



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

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Reaching Women's Potential in Cross-Border E-Commerce

Submitted by: United States



**Utilizing Digital Technology in the Field of
Trade Facilitation Under the Current
COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond: Best-
Practices Sharing Workshop - Empowering
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to
Participate in Cross-Border Trade
15 September 2021**

REACHING WOMEN'S POTENTIAL IN CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE

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BACKGROUND

- The US Support for Economic Growth in Asia (US-SEGA) activity is a joint project of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State, which Nathan Associates is implementing.
- Under the APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group, this initiative focuses specifically on how policymakers from APEC economies can reduce barriers and better support women entrepreneurs engaging in cross-border ecommerce.



CONTEXT

- The digital economy is growing rapidly and APEC is committed to helping women-owned micro, small and medium sized businesses (MSMEs) take advantage of the opportunities.
- Women in the APEC region have been taking advantage of domestic e-commerce opportunities, but remain under-represented in cross-border e-commerce in some economies.
- In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, success in e-commerce is a critical factor in the survival of small enterprises in the region.

Global e-commerce sales were around **\$3.6 trillion** in 2019, and Asia-Pacific is where much of the growth is.

CONTEXT

- **Small Businesses Face More Challenges in Cross-Border E-Commerce:** Whether it is dealing with logistics, understanding digital regulations, or access to trade finance, small businesses have the most difficult time navigating these issues in e-commerce.
- **Women-Owned Businesses are Small:** Women own 50 percent of micro-enterprises and 59 percent of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in East Asia and the Pacific. As women-owned businesses tend to be smaller, they disproportionately face cross-border e-commerce challenges.
- **Two Types of Barriers:**
 1. Overarching Enabling Environment Barriers
 2. E-Commerce Specific Barriers

THE DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT

Objectives

- Review the barriers faced by women-owned businesses in cross-border e-commerce
- Provide APEC policymakers with best practices and diagnostic questions to help identify gaps in their support to women engaging in e-commerce

Methodology

- Comprehensive literature review including from sources such as the UN, ADB, IFC, WTO, ITC; interviews with women entrepreneurs; companies; platforms; associations

Current Status

- Final diagnostic toolkit endorsed by APEC policymakers

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

Ally's Basket, Singapore
Ashleigh Ivory, Singapore
The Beacon Agency, Canada
Luminaid, USA
McCarthy Tétrault, Canada
Prinitha & Co., Australia

CORPORATIONS

Google
JD.com
Mastercard
PayPal
UPS
Visa

GOVERNMENT

Massachusetts Export Center, USA
Ministry of Trade, Chile
Virginia Small Business
Development Center, USA



BUSINESS SUPPORT GROUPS

American Chamber of Commerce, Malaysia
American Chamber of Commerce, Singapore
Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN)
Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation
Global Innovation Forum, USA
International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva
IT for Change, India
Nextrade, USA
UNCTAD
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Women's Initiative for Start-ups and
Entrepreneurship (WISE), Viet Nam
Women Entrepreneurs Go Global, USA

E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

eBay
Etsy
Kichink, Mexico

COMPONENTS OF THE TOOLKIT

- 1 Summary of key barriers for women-owned businesses**
- 2 Private sector best practices**
- 3 Diagnostic checklist for use by policymakers to assess their own support in key areas including:**

- Access to financing
- Network support
- Market access
- Reduction of regulatory hurdles
- Digital literacy
- Trade financing
- Reduction of logistics and customs barriers
- Online safety
- Representation and visibility



OVERARCHING CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Access to finance and capital



Access to networks



Access to Markets



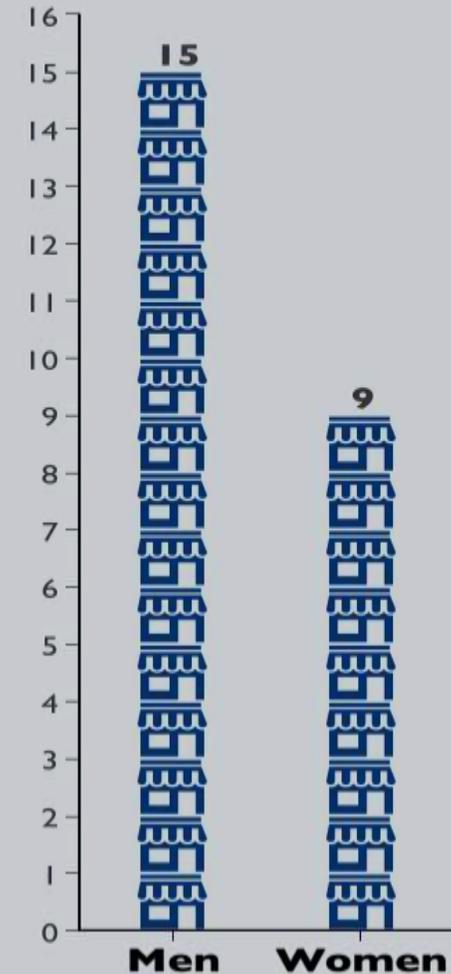
Legal and social barriers

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

A survey of 272 SME owners in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand found that a higher percentage of women owners compared to men owners never interact with business associations (APEC and The Asia Foundation 2013).



Data from the ITC shows that women-owned businesses, on average, export to fewer markets than male-owned or -led firms (ITC 2017a).



CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Trade Finance:

- Women-owned MSMEs are more likely to be denied trade finance.
- Women-owned MSMEs are less likely to have strong banking relationships and sophisticated financial documentation.



Digital Literacy and E-Payments:

- Fewer women than men have access to and/or use internet-banking services.
- Women often lack the skills and confidence to use digital services.

CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Digital Trade Regulations:

- While some economies have informative websites targeted for women-led enterprises (e.g. Australia), in others, government websites are harder to navigate for those seeking information on how to export.



Logistics:

- Women-owned businesses are more likely than men to use postal services vs. international logistics providers in sending goods across borders, which may indicate financial constraints.
- Women face barriers in accessing information related to logistics.

CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Discrimination on Online Platforms:

- Women may experience gender bias while selling on e-commerce platforms where women not only get a lower number of online bids, but earn less when selling the same products as men.
- Some practices of large e-commerce platforms favor large businesses.



Customs and After-Sales Support:

- Women-owned MSMEs face challenges with online returns.
- In some cases, customs brokers prefer dealing with male business owners, and female business owners are more susceptible to corruption.

CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES



Online Safety and Security:

- Women are two times more likely to experience online harassment than men.
- Women business owners may face digital threats while interacting in online social networks, which are crucial for sales.
- Digital threats such as hacking and data privacy violations can also disproportionately affect MSMEs.



Networks, Representation, and Visibility:

- Confidence gaps result from lack of networks, role models, and the lack of representation holds back women-owned MSMEs in e-commerce.
- Gender balanced representation is needed at e-commerce panels and events.

SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR BEST PRACTICES

Information and Training

- A global logistics company and International Trade Centre's SheTrades program developed a Women's Exporter Program to provide training and education for women business owners in cross-border e-commerce.
- The training covers exporting, e-commerce, and trade regulations in Viet Nam, amongst other economies.
- Company experts provide tips on targeting, research, documentation, and shipping processes to help build confidence and competence.



SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR BEST PRACTICES

Resources, Real-time Support, and Advocacy

- A global platform company provides women-owned businesses in online start up and e-commerce sales with an e-commerce sellers' handbook, which has e-commerce regulatory information, training videos and webinars.
- 24/7 online chat forums are available to address issues in international sales, copyright infringement, and product development.
- The company advocates for policy changes to create more favorable trade conditions for MSMEs.



DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT

Data on Women in E-Commerce:			
1. Does the government collect data on the number of women-owned businesses in cross-border e-commerce?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Additional details:
2. Does the government collect data on the challenges of women-owned businesses involved in cross-border e-commerce?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Additional details:
3. Does the government quantify the impact of women-owned businesses in cross-border e-commerce on economic growth?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Additional details:

DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT

Digital Literacy, E-Payments, and E-commerce and Digital Trade Regulations:

(page 15)



<p>1. Does the government have programs targeted towards women-owned businesses to help them access the global digital economy?</p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Additional details:</p>
<p>2. Does the government have easily available online information about internet banking and e-payment options?</p>	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Additional details:</p>
<p>3. Does the government have programs that support the expansion of export-oriented women-owned MSMEs, for example, by providing online and in-person trainings on entering new markets, on topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International product standards, locating tariff information, customs regulations, and other relevant trade related information• Assistance in complying with the importing economy's requirements• Access to market intelligence and data	<p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Additional details:</p>

DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT

Discrimination on Online Platforms:

(page 20)



1. Has the government examined whether gender-based discrimination is occurring on e-commerce platforms and has it explored ways to address biases?

No

Yes

Additional details:

Online Safety and Security:

(page 20)



1. Does the government collect data on the instances of cyberbullying and sexual harassment faced by women-owned businesses online?

No

Yes

Additional details:

2. Does the member economy provide legal protections against online cyberbullying affecting women-owned businesses, including online sexual harassment?

No

Yes

Additional details:

Thank you!

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