How Trade Rules Impact Women's Empowerment –
Trends in WTO Members Trade Policy

Submitted by: WTO
How Trade Rules Impact Women's Empowerment – Trends in WTO Members Trade Policy

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Outline of presentation

1. Three tracks of action in the WTO
2. The legal basis for WTO’s work on trade and gender
3. Trade rules are NOT gender neutral (4 examples)
4. Gender related trade policies – trends in WTO Members
1. **Three tracks of action in the WTO**

1. **The WTO Members track**
   - Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment
   - 122 Members – 75% of World Trade – 2/3 developing economies

2. **The WTO's track**
   - Trade and Gender Action Plan ➔ 4 key objectives

3. **The Human Resources track**
   - Promotion of gender parity in the WTO Secretariat
2. The explicit legal basis for WTO’s work on trade and gender

• Aid for Trade
  – Task Force Recommendation 2006
  – Cross cutting issue

• Technical Assistance Plan 2018-219
3. The implicit legal basis for WTO’s work on trade and gender

- GATT objectives + Preamble of WTO Treaty + Preamble of GATS:
  - Raising standards of living
  - full employment-
  - income growth
  - sustainable development
3. **The implicit** legal basis for WTO’s work on trade and gender

- **Inclusive trade**: narrowing down the issue

- **What about trade rules?**
  - No mention of gender in trade agreements -> gender neutral -> A widely held view (still)
  - Does it mean they don’t have an impact on women?
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

4 examples:

- Trade Facilitation Agreement
- Agreement on Agriculture
- Government Procurement Agreement
- Aid for Trade
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

Trade Facilitation Agreement

- Providing for customs collaboration, exchange of information and simplified border formalities: improve the safety of women traders
  - Impact of TFA on border post security and infrastructure improvement, creating a safer environment for cross border traders.
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

**Trade Facilitation Agreement**

- Digitalizing customs procedures

  - Avoid customs officials biased: women wait 37% longer on average than men to see the same customs official (example)

  - Reduction of women’s export costs: delays in processing export permits have a cost -> higher prices for their goods and wage gaps.

  - Multiplier effect -> training on new technologies
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

**Agreement on Agriculture**

1. Article 6.2: development box – small farmers

   Developing economies: domestic input subsidies, to low-income or resource-poor producers
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

Agreement on Agriculture

- Types of measures
  - **additional flexibilities** in providing domestic support towards poor and small farmers -> can include women
  - measures of **assistance, direct or indirect**, for agricultural and rural development as part of development programmes
4. **Trade rules are NOT gender neutral**

Agreement on Agriculture

- **Investment subsidies** available to agriculture in developing economies

- **Domestic support to encourage diversification** from growing illicit narcotic crops.
4. Trade rules are NOT gender neutral Agreement on Agriculture

• Women in subsistence agriculture:
  – Difficulties in accessing productive resources
  – Lack capital
  – If women farmers had the same access to productive resources than men, they could increase their harvests by 20-30% (FAO statistics 2012).
4. Trade rules are NOT gender neutral
Government Procurement Agreement

• Represents around 15% of GDP in most economies

• Women participation in GP markets: 1%
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

Government Procurement Agreement

- Non-discrimination, transparency and predictability:
  - Allows foreign business women to compete at the same level as national business women in procurement markets
  - Sound environment for women businesses to access procurement markets

> access to information
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

**Government Procurement Agreement**

- e-procurement tools: less corruption (like TFA)
- Example of Switzerland (wage gap policies vs. quotas)
- Link with SMEs: women owed SMEs=5 years life spam -> all these tools are important
4. Trade rules are **NOT** gender neutral

**Aid for Trade:** a trade instrument for gender equality

- A **continuous increase** in the focus of donors and developing economies on gender equality in AfT objectives
- The **main target group:** women entrepreneurs.
- A **disconnect between objectives and priorities**
- Explains the **difficulty in assessing impact** of aid for trade on women – results of 2011 evaluation
5. Gender related trade policies

Main trends

• 54 economies in 4 years (2014-2018) -> over 100 reviews (some reviewed twice in period)
• Main target sectors: finance, agriculture, government procurement, tourism
• Main target groups: MSMEs, farmers
• Training programmes
5. Gender related trade policies

Types of measures

• Objectives in national and regional trade strategies -> integrating women in the workforce
  – Example of Nigeria/construction sector

• Domestic support (Green Box) -> training activities -> increasing productivity and production.
5. Gender related trade policies

Types of measures

• Accessing credits, loans and guarantees for small businesses (rural producers & innovative companies)

• Credit guaranties programmes for rural and tourism MSMEs

• Access to regional and international GVCs: training in SPS
5. Gender related **trade policies**

**Types of measures**

- Government **procurement** schemes: preferences to companies with gender equality policies or to women-led SMEs.

- Support programmes focus on **training** and **technical assistance** (finance literacy, vocational training, competing in international markets)
5. Gender related trade policies

Types of measures

- Fiscal/financial incentives to companies to provide health check on pregnant women
- Donors: Aid targeting women
- Addressing gender discrimination through FTAs/Gender provisions in FTAs
- Import tariffs adjustments on women’s goods
- Institutions: SME authorities (quotas of loans)
For more information

WTO webpage on Women and Trade

www.wto.org/womenandtrade

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