

## **INFORMAL REPORT BY THE WTO SECRETARIAT TO THE AID-FOR-TRADE SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT OF 6 NOVEMBER 2018**

### **WORKSHOP ON " ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND EMPOWERMENT WITH A FOCUS ON YOUTH AND WOMEN "**

A workshop was held on 5 November on "Economic diversification and empowerment of women and youth". It explored the links between trade, youth and women's economic empowerment.

In his opening remarks, the Chair, H.E. Mr. Diego Aulestia, Ambassador of Ecuador recalled that women's economic empowerment has been an objective of the Aid-for-Trade Initiative since its inception. Reference could be found in the Aid-for-Trade Task Force recommendations from 2006. Focus on the issue had grown, as evidenced by the greater profile given to this topic in recent Global Reviews and the greater focus given in monitoring and evaluation results. The focus of Aid for Trade on youth was perhaps a new dimension to the Initiative, albeit one that was well-established in a national policy context.

The International Labour Organization gave two presentations to set the scene for the workshop. The first examined youth unemployment rates and trends globally. Unemployment rates varied considerably at the regional level and the proportion of young people neither in employment nor in education or training had reached 22% worldwide. Worryingly, three-quarters of this neither in employment nor in education or training cohort were young women. The rest of the presentation focused on ILO's Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. Launched in 2015, it involved 22 agencies and 40 partners. The Initiative focuses on 8 pillars: green jobs, digital skills, apprenticeship, youth in fragile situations and transitioning to the formal economy, rural economy, entrepreneurship and youth in hazardous occupations. The ILO had launched the Taaqem Initiative to strengthen gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the MENA region. Through rigorous impact research, this capacity development and learning grant project aims to understand "what works" in the promotion of gender mainstreaming, with the goal of reaching gender equality in rural employment outcomes across the region.

The second presentation focused on ILO's Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification programme. The STED programme provides strategic guidance on integrating skills development into policies to strengthen traded sectors. It combines strategic analysis and social dialogue. The STED programme in Malawi has proven successful at building female farmers' skills, and helping them to link with business and access markets. Women were empowered economically in a short period of time, leading to the construction of houses, the purchase of dairy cows, the payment of school fees and access to health care.

The next session of the workshop then discussed national experiences. The WTO Ambassadors of two WTO Members, Jamaica and The Philippines, presented their experiences.

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are high on Jamaica's development agenda. These issues are cross cutting themes in key strategies such as Jamaica's National Development Plan – Vision 2030; the new Foreign Trade Policy and Action Plan (2018) and the National Export Plan. The new Foreign Trade Policy adopted in October this year had a dedicated chapter on Trade and Gender with the objective of facilitating women's integration in trade and global value chains. The national Policy on Gender Equality acted as the main focus for these actions. Jamaica's Aid for Trade strategy identified gender as a cross cutting issue and calls for gender sensitive approaches to technical assistance activities. Jamaica had received support on six Aid for Trade projects for women's empowerment focussing on rural development, private sector development, and with a special focus on MSMEs, training, and exports. In addition, Jamaica plans to increase MSMEs participation in international trade by 10% by 2019 and for this purpose has developed numerous projects and programmes.

As one of the 121 Signatories to the Trade and Women's Empowerment Declaration, The Philippines had recognised the significant contribution of women to its economy and had developed various programmes especially focused on entrepreneurship and women's integration in the labour market, namely The Philippines Development Plan 2017-2022; the Pinay Leading Economic Advancement Toward Development and Sustainability.

The Philippines had focussed its policies at improving access of women to entrepreneurship opportunities and has developed the 7 Ms for MSMEs providing women entrepreneurs with access to information, export capacity enhancement, training, mentoring, access to market information, finance and innovative technologies. The Philippines was also focussing on harmonising its rules and regulations on MSMEs.

The second part of the workshop highlighted various empowerment programmes, initiatives and policies implemented at the international and regional by UNCTAD, ADB and FAO.

Understanding how trade policies and agreements impact women's work before and after implementation is key in designing policies targeting women's empowerment. UNCTAD has developed a toolbox that can help countries make such assessment. The toolbox has been applied in the framework of the EPA between the EAC and the EU. Including gender considerations in bilateral Free Trade Agreements could also foster women's integration in international trade. UNCTAD gave examples of various agreements signed by Chile, Canada and the EU and highlighted some critical analysis of the real impact of such provisions.

The Asian Development Bank (AsDB) presented a regional perspective of women's empowerment. Progress had been made on gender equality in Asia especially on health, education, and employment. Focussing on women's participation in the economy, the AsDB Presented key figures in the region: on average, women's labour force participation had decreased between 1990 and 2016, but the region had witnessed sector shifts, as services had become one of the more important employment sectors for women (around 82% in 2016). Also, female employment was rising in wholesale and retail trade, education, health and tourism.

Women were strongly represented in MSMEs but ownership by women remained low. While female representation was higher in trading firms, they also faced higher trade obstacles especially in accessing trade finance. The AsDB is implementing a Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Operational Plan 2013–2020. A target of 48% of ADB projects supporting gender mainstreaming has been set, with the objectives of removing barriers, empowering MSMEs and creating market incentives, implementing regulatory reforms, providing capacity building and investing in digitalisation. The AsDB also provides support in education and skills development. In addition, the AsDB highlighted that investment in physical and digital infrastructure can have a positive impact on women's social care roles.

The last presentation focussed rural women. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) presented the UN Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Women. The initiative involved collaboration between FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women It had been developed in 2012 to respond to the many challenges that rural women face and focuses on 4 main outcomes: improving food and nutrition security; increasing income to sustain livelihoods; enhancing participation in community decision-making and more gender-responsive policy environments. Since 2014, over 40,000 women had benefited from this programme, which provided them with capacity development and access to productive resources. Results included a 69.5% average increase in agricultural production and a more diversified diet; access to markets, with an increase of up to 25% increase in the income of participating women and in number of women-led businesses and access to finance. Women receiving financial services and loans had repayment rates of up to 83%.

In closing, the Chair concluded by suggesting that the positive results of trade were not automatic and depended on how targeted policies were to achieve inclusive outcomes.

Copies of presentations and a podcast are being made available on the WTO website.

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