progress of mainstreaming gender issues in various national level trade policies will be shared during the WTO trade policy review process. This exchange of information will be useful to make international trade more gender-responsive through exploring and finding best ways of tackling barriers to trade, lack of access

to trade financing and sub-optimal participation of women in public procurement process and cross-learning amongst the nations. This will also ensure that the trade related development assistance is prepared taking their direct and indirect impacts on women into consideration. Thus, adhering to JDTWEE can help the countries in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 which aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres and to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership of property.

Importance of incorporating the gender aspects in trade policies is reverberated by several Heads of Delegation present during MC11. For example, Kamina Johnson Smith, Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, said: "Greater participation of women in international trade will generate sustainable jobs and boost global growth. I support the Women and Trade Declaration because trade policy is critical in making that possible." Heraldo Muñoz, Chile's Minister of Foreign Affairs remarked: "Economic empowerment of women is a priority in the negotiation of trade policies and export promotion actions conducted by our government. This is why I support the Declaration on Women and Trade."

1.2 Follow-up on JDWTEE

On 6 and 7 December 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank Group organised a one and a half-day conference in Geneva, to discuss the impact of trade and trade policies on women and men one year after the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade. The aim of the conference was to present and discuss the impact of trade policies and entrepreneurship on women and men and to conduct a stock taking exercise one year after the Declaration.

Around 40 countries including India did not join the declaration arguing the viability of WTO as the appropriate platform to discuss gender issues. Many international women's organizations such as Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) also opposed the declaration and termed it a "pink herring" as it diverts attention from other crucial issues ailing global trade rules and structural inequalities they perpetuate.

Capacity Building Workshops

Despite this setback, to galvanise support for the declaration, the International Gender Champions (IGC) Trade Impact Group (TIG), has been conducting six workshops, starting from March 2018 at WTO Headquarters, as in the below table.

Table 1: Calendar of IGC Trade Impact Group (TIG) Workshops

Date (Time Frame)	Event/Seminar Topic	Organiser(s)
16 March 2018	Gender-Based Analysis of Trade Policy	Hosted by Canada
25 June 2018	Public Procurement	Hosted by the Republic of Moldova; Organized in cooperation with WTO, ITC and EBRD
1 October 2018	Women in International Value Chains	Hosted by MIKTA Countries, CUTS International, International Trade Centre
November 2018 (<i>postponed</i>)	Financial Inclusion	TBD
March 2019	Women and Trade in Trade Agreements	Iceland
July 2019	Women in Digital Trade	TBD
June 2020 (WTO MC12)	Launch publication on making trade policy more inclusive and report on the work of the TIG	TBD

To some extent, the WTO seminars organised so far have brought some light on the topic of gender & trade policy. The Permanent Mission of Canada to the World Trade Organization in Geneva in collaboration with WTO organised the first seminar in support of the JDTWEE, with the focus of sharing best practices for conducting Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) of trade policies and monitoring their impacts. The convening helped to access existing knowledge on the trade-gender nexus, how to use GBA in trade and data requirement for conducting GBA³. During the summit, data gap emerged as the principal deterrent in better understanding the linkages between trade policies and gender issues. To help address this, the WTO has decided to join forces with the World Bank on a research project to gather such data and launch a dedicated publication by 2019.

Public procurement occupies a substantial share of international trade, more than €1.3 trillion per year. In the EU itself, the public purchase of goods and services has been estimated to be worth 16% of GDP.

As the biggest buyer of goods and services in most countries is usually the government itself, trade agreements may include obligations by governments to open their public procurement opportunities to citizens of their trade partners. During the workshop on public procurement, it came out that it is a 15 trillion-dollar market and it can offer significant opportunities for women to connect with the global market⁴. WTO's General Procurement Agreement (GPA) comprising of 47 member countries, seek to lower the barriers to government procurement, thus encouraging more women participation. GPA also promotes e-

³ http://www.sice.oas.org/Genderandtrade/CIDA_Trade-Related%20Capacity%20Building.pdf

⁴ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/womenandtrade_e/badec/ arationgpworkshop.pdf

procurement tools to enable women to access new business opportunities. Although only 47 member nations are part of the agreement at the moment, the membership is increasing, implying more opportunities for women traders in international procurement market. One principal recommendation of the workshop was the need to conduct advocacy, training and establishing networks of female procurement officials to enhance women businesses access to procurement markets.

In October 2018, MIKTA countries (Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia) hosted the 3rd workshop of the series aiming to enhance the participation of women entrepreneurs and traders in global value chains. The Workshop helped to evaluate the gender dimension of global value chains (GVCs) and explore how trade policies, trade measures and technical assistance can help enhance women's participation in GVCs. The workshop also brought into fore different perspectives from actors in GVCs, best practices and experiences of WTO Members. Inadequate capacity emerged as the primary concern for women's integration in GVCs or into the formal sector. Digital inclusion of women traders was acknowledged as a potential tool to link women traders into global value chain.

According to Ambassador Harald Aspelund of Iceland, the results of these seminars are meant to foster discussions, support the development of more inclusive trade policy agenda, and feed into a related publication that would be released ahead of MC12 in June 2020.

Gender in Trade Policy Reviews

In addition to these seminars, many signatory countries have started to put their work programme into action, and will submit their action progress report towards implementation of this joint declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment in 2019. The report will also cover specific policies that are geared towards addressing gender equality, examining these within the context of their Trade Policy Reviews (TPRs).

As of now, European Union, Iceland and one African country, Gambia, has also voluntarily addressed gender issues in its recent TPRs. Iceland is one of the strong advocates of gender rights in trade and supports binding commitments in the area of domestic regulation in services in order to remove explicit and implicit discrimination based on gender elements. Gambia, the small West African nation is one of the first WTO Members to include a chapter on Mainstreaming Gender in Trade in its TPR. Gambia TPR prioritises the sectors which have more potential of creating opportunities for women such as fisheries, horticulture and micro, small and medium enterprises. During the MC11, the endorsement of Gambia was highly appraised and Canada promised to cooperate with Gambia to build their capacity to effectively execute gender mainstreaming in the National Trade Policy (NTP) Gambia.⁵

⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/s365_sum_e.pdf

SECTION 2

Gender in Regional Trade Policies in East and Southern Africa

The African Union (AU) recognises the challenge and strives to work towards bringing gender equality in all spheres of life, including trade related activities. Agenda 2063 of AU aims to create “An Africa where development is people-driven, unleashing the potential of women and youth”. In 2008, AU published a Gender Policy Action Plan in support of the UN Process of gender recognition which started in World Conference of Women in 1975. In accordance with the AU Action Plan, regional blocks and national governments are taking different initiatives to mainstream gender equality, including in trade. Therefore, it seems critical to work towards the removal of trade barriers which are preventing women from joining formal economy while formally moving ahead with African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

2.1 Gender in Regional Trade Policies

The African Union (AU) recognises Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as regional groupings meant to work towards regional integration through a range of activities and programmes. In addition to serving as trade blocks, RECs are responsible for the coordination of activities on various areas including development, governance, peace and security, and gender. RECs have a crucial role to play in facilitation of the adaptation and adoption of various AU initiatives, including forthcoming Gender Strategy.

In total, the AU comprises principally eight different RECs: (i) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); (ii) East African Community (EAC); (iii) Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); (iv) Southern African Development Community (SADC); (v) Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); (vi) Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); (vii) Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); (viii) Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN-SAD).

In this paper, gender-based frameworks of three most prominent regional blocks of the eastern and southern Africa i.e. COMESA, EAC and SADC will be presented and discussed. These gender policy initiatives at the regional level can be effective and may complement national initiatives.

After briefly citing the policies and laws related to gender equality and women’s right in these regional frameworks, the paper will present a snapshot of gender mainstreaming in each regional block with a special focus on their respective trade policies/strategies.

EAC, SADC and COMESA have all taken measures to mainstream gender equality including a focus on business and they are the most advanced RECs in terms of recognising the rights of women. All of them have explicit gender equality and/or women and girls’ rights normative framework in place. SADC also has a monitoring framework on these commitments while COMESA and EAC are preparing one. EAC, SADC and COMESA all have a gender infrastructure which plays an important role in driving the gender

equality and women and girls' rights work. Unfortunately due to financial and human resources constraints, their performances are often suboptimal. Regional advocacy networks of civil society actors are active at the level of the RECs, most prominently in SADC, EAC, although limited in COMESA.

Table 2: Regional Gender Frameworks

RECs	Framework on gender equality/women and girls' rights
EAC	EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill (2016); awaiting assent from EAC Heads of State
SADC	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008); amended in 2016
COMESA	Gender Policy (2002) revised on 2016

2.2 Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

COMESA, the largest REC in Africa with 21 Member States, entered into force in 1994 to replace the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) Agreement of 1981. It was established as 'an organisation of free independent sovereign states which have agreed to co-operate in developing their natural and human resources for the good of all their people'. One of the principal objectives of COMESA Treaty has been supporting women entrepreneurs and businesswomen.

- Article 154 and 155 of the Treaty acknowledges that 'Women make significant contribution towards the process of socioeconomic transformation and sustainable growth and that it is impossible

to implement effective programmes for rural transformation and improvements in the informal sector without the full participation of women.'

- Article 154(b) also calls on member states through appropriate legislative and other measures to eliminate regulations and customs that are discriminatory against women and girls.

In 2002, COMESA Secretariat developed and adopted the 'Gender Policy' which was later revised on 2016. The policy aims to foster gender equality and equity in their various regional integration plans and programs. The COMESA Gender Policy calls for the development of training programs in business, financial management and business negotiation skills for women and small-scale traders; facilitation of women's access to financial services including loans/credit and linkages with financial institutions to ensure friendly credit conditions for women and small-scale entrepreneurs in general. In March 2018, COMESA launched its inaugural Gender Statistics Bulletin demonstrating the progress being made by Member States regarding gender equality, women empowerment and social development. The annual Bulletin will be published with the assistance of COMESA Sub-Committee on Statistical Matters

The COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2016 – 2020 provides for economic empowerment of women and youth as stipulated in the COMESA Treaty and the COMESA Gender Policy. The MTSP provides for support to women entrepreneurs through creation of a regional forum for information exchange and networking, opportunities for market access, mentorship, access to financial services and business linkages, and business profiling. From the beginning, COMESA was focused on women's participation in business. In that endeavour, COMESA has established the Gender and Social Affairs Division and the Federation of National

Associations of Women in Business (FEMCOM) which is focused on Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment of Women. The Malawi Government allocated 10 acres of prime land to FEMCOM for the construction of its secretariat in Lilongwe, Malawi and COMESA is seeking funds for the development of the institution's secretariat.

Women Economic Empowerment Platform

COMESA has established a Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Platform to bolster coordination and collaboration between different actors within the WEE sector and act as a vehicle to the social, political and economic empowerment of women. This strategic platform is crucial in order to promote cross learning, research and information sharing, especially related to trade, among COMESA member countries. Finally, the platform works towards ensuring that good practices are effectively scaled up and that discussions and advocacy on WEE are anchored in sound research. The platform will be run by COMESA Women Economic Empowerment Fund (WEEF) which will be formed by taking one percent from the annual contributions of the Member States and it will be managed by one of the COMESA Institution, the Trade and Development Bank.

The WEE Platform deliverables, designed to be measurable and tangible indicators of success are as follows:

- A more coordinated policy environment for MSMEs
- Improved incorporation of gender provisions in legal and policy frameworks governing the labour market by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism
- Increased number of jointly initiated and implemented projects with involvement of WEE Platform key stakeholders

- Improved access to vocational and educational skills for women entrepreneurs
- Increased number of policy briefs/reports disseminated on the topic of Women's Economic Empowerment by key stakeholders
- Increased documentation of good practices in scaling up efforts within women's economic empowerment
- Increased level of trained women entrepreneurs
- Supportive infrastructure for MSMEs established
- Establishment of a data bank which collects gender-sensitive, quantitative and qualitative data which illuminates the impacts of WEE activities on women's lives and livelihoods
- Dissemination and access to data bank shared with stakeholders of WEE

On June 2018, COMESA, under the WEE platform, has successfully launched the 50 Million African Women Speak (50MWS) project in Malawi. The 50MWS, a women economic empowerment initiative, is a three-year project funded by the African Development Bank, jointly implemented by three regional economic communities (RECs) i.e. COMESA, East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community for Western African States (ECOWAS) in 36 countries. The objective of the project is to empower women entrepreneurs by providing access to financial and non-financial information necessary to grow business. The project is expected to create a dynamic networking platform for women entrepreneurs, connecting them with in ways that will foster peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and knowledge and information sharing and provide them with access to trade finance and market opportunities between urban and rural areas, and across borders and between countries. This will expedite the overall goal of

enhanced financial inclusion of women, leading ultimately to increased economic activity in Africa.

To help women farmers to actively participate in trade, COMESA conducts capacity building workshops under the obligation of 80 percent gender parity benchmark. The principal goal is to integrate a gender responsive design and ensure gender responsiveness in all stages of activity implementation. The capacity building is also expected to prepare a cadre of women trained in gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and impact assessment.

Simplified Trade Regime (STR)

In 2010, COMESA launched STR for some specific types of commodities in order to reduce constraints and challenges faced by small-scale traders especially women in informal cross border trade. Although the text doesn't emphasise the role of women, the women traders in the region can nevertheless benefit from a simplified customs document and a simplified certificate of origin (SCOO). Goods valued under US\$ 2,000 (started with US\$ 500) per consignment, the most common among women Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBTs), can qualify automatically for duty-free entry in the respective markets provided they are originating from member countries. The certificate is issued at the border posts to enable traders located in remote areas to benefit from the regime. It allows goods that have been agreed upon through a common list and which meet the requisite Rules of Origin (RoO), to cross borders easily on the basis on simplified customs document. Applicable lists are displayed at border posts and available at the offices of the cross-border traders' associations and customs both at the border and in the main towns for easy

access of women traders. The SCOO can be obtained at the border post and is signed by the customs office. Under the World Bank funded Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP), border officials and traders at ten border points between the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Rwanda were also trained on the gender issues and the regulations on the minimum standards for the treatment of small scale traders including women traders. Implementation of STR would contribute to more professional treatment of women informal traders and reduction of incidents of harassment, corruption, conflict and other malpractices and ultimately reduce costs of doing business for women.

COMESA Charter for Cross-Border Trade (CCBT)

COMESA has developed the Charter for Cross-Border Trade (CCBT) which will address the challenges faced by cross-border traders, particularly for vulnerable groups – not only women but also youth including high duties and bureaucratic hassles, corruption, sexual abuse and harassment by officials. Similar to the idea of the lists of passengers' rights and responsibilities displayed at many airports worldwide, the document enshrines a basic set of rights and obligations for traders and officials. With support from the World Bank, "Charter for Cross-Border Traders" has been piloted in Zambia-Malawi border. The reaction to the charter among women traders is highly positive⁶. Currently, efforts are being made to implement CCBT at Tanzania/Zambia and Tanzania/Malawi borders. COMESA also established Trade Information Desks (TIDs), staffed by Trade Information Desk

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<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/894601468346146304/pdf/894730BRI0Char0Box0385291B00PUBLIC0.pdf>

Officers (TIDOs) to help the women ICBTs with their STR paperwork.

If these aforementioned COMESA initiatives are well implemented, this could greatly facilitate trade related activities for women while promoting gender equality and reducing the marginalization of women.

2.3 East African Community (EAC)

East African Community was formed through a treaty that was signed on 30th November 1999 and entered into force on 7th July 2000. While Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda were the first to ratify the treaty, Rwanda and Burundi acceded to the EAC Treaty and became full members of the community in 2007. Recently, South Sudan acceded to the treaty and became a full member in 2016 (EAC 2016). In 2005, EAC partner states signed the Customs Union Treaty to establish a common external tariff on imports from third countries and to gradually eliminate internal tariffs. In January 2010, the process of establishing a Customs Union was completed. The Customs Union Treaty was followed by the signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market in November 2009. The Common Market came into effect in July 2010. This shifted the emphasis from solely liberalising goods and tariffs to furthering the free movement of goods, services, labour, and capital. More recently, the Protocol for the Establishment of the EAC Monetary Union was signed in November 2013. Currently, the process towards an East African Federation is being fast-tracked by appointing a 12-member Committee of Experts (CoE) to draft a regional constitution. The CoE is chaired by Benjamin Odoki, former Chief Justice of Uganda and the drafting of the East African Community Constitution is expected to be over by 2021 and disseminated by 2023.

In EAC countries, majority of women is self-employed even though many of them are working in their family land and since they are not paid, it doesn't reflect in the national GDP. EAC Secretariat recognises their contribution to the economy and the EAC treaty clearly defines and/or mandates empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming under the below specific sections/articles:

- Article 5(e) - states the objectives of the Community
- Article 5.3 - provides for the mainstreaming of gender in all EAC endeavours and the enhancement of the role of women in cultural, social, political, and the enhancement of the role of women in cultural, social, political, economic and technological development.
- Article 121 - recognises the significant contribution that women make towards progress of socio-economic transformation and sustainable growth and the importance of full participation of women and men in the economic and social development of the Partner States.
- Article 122 - charts out the role of women in business.

The East African Community (EAC Partner States) have signed and ratified various regional and international instruments in pursuit of gender equality and women's right such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the protocol to the African charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa and the Recent Sustainable Development Goals.

Drawing its mandate from the Treaty for the Establishment of East African Community, particularly under Article 121 and 122, in 2012 EAC established the East African Women in Business Platform (EAWiBP). EAWiBP is a forum

that brings together business-women from across the EAC. Its membership and Steering Committee comprises of; national apex bodies/ associations/ networks of business-women (including associations of women formal and informal cross-border traders); professional women associations; and civil society organizations working to promote business-women and women's socio-economic advancement. Till date, EAWiBP has developed a contact database of 10,000 women in business in the EAC region. Recently, EAWiBP have successfully negotiated an agreement with the International Trade Centre (ITC) to increase market access to Europe for products where women are more involved such as coffee, flowers, tobacco, tea, fish, vegetables and precious metal ores among others.

EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill

In 2015, an MP from Kenya, Hon. Nancy Abisai tabled the Gender Bill before the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Parliament and it received uncontested support. After several rounds of debates, in 2017 the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) passed the EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill, 2016. While the bill advocates for gender equality, equity, protection and development of the female community, one of its principal objective is to promote the equal participation of women and men in regional trade by entrenching enabling policies and macro-economic frameworks that are gender sensitive and responsive. The Bill acknowledges various programmes and legislation developed by Partner States seeking gender equality, and appreciates the heterogeneity of the policies with regard to socioeconomic condition of particular Partner

State. This has considerable potential to improve conditions for women across EAC partner states and also contribute towards expanding the opportunities from trade liberalisation and regional integration for women, particularly through its chapters on economic empowerment, land rights, and trade⁷. EAC is also promoting inclusion of gender chapters in future free-trade agreements to achieve EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill.

Simplified Trade Regime (STR)

Similar to COMESA, in 2007 EAC launched its STR. EAC List of Originating Goods provides for goods which are eligible for clearance through the simplified certificate of origin, goods that are commonly traded by Small Scale Cross-Border Traders, particularly women. While there is only mention of gender/women in the text of the STR itself or in its implementation plan, concerning gender based violence ; it is still expected that women should benefit greatly as the small quantities of products they trade in are the target of this trade arrangement. Many research demonstrated that the majority of ICBTs deal in small quantities of goods with agricultural products amounting to 42%, textiles 21% and consumables 18.5%. Most of their consignments are of the value of USD 2,000 and below. Current list contains 370 products including agricultural commodities like maize and beans, fish products, textiles, cosmetics, office supplies, and household goods. As evidenced as successful implementation of STR, Rwanda and Uganda have recorded noticeable increases in their trade volumes since STR has been enforced. However, in the absence of gender disaggregated data, it is difficult to quantify the gender impact of STR.

⁷ <https://www.eassi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EAC-Gender-Equality-and-Development-Bill.pdf>

The EAC has also fully operationalized and trained personnel at 13 One Stop Border Post (OSBP) aimed at reducing the time spent by women and men at border points hence improving business efficiency. OSBP is a one stop form of border crossing point jointly managed by neighbouring countries where activities are streamlined to maximise efficiency. In order to resolve the problem of lack of information for women regarding business, Trade Information Portals (TIPs) had been installed in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Tanzania is in the process of establishing and at a later stage in Burundi and South Sudan will install TIPs.

Social Development Framework

In 2013, EAC has adopted Social Development Framework, with specific focus on socioeconomic development of women, particularly their promotion in trade related activities. EAC Strategic plan for Gender, Youth, Children, and Persons with Disability, Social Protection and Community (2012-2016) envisages the promotion for women in socio economic development and business through policy and initiatives for economic security of women. The East African Business Council, regional apex body for the private sector in its 2015-2018 Strategic Plan envisages economic empowerment of business in the region including women owned enterprises.

2.4 Southern African Development Community (SADC)

In 1992, Southern African Development Community (SADC) was established with the objective to enhance economic and political development of the region through various policies and programmes including trade agreements. As of 2018, the SADC is composed of 16 countries, characterized by vastly different levels of economic development and economic

structure. In 2008, the SADC met the requirements for intra-regional trade liberalization, leading to the formation of a free trade area (FTA). Other integration milestones i.e. a customs union, common market, economic union and single currency are behind schedule and yet to be achieved.

Since the outset, SADC considers gender equality as one of its priorities and has shown a strong commitment toward mainstreaming gender which is enshrined in the 1992 SADC Treaty. SADC Treaty Article 6(2) clearly instructs not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of inter alia, sex or gender.

In addition, gender focal points have been established in most national ministries to ensure the effective adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming. The primary responsibility of the unit is to supervise and coordinate government measures in response to commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment. The unit is also promoting gender aware Regional Advocacy Strategy on ICBT's, organising regional international trade fairs and trade exhibitions in order to build the capacities of business women in accessing regional and international markets. In addition to capacity building, SADC- Gender Unit also supports research studies to identify and analyse the gendered impacts of trade policies. One such example is Gender Audit Study (GAS). Commissioned in 2000, immediately after the introduction of STP, the results of the study enabled the Secretariat to facilitate and coordinate the design and implementation of its Gender Mainstreaming strategy (GMS).

Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP)

Adopted in 2003, The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) is a comprehensive development and implementation

framework guiding the Regional Integration agenda of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) over a period of fifteen years (2005-2020). The plan is expected to guide Member States, SADC institutions and other primary stakeholders on various measures to integrate gender issues into their programming cycles. RISDP notes that gender equality can contribute to growth, reduction of poverty and overall human development. It also notes that majority of the poor and vulnerable in the region are women due to their limited access and control over productive resources such as land, livestock, finance and modern technology.

Following the adoption of RISDP in 2003, a number of gender equality reforms were put in place as follows:

SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

In August 2008, SADC Heads of State and Government signed a Protocol containing 28 substantive targets including constitutional and legal, governance, education and training, productive resources and employment, gender based violence and sexual harassment with the objective to achieve gender equality and equity in the sub region by 2015. Some of the key activities included:

- Building the capacity of women to participate effectively through leadership and gender sensitivity training and mentoring
- Providing support structures for women in decision-making positions
- Establishing and strengthening of structures to enhance gender mainstreaming and
- Changing discriminatory attitudes and norms of decision making structures and procedures.

Article 17, sec. 6 of the protocol mandates member states to develop subsidized training programs for women which will develop their entrepreneurial skills and provide them opportunities to enhance the production, marketing and exporting of quality products. Further, according to Article 12, Member States shall aspire to fill at least fifty percent of decision-making positions by women in the public and private sectors by 2015. Although short of target, representation of women in parliament within the SADC regions increased from an average of 21% in 2005 to 25% in 2011. The Presidency of Mrs. Joyce Banda in Malawi is one of the cornerstone events in this regard.

SADC Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

In the same year of establishing SADC Gender Protocol, SADC also adopted a comprehensive strategy that aims to achieve greater gender equality at all levels and in all fields including trade through gender mainstreaming. In trade related matters, gender mainstreaming entails integrating a gender perspective in trade legislations, policies, strategies as well as addressing gender inequity issues affecting various stakeholders by creating working environments that are gender responsive and guaranteeing equal opportunities and treatment to both women and men in their diversity. SADC Gender unit was also formed under the strategy. The primary responsibility of the unit is to coordinate and oversee the integration of gender issues in all SADC activities implemented at the head office and Member State level.

SADC Gender Mainstreaming Resource Kit

Next year in 2009, SADC developed a toolkit to strengthen the capacities of its members in mainstreaming gender within the policies and

programmes including trade, industry, finance and investment, infrastructure and services, social and human development and special programmes, politics, defence and security cooperation, human resources etc. Further, SADC Gender Unit has also organised different types of capacity building trainings in gender analysis, planning, and gender budgeting to staffs in the region specifically from the sectors of trade, industry, finance and investment. Customs Experts and staffs were given gender sensitisation trainings to build their capacity in identifying and addressing gender issues and concerns of women involved with trade including Informal Cross Boarder Traders (ICBTs).

SADC Gender Monitoring Tool

In 2009, a SADC Gender Monitoring Tool (GMT) was also put into use for collecting data on progress made by respective Member States in relation to the implementation of its various gender equality commitments, both regional and international.

SADC Gender Protocol Monitor and Barometer

Since 2009, the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer has been tracking annually the progress made by member countries in achieving the targets of the protocol. Each SADC member states have either gender ministries or gender departments located within other ministries. Since 2011, Southern Africa Gender and Development Index (SGDI) is applied to track progress against 28 set targets. The indicator is based on empirical data of 36 indicators as of 2017. The SGDI incorporates many indicators from the SADC Protocol on Gender Development monitoring, evaluation and results framework

(MERF) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators, as well as its own unique measures of voice, choice and control.

SADC trade protocol (STP)

Signed in 1996 and entered into force in 2000, SADC introduced its trade protocol (STP) in order to stimulate intraregional trade both in goods and services among its member states as well as finance and investments. STP aims to achieve among others gradual elimination of trade and nontrade barriers, adoption and harmonisation of custom rules and procedures, attainment of internationally acceptable standards, quality accreditation and meteorology, harmonisation of sanitary and phyto-barriers and trade liberalisation. The overall goal of establishing the STP is to ensure efficient production of goods and services and trade across member states in particular. However, similar to many trade agreements, the protocol remains gender blind as no specific gender dimension is taken into consideration during its negotiations.

SADC Trade Facilitation Program (TFP), which aims at implementation of STP, is also not gender sensitive. However, its targets including simplification and harmonisation of trade documents and procedures can help women traders who face overwhelming number of obstacles while crossing the borders. SADC Simplified Trade Regime (STR), which is modelled around a similar initiative of COMESA, is being developed to assist small scale women traders in reducing barriers to trade and transaction costs when crossing borders. The development of STR will be the first step towards gender mainstreaming in trade related policies and strategies of SADC.

SECTION 3

Gender in National Economic Policy framework in East and Southern Africa: the state of play

This section explores how the gender aspect has been treated in the trade-related and economic national policies of some of the COMESA, EAC and SADC member countries. In addition to a brief gender profile of the countries, this section will help to understand how the national policies are complementing the regional blocks they are part of or sometimes contradicting. It is important to remember that almost all countries in the region are members of at least two or more regional blocks.

Table 3: Selected Countries' Regional Memberships

Country	COMESA	EAC	SADC
Malawi	✓		✓
Zimbabwe	✓		✓
Rwanda	✓	✓	
Kenya	✓	✓	

3.1 Malawi

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world where over 70% of the population lives below the poverty line. Agricultural activities are the principal source of income with more than 80% of people involved with agriculture and associated activities for their living. Although women constitute 52 per cent of the population, there is

a huge difference between men and women in terms of access to land, resources, and credit. Due to illiteracy and some cultural practices women are in a much disadvantaged position.

Women account for most of the socio-economic activities in Malawi. Yet they face various gender-differentiated constraints to economic empowerment. Myriad of barriers including higher labour burdens, lack of access to financial resources, time poverty due to weak infrastructure and care responsibilities, limited access to markets, lack of female voice in decision making processes, negative cultural and traditional factors, violence against women and low levels of literacy and education are preventing women from effective participation in the economic activities.

According to the data of Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare 93 percent of women's labour are unpaid. Additionally, women have a more difficult time gaining access to financial services and credit. More than half of 18 year old girls are pregnant or mothers which significantly curtails their lifelong opportunities. According to the UNDP's 2016 African Human Development Report, only three percent of Malawian women are registered owners of commercial land, despite the fact that they constitute 70 percent of the agricultural workforce and produce over 70% of the food that is consumed locally. According to the data from the Third Integrated Household Survey (IHS3),

collected from March 2010 to March 2011 by the Malawi National Statistical Office, in Malawi female-managed plots are on average 25 percent less productive than plots that are managed by males. The endowment effect explains 82 percent of this gender gap. In particular, female-managed plots are constrained by lower use of inorganic fertilizer, lower use of household adult male labour, lower production of high-value export crops, and restricted access to agricultural tools. The remaining 18 percent of the gender gap – the structure effect – is driven by differences in returns to the use of household adult male labour, and the application of inorganic fertilizer.

Despite all these, Malawi stands third, after Rwanda and Burundi, in terms of women employment rate. Malawi Government recognised the significance of women empowerment and has set up a Secretariat to coordinate various work related to women economic empowerment. The Secretariat is currently chaired by Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare and it will be co-chaired by a suitable representative from the private sector, yet to be chosen. An interim task force is being formed. The task force will spearhead the logistical issues and will be responsible for establishing the WEE Platform in Malawi. The interim committee will have representatives from government, private sector, NGOs, CSOs and associations of women. It is anticipated that the future stakeholders in the platform will be active members of the Malawian economic empowerment sphere. The interim task force will have the duty to spearhead the establishment of the platform which will be run as an entity on its own.

Malawi launched its NTP along with National Industrial Policy in the year 2016 with an aim to support the private operators i.e. farmer organisations, cooperatives, women's groups, MSMEs and businesses in furthering economic development, generating employment and reducing poverty. The policy recognises the

limited participation of small scale traders and in particular women and the youths in CBT due to procedural challenges at the border and seeks to support free movement of goods to markets in neighbouring countries by MSMEs particularly youth and women. Promoting STR, establishing training programs specifically for women, linking women entrepreneurs to international value chain are the key measures, identified by the government to reduce the gender inequality in trade.

Malawian government is also mobilising women groups to make them part of women economic empowerment process. These women groups are expected to be engaged in formalising the informal sector through creation of cooperatives. The government is also considering mainstreaming Farmers Unions in Malawi's Gender Strategy. There are plans to elevate women to leadership roles in Beach Village Committees. These committees play important role in protecting fisheries in Malawi's lakes. However, National Trade Policy of Malawi speaks of women only in the context of "initiatives to support free movement of goods to markets in neighbouring countries by MSMEs, particularly youth and women". There might not be any immediate concrete plan to mainstream gender in trade related activities at the national level.

3.2 Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa. Agriculture is the principal livelihood activity for about 70 percent of the population living mostly in rural areas and accounting for about 15 percent to 20 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. About 52 percent of the population is female. Literacy rates are high in Zimbabwe: 97 percent for women and 98 percent for men.

Zimbabwe is signatory to several international conventions that provide for gender equality such

as CEDAW (1991), Beijing Declaration on the Platform for Action (1995), Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), Equal Remuneration Convention, Convention on Prohibition of Discrimination in Occupations, Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Convention on Economic, and Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC), The protocol to the 2003 African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women ratified by Zimbabwe in 2008, The 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender and Equality in Africa, SADC's Gender and Development Protocol, COMESA Gender Policy, AU Declaration on Agenda 2063.

Zimbabwe also has a National Gender Policy (2013–2017) which replaces the first National Gender Policy of 2004. With 86 percent of women in Zimbabwe depending on agriculture for livelihood, national gender policy strives for reduced inequality in agriculture as principal mean towards women empowerment, particularly for rural women. The government of Zimbabwe, through this policy, commits to gender mainstreaming in all sectors including access to water and sanitation; infrastructure; access to land and agricultural inputs; and employment creation. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (adopted in 2013) is also acknowledges its firm commitment towards gender equality.

Government implements its gender policy through Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (MWGCD). Accordingly, MWGCD has adopted women's economic empowerment as a key strategy for achieving SDGs and long-term economic development. One key programme run by MWGCD is the promotion of community gardens. The programme seeks to provide 1 kg seed packs to women with gardens and available water, targeting 50 women per ward. This programme aims at alleviating food insecurity.

The latest trade policy of Zimbabwe, National Trade policy (NTP 2012-2016) does not distinctly target women but acknowledges the need for gender mainstreaming. It promises to give due consideration to women so that they can have equal access to trade finance and trade support facilities. The Government also aims to facilitate the participation of women in local, regional and international exhibitions to create market linkages for women products and to improve networking with other organisations in order to foster women empowerment, gender equality and community development. The policy also aims to explore and consider extending the concept of the STRs to other neighbouring trading partners under the auspices of COMESA/SADC or bilateral trading arrangements in order to facilitate and simplify informal cross-border trade, which is mainly dominated by women. The regime is already operational between Zimbabwe and Zambia, as well as Zimbabwe and Malawi. Goods are imported under the Simplified Certificate of Origin entering Zimbabwe free of customs duty.

Concerning the access to finance, women receive less financial support, even in sectors where they dominate, such as in the informal economy, micro and small-scale enterprises and agricultural production. To correct this, MWGCD is trying to enhance loan access for women. Their efforts include influencing financial institutions to set quotas for women; encouraging conventional banks to support women entrepreneurs; expanding financial services to women entrepreneurs beyond credit, for example, savings, investment and asset management; and, pre- and post-credit counselling of female loan recipients. MWGCD has also created a women's fund to finance income-generating projects for women. Although, the effectiveness of this fund and women's knowledge concerning the existence of this fund requires further research and analysis, MWGCD is playing a big role in improving women's access to finance.

3.3 Rwanda

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country of eastern Africa bordering Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Despite the genocide in 1994, which decimated fragile economic structure of the country and severely impoverished the population, since mid-90s Rwanda has made significant progress in rebuilding its economy. Along with the average annual growth of 7-8 per cent since 2003, Rwanda has also achieved significant progress in reducing poverty which dropped from 56.7 per cent in 2005/2006 to 39.1 per cent in 2014/2015.

Rwanda is a leading example of successful integration of gender considerations in all government programmes and laws, as well as in the main plans and strategies that form the country's development framework. Rwanda is a particularly outstanding case, becoming the first country in history to have a higher share of women in the parliament than men in 2008. In 2015, 64 per cent of the seats were held by women in the national parliament. Rwanda's outstanding achievements in gender equality reflect in 2014 Global Gender Gap Index which ranks Rwanda at 7th place in the world, out of over 200 countries.

Rwanda's 1988 Civil Code gives equal rights to men and women in their access to passports and travel, and in formal labour (ability to sign contracts, register businesses, and obtain bank accounts), and it provides the legal framework for divorce proceedings. To address the limitations for women in land ownership, in 1999, Rwanda brought forth the Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Donations, Successions and Liberalities (Law No. 22/1999), a significant ground breaking legal reform stipulates equality between men and women in property and inheritance rights. Similarly, the 2005 land law provides a new framework for land administration and usage,

defining land tenure categories and establishing that all land in Rwanda has to be registered and titled. It established equal property rights for men and women, prohibited any discriminatory practice based on sex, and mandated that all women be adequately represented at all levels of decision-making bodies and commissions on land management.

The new Labour Code and 2003 Constitution recognize an equal right to work for men and women, and the right to equal pay for work of equal value. Gender considerations have also been included as a crosscutting dimension in the design of both medium- and long-term national development frameworks and key instruments such as Vision 2020, the Decentralization Policy, and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), which implements Vision 2020. In 2004, the government of Rwanda put in place a National Gender Policy with the objective to guide the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting issue into all trade and investment programs. The policy, last reviewed in 2010, defines policy actions spanning all sectors of national development.

Rwanda has National Trade Policy which places social development and gender equality as one of its primary focuses, and recognizes the need for the gender assessment of trade agreements in its policy. Additionally, within ministries of trade, gender ministries are part of the national monitoring committee on non-tariff barriers. In fact both national trade policy and national export strategy of Rwanda suggest specific interventions to reduce gender imbalances within the context of trade policy. Some gender specific considerations mentioned in the NTP are:

- Integration of gender issues in trade policy formulation, implementation and in trade negotiations at national, regional and international levels;

- Increased awareness among women of emerging trade opportunities at national, regional and international levels;
- Identifying sectors where female work force is particularly significant and design trade policies that enhance production and trade opportunities in such sectors/products, including through the improvement of infrastructure to facilitate access to markets, removing of customs obstacles and other barriers to export; and encouraging entrepreneurship in such sectors. Future intervention are planned on enhancing market linkages using ICT, especially mobile phones
- Increasing access for women to training in entrepreneurial skills, including managing and financing, and training for women entrepreneurs in rural areas. As part of the initiative, in October 2018, a special training was organised in various parts of Rwanda, on the best way for women to practice profitable trade of agriculture inputs that include seeds and fertilizers.

Rwanda adopted a Gender Responsive Budgeting Programme (GRB) from 2002 to 2004, and again from 2008 to 2010, led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, to ensure that budget allocations and public expenditures were gender-sensitive. Since 2011-2012 gender budget statements became mandatory for all ministries. The objective is to train government officers on gender-sensitive budgeting, in the gathering and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. Today, the Gender Budget Statement (GBS) is part of the Organic Budget Law (OBL, 2013). The Women and Youth Access to Finance Programme, launched in 2012, was designed to support women's and youth's access to finance, stimulate their financial literacy, and enhance their abilities to pursue economic opportunities. Women also have access to support through the Umurenge Savings and Credit Cooperatives (known as Umurenge - SACCO) and the Peoples

Bank for Women's Promotion, which encourage women's entrepreneurship and facilitate access to finance and microcredit.

Rwanda's 2007 National Employment Policy recognises the under-representation of women workers in wage earning jobs and the engagement of the female population mainly in informal activities. Within this framework, the government of Rwanda aims to reduce high levels of unemployment and underemployment among women. The 2010 Agriculture Gender Strategy identifies specific gender gaps, challenges, and opportunities in agriculture. The Girls' Education Policy launched in 2008 aims to reduce gender disparity in education and training and promote access of girls to fields related to science and technology. Rwandan women also benefit from a National Reproductive Health Policy, which aims to reduce maternal mortality, guarantee maternal and child health as well as assisted delivery, and make access to family planning available to all.

The Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, in association with the Commercial Bank of Rwanda established the Women Guarantee Fund in 1998 to support access by women entrepreneurs and women-owned small and medium sized enterprises to credit without collateral through banks and micro finance institutions at affordable rates. Although the program is an important initiative, the requirement of a sound business plan for eligibility is a significant obstacle, particularly for rural women. Lately, the government has also backed a number of rural investment guarantee funds to facilitate women's access to credit.

3.4 Kenya

Kenya is the largest economy in the EAC and the only non-least-developed country among the EAC Members. Women play a major role in Kenya's economy. The proportion of women in the labour force in Kenya has gradually increased over the

last 30 years and today they make up almost half the labour force, mainly informal. Kenyan women, however only 9% of firms in Kenya are majority women-owned and barriers continue to stifle their growth. In rural areas they are involved either in self-employment or as unpaid family workers. In urban areas, women mainly work both in the care economy but also in the services sector, such as in education as primary school teachers, in health as nurses, in retailing or manufacturing, or as nannies, making significant contributions to the economy.

New Constitution of Kenya, passed in 2010, provides a powerful framework for addressing gender equality, marking a new beginning for women's rights in Kenya, seeking to address the traditional omission of women and promote their full involvement in every aspect of growth and development. Several articles of the Constitution, including Articles 27(3), 27(6), 81(b), 177(b) and 197, can be termed as milestone in Kenya's quest for gender equality and equity in representation at the two distinct but independent levels of government in Kenya: National and County. Article 27 (3) for example can be quoted as: "Women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres."

The new constitution and Inclusion of several gender sensitive articles also paved the way for mainstreaming gender in the newly formed National Trade Policy 2016. The last part of section D, Chapter 6 of NTP i.e. on Complementary Support Policies and Measures, is reserved for Gender Equity and Youth Inclusive Approach to trade. The section acknowledges the challenges faced by the women and identifies inadequate legal framework and inadequate access to capital as principle challenges to women's participation in trade. The allocation of one whole section (6.11) towards Gender Equity and Youth Inclusive Approach to Trade

Development places the Kenya NTP very high in terms of mainstreaming gender in National Trade Policy.

The National Policy on Gender and Development also purposes to attain equal treatment for men and women in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres of life. The National Development Vision, 2030 endeavours to uplift the socioeconomic status of women through a series of targeted programmes. An example of this is the Uwezo Fund, a flagship programme of Vision 2030 that aims at enabling women, youth and persons with disabilities to access finances to promote businesses and enterprises at the constituency level, thereby enhancing economic growth. The Fund seeks to expand access to finances and promote women, youth and persons living with disability led enterprises at the constituency level. It also provides mentorship opportunities to enable the beneficiaries take advantage of the 30% government procurement preference through its Capacity Building Programme. Thus, it is an avenue for incubating enterprises, catalysing innovation, promoting industry, creating employment, and growing the economy with the inclusive participation of women. Enacted since 2014, the fund however is in its very early stage and therefore its impact cannot be accurately measured yet.

Another measure to ensure financial inclusion and equity in economic opportunities for women is the establishment of Women Enterprise Fund. It is a Semi-Autonomous Government Agency in the Ministry of Public Service, Youth & Gender Affairs established in August 2007, to provide accessible and affordable credit to support women start and/or expand business for wealth and employment creation, thus promoting gender equality and women economic empowerment. In 2011, the Fund was selected as the winner of the Sustainable Development Goals Award for outstanding achievement on promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

SECTION 4

Other Plurilateral efforts

In addition to aforementioned regional and national frameworks, countries of the region are subject to many other plurilateral frameworks and initiatives which concern gender aspects of trade. Some of the most important frameworks are:

4.1 Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)

In July 2015, during the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the world leaders including several ministers of development cooperation and finance, civil society and the UN-system recognised the role of women in development and endorsed a global framework to shape the development cooperation agenda and provide financing for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. A standalone, comprehensive and transformative goal on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment titled 'Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'⁸ was developed and adopted by 193 UN member states. The Action plan outlines transformative policy and financing actions to accelerate implementation of existing commitments in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to meet new commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The agenda aims to significantly increase investments, in both scale and scope, to close the financing gaps that hinder

progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

Paragraph 6 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda highlights the commitments:

- 1) Member States recognize that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and the realization of women's human rights are essential for achieving sustained economic growth, inclusive and equitable economic growth, and sustainable development;
- 2) Reiterate the need for gender mainstreaming, including through targeted actions and investments in the formulation and implementation of all financial, economic, environmental and social policies;
- 3) Commit to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through sound policies, enforceable legislation and transformative actions at all levels;
- 4) Show determination to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy; and
- 5) Demonstrate determination to eliminate violence against women.

4.2 SheTrades

Evolved from ITC's Women and Trade programme 'SheTrades' Initiative was launched in 2016. The

⁸<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/8131Action%20Plan%20on%20Transformative%20Financing%20for%20GEWE.pdf>

programme strives to close the gender gaps in women-owned businesses by supporting women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses through an online platform for women entrepreneurs to connect to international markets. In order to connect 1 million women to markets by 2020, SheTrades has developed a framework of seven global actions⁹.

- I. To collect, analyse and distribute data on women's economic participation;
- II. To create trade policies and agreements that enhances women's participation in trade;
- III. To empower women-owned businesses to participate in the public procurement spending;
- IV. To create corporate procurement programmes that embed diversity and inclusion in value chains;
- V. To address supply side constraints that affect women-owned businesses;
- VI. To close the gap between men and women for accessing financial services; and,
- VII. To ensure legislative and administrative reforms guaranteeing women's rights to ownership and control over resources.

The initiative has till date mobilised a network of more than 800,000 women entrepreneurs, facilitated access to markets for more than 15,000 women in business, and has helped generate more than \$70 million in trade for women across eastern and central Africa. The programme is working with several associations

to help women coffee farmers and producers meet international quality standard. Out of 10 country offices across Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America, three are based in Africa. Since 2016 SheTrades Kenya is helping the Kenyan women in the services sectors to connect to regional and global market opportunities. Launched in 2018, SheTrades Nigeria aims to strengthen the capacities of over 3,000 women-owned businesses with a view to generating sales worth £28 million (\$38m) by 2020. Launched also in 2018, in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), SheTrades Zambia strives to improve the competitiveness of Zambian women and strengthen their opportunities to access regional and international markets. A data-mapping survey on women entrepreneurs will also be conducted to identify their specific needs.

4.3 The International Gender Champions Geneva Initiative

In October 2015, Rolf Heuer and Fabiola Gianotti signed together with 41 diplomatic missions and 21 intergovernmental organizations based in Geneva to be International Gender Champions Geneva. The International Gender Champions Geneva Initiative is a leadership network of female and male decision-makers. It is a platform for decision makers who are committed to promote gender equality in all spheres of life. All gender champions need to sign a panel parity pledge for gender balance when inviting experts for panel discussions. In addition to the Panel Parity Pledge, each gender champion makes two individual annual commitments, which are concrete actions to moving gender equality forward in their respective organisation. The

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https://www.shetrades.com/application/files/2515/2931/4304/SheTrades_Kenya_Low_res.pdf

Gender Champion Network is being updated regularly on the progress of the commitments and review takes place twice a year. These half-yearly exchanges help to prioritise and mainstream gender awareness and ongoing engagement on capacity building, representational, and communication commitments. The platform also eases the sharing of experiences and strategies to achieve gender equality and break down gender barriers.

In addition to aforementioned, multilateral development assistance frameworks such as the Aid-for-Trade (Aft) Initiative, the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to the Least Developed Countries (EIF) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) also offer frameworks to integrate gender issues in international trade.

SECTION 5

Promoting Gender in National and Regional Trade Policy Frameworks: The Way Forward

The prevailing assumption that free trade is gender neutral is under increased scrutiny. As shown through preceding discussions, there clearly exists a gender gap in current trade policies that impacts men and women differently. There is a compelling need to frame gender specific policies or of scaling up trade measures in regards to expected positive impacts for women and girls. Above all, national governments need to recognise the gender-differentiated impacts of trade liberalisation and the importance of gender equality to ensure sustainable trade outcomes. The recognition will lead to mainstreaming of gender analysis in trade policy making and negotiations. Further, the policies need to be effectively implemented to remove women's barrier to trade as well as to ensure equality in benefit sharing. Based on the discussion so far, some specific recommendations at the policy level can be formed which will help to improve women's participation in trade related activities, including policy making, and contribute to reduce gender equality caused by gender insensitive trade policies, among others.

5.1 Trade Policy-making

Gender assessments

Prior to introducing any new trade measures, regional and national policymakers may conduct some ex-ante assessments of gender sensitivity reforms to their trade policy. A value chain analysis linking the entire range of sectors as well as economic activities and agents involved in the process can be useful in identifying inequalities in the chain and come out with specific recommendation to subside this disparity. This will help the policymakers to have a deeper understanding of the implications of possible multilaterally agreed conduct on gender and trade for their economies and for women in particular. This will also help them to mitigate the potential effects of multilateral gender-sensitive trade rules and ensure that the maximisation of benefit under the new rules is achieved. Such assessments will also enable the policy-makers to prepare appropriate responses to questions that might arise in WTO discussions and to meaningfully participate in trade and gender activities at the WTO. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has developed a methodological approach that can be used for

carrying out *ex ante* gender-related assessments of trade reforms¹⁰

Gender in Trade Agreements

The inclusion of gender chapter in trade agreements has the potential to improve partnership between multiple stakeholders at the national, regional and multilateral levels. Incorporating gender-related considerations in the text of trade agreements can help to leverage opportunities for women to be involved in trade and work as a form of investment aimed at improving the gains of women from trade. This will also help women to invest in themselves and participate more prominently in trade. Chile-Uruguay FTA and the Canada-Chile FTA can work as a model in that respect.

Inclusion in Investment Policies

Investment policies need to acknowledge the barriers faced by the women. Governments and donors are mostly concerned with trade facilitation and productivity enhancement in export-oriented sectors in order to improve international competitiveness. Notwithstanding, these policies need to be better targeted to ensure that it is not just men who benefit and women traders are also benefited by these interventions. Thus programs and policies need to go beyond the existing trade networks for information dissemination and create new networks keeping women traders in mind. Similarly, skill training in export-oriented activities needs to recognise women-specific barriers and design the course accordingly. Finally, there is a need to create new and alternative sources of financing form domestic or regional resource mobilisation to support women traders such as regional

development fund. In Liberia, government has reserved 25 percent of public budget to invest in SMEs and 5 percent of it will specifically be used for women entrepreneurs.

Regional integration

There is a need for cross-border cooperation to share best policies and practices of gender mainstreaming. Some case studies suggest that the regional trading arrangements are more likely to positively influence women. However, small scale producers and traders do not always need large export markets and can thrive in neighbouring markets with similarities. This is particularly true for this region where women are historically involved with informal cross-border trade. While developing major regional trade agreements including ongoing negotiations for AfCFTA, policymakers need to put attention in developing inter-regional/sub-regional markets and linking them with small women exporters. There is a need to establish a **regional platform** to exchange best practices among and across RECs and develop a uniform monitoring tool to check the implementation of various plans on Gender Equality and women empowerment. The advancement of technology should be leveraged in that respect. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) of SADC is one such example. By linking these platforms with gender objectives, the platforms can be leveraged and used as a medium to promote gender equality. These platforms can also be used for sharing market prices.

¹⁰

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=1517>

Women participation in policy-making

The participation of women and gender experts need to be promoted at all levels of trade policy-making and negotiation processes. Multi-stakeholder mechanisms such as the National Committee on the WTO (NCWTO) in Kenya and the Inter-Institutional Committee (IITC) in Uganda are successful examples of the participation of civil society in national trade policy-making. However, there is also huge capacity gap as far as the skill and capacity of women negotiators and policy dialogue partners of these countries are concerned. EIF, Aid-for-Trade are some initiatives that can be used to bridge the gap.

Policy coherence

Last but not the least, as most of the countries of the region are part of at least two RECs, it is important to ensure that their gender policies are not contradicting each other as there is a clear difference in the levels of maturity among different countries and regional blocks concerning the trade-gender nexus. This is due to the diversity of all the nations in terms of culture, socioeconomic status, development and growth indicators, climatic conditions affecting trading patterns are just to name a few. As AfCFTA coming up, gender inequality will widen if specific concerns of individual nations are not taken into account.

5.2 Trade Policy Implementation

To achieve the desired policy objectives, governments need to ensure that trade related rules and regulations are duly implemented. For effective implementation of trade policies that can reduce gender inequality by empowering women, recommendations to governments are provided below.

Policy ownership

Trade policies are simple and easily understood by all the women traders. ICBT rules should be clearly manifested in the border posts. Predictable rules and regulations, clarity on the required documents will help the small scale women traders to deal with the unfriendly border officials. Single customs document in COMESA or bilaterally such as pilot one-stop border post between Zambia and Zimbabwe at Chirundu are good examples of reducing the complexity, time, and cost of formal trade procedures. COMESA and EAC have developed and SADC is in the process of developing STRs, in order to overcome problems associated with small traders. Rwanda and Uganda who are members of both EAC and COMESA, have already recorded noticeable increases in their trade volumes. In addition, COMESA has relaxed the requirement of normal proof of origin at a COMESA border post and replaced it with simplified certificate of origin.

Role of Cross Border Traders' Associations

National governments need to empower the leadership of existing Cross Border Traders' Associations (CBTAs) with the requisite knowledge of the legal regime regulating trade and enhance CBTAs' knowledge base and expertise on customs procedures and documentation, Tariff classification, Rules of Origin, STR, Technical Barriers To Trade like Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, security and cross cutting Issues in the trade agreements. Strengthen the role and visibility of women in CBTAs by linking the existing CBTAs and advocating for their formation where they do not exist with the ultimate goal of having a regional network. In that respect, COMESA Secretariat is actively seeking the formalisation of trader groups into registered associations. COMESA encourages national governments to create a policy environment that allows women

traders to form associations. COMESA Secretariat is also spearheading the inclusion of traders in policy forums in the region and encouraging the CBTAs to participate in various national and regional policy forums. As of today, eight COMESA member states have accepted the existing national CBTAs as participants in their National Working Group Committee on Trade. In order to address the challenge of lack of information for women traders who want to move into formal trading, EAC and COMESA have authorised establishment of trade information desks (TIDs) at each STR implementing border. This would help small traders with the STR and deal with other formalities and disseminate information on trade procedures and regional initiatives. These TIDs will also act as a liaison between traders and border authorities in daily operations. The World Bank has just launched a charter that requires support from the international community, governments, cross-border traders, and officials for successful enactment. Known as the Charter for Cross-Border Traders, its main objective is to facilitate small-scale cross-border trade by improving the treatment of traders and the efficiency of border procedures.

Capacity building

Capacity building is an important component for effective implementation of gender inclusive trade and thus government should give special importance to skill trainings and reserve adequate budget in that respect. The training should focus in entrepreneurial skills, in addition to building women's capacity in specific technical issues, in other word, skills which will improve women's ability to participate in trade and skills to manage an organisation including financial management. Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) provide entrepreneurial and business development trainings to the business community. The Chamber has a countrywide outreach with 47 County Chambers.

Unfortunately, these are not tailored to the specific needs of women. This is an excellent set up as women in rural areas could benefit from a range of services brought closer to the rural areas. Technology can play an important role in that respect. In that respect, special and differential treatment (S&D) for developing countries in agriculture can help to create enough policy space to overcome the difficulties faced by their smallholders and subsistence farmers. Measures such as special product provisions and a special safeguard measure for developing countries can also be useful in this regard. The special product provision can help to keep a few sensitive products exempt from reduction commitments, or to lower the commitments and the safeguard measure. This would allow countries to protect women farmers as producers and consumers till they build their capacity.

To ensure that the project implementation is leading to the policy achievement regional and respective governments need to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation. The existing mechanisms such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) processes and tools such as Sustainable Impact Assessments (SIAs), Gender Trade Impact Assessments (GTIAs) and Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIAs)) can be used to monitor the gendered impacts of trade policies and agreements. The country reports produced by the TPRM of the WTO have already been identified as an entry point by the Informal Working Group on Gender and Trade. The SIAs scheduled under the Cotonou Agreement (an RTA between the EU and ACP countries) are another possible entry point for integrating women's specific concerns into the negotiation process. Further, local and national governments should be hold accountable for their actions towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The world is at a crossroad where globalisation and trade liberalisation is drastically transforming the social, economic and political scenario. Trade as engine for growth has the potential for upliftment of women as has been witnessed in their increased participation in export related activities. Gender mainstreaming into country's overall economic policy framework including trade policy is important for a development that focuses on empowerment of women to achieve equity and equality, active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political decision-making, social justice, inter- and intra-generational equity, ecological soundness and equal access to economic resources catering to the vision of sustainable development.

While trade is not the cause of gender differentials, it may act as a magnifier to existing disparities. Empowering women through trade can stimulate social development and create a virtuous cycle. The institutional framework of WTO is based on the assumption that trade policies and agreements are class, race and gender neutral (Paas 2008). This underlying assumption has led to the long neglect of gender as a variable in trade policy-making, while women and other groups affected by trade policies have been excluded from the decision-making processes related to the WTO as well as at the regional and national levels. From that aspect, the Joint Declaration is a welcome first

step. While the Declaration contains several activities that members have agreed to undertake collectively in the context of the WTO, there is no negotiating agenda, nor any intention to bring the issues to the WTO in the short to medium term. There is a need for consensus among members on new/innovative ways to further incorporate gender issues on the WTO agenda. Undoubtedly, this is not going to be easy as many countries consider the introduction of gender issues at the WTO as a ploy to introduce new topics such as trade finance and government procurement, and a potential trade barrier at a later stage.

There is no doubt that African countries will benefit from better gender equality in trade. However, the question of bringing in gender issues in the WTO and other Multilateral Trade Agendas needs to be carefully analysed. It is critical that African policy-makers interested in gender equality are aware of the full range of opportunities and specific challenges of incorporating gender issues in formal WTO negotiations/work.

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