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Aid for Trade and Gender Equality

*WORKSHOP ON THE 2022 AID-FOR-TRADE MONITORING
AND EVALUATION EXERCISE*

31 May 2022

1. Gender equality is part of aid for trade since its inception

- Hong-Kong Ministerial Conference in 2005 (Paragraph 57)
- In 2006, WTO Members composed the Aid for Trade Task Force to operationalize the Initiative and frame its objectives.
- References to gender equality as a cross-cutting issue throughout the Initiative can be found in the 2006 Aid for Trade Task Force Recommendations and the final report of the Task Force (WT/AFT/1), released in July 2006.
 - Aid for Trade Task Force Recommendations, Section F. Operationalizing Aid for Trade, Section F.2 Guiding Principles
 - Article 42 (WT/AFT/1)
- Gender equality has therefore been an integral part of Aid for Trade since its inception.

2. Women's economic empowerment: integrated in development objectives plans and strategies

- Some 92% of developing countries and 90% of donors (both bilateral and multilateral) integrate women's economic empowerment as a priority in their national or regional development plans and objectives or trade-related development aid.
- Both groups are therefore at par, similarly to 2019, as revealed by the Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Exercise 2019 (WTO Staff Working Paper ERSD-2019-08).

3. Most countries also mainstream gender into instruments other than development strategies

- Respondents to M&E 2022 indicated that they use a range of instruments to mainstream gender in development strategies.
- The instruments used are diverse with varying legal status and impact
- Country respondents can be divided in 3 categories

3. Most countries also mainstream gender into instruments other than development strategies

- 1: Countries that include gender issues into their overarching development plans and strategies
- 2: Countries that develop specific and dedicated instruments focusing specifically on gender equality issues (within their gender equality policies or strategies)
- 3: Countries that develop dedicated and thematic instruments addressing gender issues with a specific policy scope.



3. Most countries also mainstream gender into instruments other than development strategies

- A number of countries include gender issues in their decentralisation strategies and policies that focus on impact at the local community level.
- Some countries combine two or three of these types of instruments.
- All these instruments are used as a basis or provide a mandate to mainstream gender into countries' aid for trade strategies and programmes.

3. Most countries also mainstream gender into instruments other than development strategies

- However, Gender mainstreaming in trade policy remains a challenge for most countries and when it occurs countries mostly integrate trade and gender issues in their entrepreneurship strategies and support for female exporters.
- While, for example, Pakistan, Vanuatu and Mauritius, directly integrate gender issues in their trade policies or export strategies, they are among only a few such countries.

4. Gender-related aid for trade programmes are specific and targeted

- Most gender related Aid for trade programmes focus on women entrepreneurs and female farmers
- While targeting women entrepreneurs and female farmers, Aid for trade programmes focus on capacity building programmes in line with their skills development needs.
- With the objective of strengthening productive capacity, they mostly ensure compliance with product standards and increase quality and also integrate other non-trade related trainings such financial and digital literacy or business management.
- Some programmes focus on access to information about border clearance procedures, licensing requirements.

5. Aid for trade programmes tend to focus on sectors where female labour is concentrated

- Such as apparel and textiles in Peru, shea nuts and shea butter in Mali, honey in Zambia, and cashew nuts production in Burkina Faso.
- Interestingly, programmes focus less in the services sector where most women work, even if some African countries intend to increase women's participation in services sectors through aid for trade.
- Tourism is the exception and is one focus of gender related aid for trade programmes.
 - Some countries are promoting forward-looking, innovative tourism projects.

5. Aid for trade programmes tend to focus on sectors where female labour is concentrated

- Some developing countries have a more innovative approach about future support by involving small scale female economic actors.
 - Madagascar mentions that in the fishing sector, support should prioritise the artisanal processing of fishing products; in the mining sector, support in extractive activities should be directed towards small and artisanal mines; and that in industry, support for promoting small and medium-sized enterprises managed by women.
- Scaling up women's activities is also a future focus identified by partner countries.
 - For instance, Lesotho estimates that aid for trade should focus more on supporting women to transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming and empowering women to get involved in supply chains.

6. Policy interventions in relation to gender equality encompass a wide scope of areas of intervention

- 7 areas of policy intervention
 - *To be further developed by OECD but I would like to focus on one in particular*
- Tackling violence against women is a key aim of some aid for trade programmes – for the first time highlighted by WTO Members in the M&E
 - Violence against women in general and during the conduct of trade activities (e.g., at the border) is being integrated as a key issue of focus in countries' strategies and policies.
 - This focus may be rooted in the increase of violence against women in the last two years, during the COVID-19 pandemic and its colossal economic cost.

6. Policy interventions in relation to gender equality encompass a wide scope of areas of intervention

- Many partner countries put an emphasis on the elimination of gender-based violence, some including child marriage and other harmful practices, as a challenge to overcome and a key development objective.
 - Example of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Several donors also reflect this issue in their trade related programmes and projects.
 - Example of The Netherlands
 - Example of Australia



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Floor to OECD

7. Donors and partner countries are aligned in their support for gender targeting in aid for trade programmes.

- Both donors and partner countries clearly establish that aid for trade can be a significant instrument to mobilise funds in support of women's economic empowerment.
- For instance, Aid for Trade can successfully connect women entrepreneurs and financiers.
- Aid for trade funding is also aligned with developing countries' priorities and objectives on women's economic empowerment as adopted in their development plans and strategies and their various policy instruments. This can reinforce the effectiveness of aid for trade programmes.
- Some constraints faced by women that can be addressed by aid for trade programmes are commonly identified by developing countries and donors.

7. Donors and partner countries are aligned in their support for gender targeting in aid for trade programmes.

- However, some disparities between them could, in turn, weaken the effectiveness of such programmes.
- When identifying constraints faced by women and addressed by programmes, four out of the six top obstacles are commonly acknowledged by both donors and country partners.
 - These four aligned constraints are access to finance, informal employment, access to digital services and poor access to information.
- Donors have also identified unpaid care work and unpaid employment as a key obstacle for women, whereas partner countries have not placed this issue high on their list of obstacles.
- Similarly, 70 % of donors and only 30% of partners believe that the gender pay gap is a key obstacle.

7. Donors and partner countries are aligned in their support for gender targeting in aid for trade programmes.

- This disparity in some areas of policy intervention and aid for trade programming could weaken the effectiveness of aid for trade programmes given that they are demand driven.
- The link between aid for trade and gender is strongly established for both donors and partners.
- Most developing countries agree that aid for trade can help remove the obstacles they identified.
- Both donors and partners consider that aid for trade can help women's access to finance and credit, strengthen female entrepreneurship and business development through market linkages, and support women's access to skills development and capacity building in trade.

7. Donors and partner countries are aligned in their support for gender targeting in aid for trade programmes.

- **Future perspectives** on aid for trade and gender are also similar between partner countries and donors despite few discrepancies.
- In terms of sectoral support, most countries established that aid for trade should focus on agriculture, fisheries, handicraft fashion and apparel as well as e-commerce and digital services. Some also mentioned tourism. There is strong overlap with sectors in which most women work.
- However, differences between donors' and partners' priorities exist.
- Future key priorities identified by partner countries and not donors include energy supply, communication infrastructure, and trade education and training.

8. Sex-disaggregated data in trade is a challenge and is not collected by many countries. It is gaining traction

- The M&E 2022 confirms that governments collect sex disaggregated data in various areas of policy interventions and using a range of instruments from national surveys to tax statistics.
- However, gender-differentiated data collection as regards trade is more scarce.
- Countries integrate data collection mechanisms on women's economic empowerment in their development strategies and more broadly in their policies.
- Examples of data collection processes

8. Sex-disaggregated data in trade is a challenge and is not collected by many countries. It is gaining traction

- Some donors have included data collection systems, sometimes as a requirement, in a more systematic manner, but they often collect information for monitoring and evaluation purposes, as well as to select projects that would benefit from aid for trade.
- The way the data is collected, and its periodicity, is not always systemic and institutionalized. Many countries collect data on an ad-hoc basis such as when they organize training workshops. One partner country mentioned that it collects data when the need arises. One donor relies on international organizations such the OECD or the World Bank for data.

8. Sex-disaggregated data in trade is a challenge and is not collected by many countries. It is gaining traction

- Even when governments gather such statistics, they rarely do so as regard to trade.
- Rare exceptions include for example:
 - Guinea Bissau which integrates a gender-disaggregated data collection process in its strategy for the development of trade and exports.
 - Similarly, Mexico gathers data on women in trade through dedicated surveys conducted by its statistics office.

8. Sex-disaggregated data in trade is a challenge and is not collected by many countries. It is gaining traction

- Aid for trade initiatives can be an instrument to collect data on women's participation in trade. Some donors and partner countries have indicated that sex-disaggregated information is a key challenge while designing aid for trade projects focusing on women.
- The lack of regular data collection on women in trade has created statistical gaps that impact the effectiveness of trade policies and development strategies. This issue has been discussed by WTO Members in the Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender and they have exchanged data collection methods as part of their technical work on trade and gender . WTO Members also prioritized developing and improving gender-disaggregated data collection. WTO Members identified this area of policy intervention as fundamental to advancing gender equality in trade.

8. Sex-disaggregated data in trade is a challenge and is not collected by many countries. It is however gaining traction

- The lack of data on women and trade has been confirmed by research, the work of the WTO Gender Research Hub and the WTO's work on data collection in trade. For this purpose and in order to support governments, the WTO has developed a data collection questionnaire for them to use as guidance. This questionnaire is one of twelve trade and gender policy tools developed by the WTO for government officials to better and concretely integrate gender issues in their policies and that are incorporated in its training course on trade and gender .
- The lack of data also impedes research and in turn policy making, as research findings can be used to inform gender responsive trade policies and promote women in trade.
- This is why the WTO created the WTO Gender Research Hub in May 2021 to foster further research and consequently data collection efforts through an information-sharing and knowledge-gathering platform where the latest findings of researchers and experts can be shared and disseminated globally.

9. Aid-for-trade programmes are not systematically evaluated for their gender impact

- Few partner countries embed impact evaluation mechanisms while some donors make them mandatory
- The impact assessment of gender responsive programmes is a key and current issue of focus in the trade and gender community. Without understanding how effective these programmes are, countries cannot design informed policies and initiatives to support women.
- The M&E 2022 suggests that only one third of developing country partners evaluate their aid for trade programmes while more than two-thirds of donors have instituted monitoring processes. For some, impact assessments are mandatory. Among partner countries, LDCs are more inclined to include evaluation processes as they use the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the Enhance Integrated Framework (EIF).

9. Aid-for-trade programmes are not systematically evaluated for their gender impact

- When they evaluate their programmes, countries use various methods.
- Most of them include specific gender related indicators and targets that are evaluated against their objectives to examine progress in implementation, and they include them as an integral part of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Some countries use the Voluntary National Review of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to assess their programmes.
- As outlined before, one of the main challenges in monitoring the inclusion of gender perspectives in trade is data availability on women's participation in trade and its impacts.
- The example of Benin

10. Conclusion

- Aid for trade is a powerful instrument to foster women's economic empowerment.
- The WTO Secretariat will continue enhancing its work in this area and improve the M&E exercise to better capture data and information related to aid for trade programmes.
- As data is a key component of informed trade policy making.

For **more information**

WTO webpage on Women and Trade

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