

WTO ACTION PLAN ON TRADE AND GENDER 2017-2019

BUILDING THE TRADE AND GENDER FOUNDATIONS IN THE WTO

The purpose of this medium-term Action Plan (2017-2019) is to frame and structure the WTO's actions on trade and gender. It describes the strategies that the WTO will use to meet its goals and objectives defined in this document. This Action Plan also sets a clear direction and will help to keep track of activities undertaken through the proposed timeline.

The Action Plan is based on the following four main axes: educate; facilitate; gather data and train.

Current political context and main objectives

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has focused attention on gender empowerment, setting targets for the global community to reach by 2030. The WTO is actively engaged in contributing to the 2030 Agenda and achieving those SDGs that contain direct references to WTO activities, including:

- SDG 2 on hunger, food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture
- SDG 3 on healthy lives and wellbeing
- SDG 8 on economic growth, employment and work
- SDG 10 on inequalities within and among countries
- SDG 14 on oceans, seas, and marine resources.
- SDG 17 on strengthening the global partnership for sustainable development.

By contrast, less attention has been paid on how trade can contribute to the gender empowerment objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda, and in particular, in SDG 5.

Inclusive trade has been one of the WTO's main focuses in the last 4 years, through the DG's political stance and the focus on women empowerment is one of the WTO's priority issues. However, the WTO is lagging behind other international organisations because for decades, it was agreed and never challenged that trade rules are gender neutral.

More recently, the topic of trade and gender is gaining more attention among WTO Members. One such occasion took place during the last meeting of the Working Party on Domestic Regulations (WPDR) when Canada presented its proposal for gender equality in services domestic regulations (JOB/SERV/258). It was clear that not all members understand the need to discuss this issue in the WTO (and especially in the domestic regulations negotiations). Some also requested statistics and the economic reasons justifying this discussion.

However, today, no WTO Member is questioning the importance of this theme. This was a clear message during the Aid for Trade Global Review 2017. A vast number of donors and developing countries are looking to increase the focus on gender in terms of Aid for Trade impact on women's economic empowerment.

Moreover, some members are more advanced in their actions and reasoning than others. Those members are not only developed countries (EU, Canada, Sweden, The Netherlands) but also developing and least-developed (Zambia, Ghana, the Gambia, Sierra Leone); and they are starting to push this issue into the WTO.

Also, Japan is a strong supporter of women's' empowerment. This issue is handled from within the Prime Minister Office. Interestingly, Japan will be the General Council Chair in 2018 and could be important supporter of this issue and the Secretariat work.

Consequently, there is a need to change the way the trade community (including WTO Members) look at the gender issue and a role for the WTO Secretariat to raise awareness and facilitate WTO members' actions.

One of the most pressing issues is tracking the impact of trade measures and rules on women. There is insufficient data in that regard and we consequently need to understand the links between trade and gender. This is a very complex issue because it implies combining sound economic analysis with an understanding of social, cultural and religious dynamics. Not only creating new data will help better understanding of the link between trade and gender but may also allow WTO Members to realize what the concrete and real economic benefits are in empowering women and adjust their policies.

Also, existing data is scattered across a wide spectrum of international organisations, private sector bodies and think tanks. This data should be better used and promoted.

Additionally, women traders and entrepreneurs face numerous constraints before they can use trade as a tool for their economic development and autonomy. They face disproportionately higher trade barriers such as greater difficulties in complying with regulatory and procedural requirements, poor access to information and markets. Lack of access to information and knowledge has been identified as one of the main barriers preventing women entrepreneurs to develop their business.

Within this context, the Action Plan should aim at:

- **Objective1:** Educate and raise awareness and visibility on the links between trade and gender.
- **Objective2:** Support and facilitate WTO members' actions and activities on trade and gender.
- **Objective3:** Gather data and statistics analysing the impact of trade measures on gender and promote a better use of existing data.
- **Objective4:** Provide trainings and information tools for government officials in charge of policy making, for women traders and entrepreneurs and for WTO Secretariat staff.

On the basis of the results achieved and changing objectives, this Action Plan should be adjusted and revised.

In order to achieve these objectives, a set overarching messages and targeted actions will be developed and implemented.

Action1: Developing key political messages

In light of the political context and objectives described above, the following 4 overarching messages will be integrated into all of the WTO's communications and activities on gender, with the purpose of maximising their impact.

They constitute tools to help achieve some of the objectives, especially 1 and 2. They will help explain to WTO Staff and Members why the WTO is focusing on gender, why this issue is important, why there is space in the WTO to integrate gender focused activities and what are the gains of doing so.

These messages can be accompanied by 'sub-messages' intended for different target audiences.

They should be revised and adjusted following the evolution of the discussions and the WTO's work on this topic.

The key messages should be the following:

1. Ensuring that benefits from trade reach wider and further.
2. Empowering women means economic efficiency.
3. Trade can be a force driving women's economic empowerment.
4. Tracking and understanding the impact of trade on women.

➤ **Key message 1: Inclusive trade is high on the WTO agenda. We need to ensure that benefits from trade reach wider and further.**

Trade can create opportunities for women's employment and economic development. Through trade, job opportunities for women have increased significantly.

The World Trade Report 2017 shows that trade has supported employment opportunities for women in some countries. Given that time and mobility constraints are greater for women, particularly those with children, technological developments like e-commerce can have an important impact on work for women. Because trade creates job opportunities for skilled workers, it increases the incentive to undertake schooling. This is particularly beneficial for women.

➤ **Key message 2: Empowering women means economic efficiency**

This message addresses those who would question why gender is an issue the WTO should focus on because trade rules are gender neutral.

Inclusive trade is about economic efficiency. Investing in women is good business. Women make 52% of the world's population and they play a key role in the global economy. The more involved they are, the more economies grow. All the evidence shows that giving women the same opportunities as men, improves competitiveness and productivity which in turn impacts economic growth and poverty reduction. Globally, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women would raise per capita productivity by 40%. Increasing women's participation in the labour market to the same level as men's would raise US GDP by 5%, Japan's by 9% and Egypt's by 34%. It is a matter of economic efficiency for all countries, developed or developing!

➤ **Key message 3: Trade can be a force driving women's economic empowerment.**

Trade opportunities can open a door to employment, more decent work and economic development. Tradable sectors are large sources of employment for women. Exporting companies in developing countries employ more women than non-exporters. Women are heavily involved in services, agriculture and manufacturing, as cross-border traders, producers and entrepreneurs.

Globally, in 2015, 62% of employed women worked in services sector, 25% in agriculture, and 13% in the industry. Global value chains may be one way that women can realize their potential.

Using technology, online platforms and e-commerce can be an easy and inexpensive way to enter foreign markets, expand women-owned businesses and promote women entrepreneurship (despite the persisting gender digital divide).

➤ **Key message 4: The need for better data on the impact of trade on women**

There is a need to track the impact of trade on women. This means that we need to have better data. Not only would gathering new data help better understanding of the link between trade and gender but may also allow governments to realize what the concrete and real economic benefits are in empowering women and adjust their policies.

Action2: Gathering data on trade and gender

The objectives are two-fold: gathering data on how trade measures impact women and promoting a better use of existing data.

➤ **Gathering and publicising data on impact of trade measures on gender**

The gender brochure developed in June 2017 is a starting point for deeper analysis on trade and gender which is a vast subject. The research will therefore need to be focused, framed and structured. Partnering with other international organisations that have more experience would also be an asset.

- Framing the focus of the research: it could focus on one sector in services or more broadly on GVCs. Gender and SMEs could be an interesting angle as it could follow up with the SME and trade finance publication as well as the WTR 2016. This list of issues is none exhaustive. Many others could be looked into and defining topics of research will be conducted in collaboration with ERSD.
- Partnerships: Other international organizations could partner with the WTO, namely The World Bank and UNCTAD (gender toolbox).
 - The World Bank and the WTO have already initiated the work on a joint publication on trade and gender.
 - UNCTAD just launched its gender tool box assessing how trade measures impact gender and what happens to women if a given trade measure is implemented.
- The research will be compiled and released in a new publication.
- Focussing the World Trade Report on gender could also be an option in the future. This means that a partnership with other organisations will not be possible. The WTR 2016 focused on SMEs with only a few mentions regarding women owned SMEs.

- Basing the next WTR on women could deepen the existing research made on SMEs and provide continuity between reports.

Action and timeline:

- *Framing the focus of the research with ERSD and establishing partnerships: September/October 2017*
- *Developing concept, content and outline of publication with ERSD: November/December 2017*
- *Starting research: January 2018*
- *Drafting and finalising publication until release: 2018 (timeline tbd)*

NOTE: this activity has recently been discussed with ERSD. A first meeting with ERSD and the World Bank took place on 29 September 2017. Research themes and World Bank collaboration regarding data collection on gender were the focus of the discussions. Research on the following themes would be pursued: Gender and trade costs; Investment and links to GVCs; Trade facilitation; Trade finance; others tbd. The intent is to release the data in a report addressing those various issues at the next Aid for Trade Global Review in July 2019.

➤ **Compiling existing figures and statistics**

Before promoting a better use of existing data, we need to identify, classify and record this information. Also, as mentioned above, some Members requested statistics and the economic reasons justifying the discussion on gender in the domestic regulation negotiations. A database of existing figures and statistics should therefore be created looking at a wide spectrum of issues. This activity will be conducted in parallel of ERSD's work on new data.

Action and timeline:

- *Research, compilation of statistics and database creation: October to December 2017*
- *Keeping the database up to date: ongoing*

Action3: Mapping out policy trends through WTO monitoring processes and Technical Assistance

The various monitoring processes already into place in the WTO can be used as a tool to gather information and map out policy trends on trade and gender.

This information will complement the work done with ERSD on creating new data, with the aim of building a fuller picture on how trade and gender issues are intertwined.

➤ **Aid for Trade: using the Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise (M&E)**

Aid for Trade is the only programme in the WTO with a clear mandate to work on gender. In 2006, the Aid for Trade Task Force stated that "Aid for Trade should be rendered in a coherent manner taking full account ... of the gender perspective and of the overall goal of sustainable development".

In 2010, the WTO Secretariat in collaboration with the ITC hosted an Expert Roundtable Meeting on the Gender Dimension of Aid for Trade. The roundtable showcased strategic actions for gender mainstreaming that can be used by stakeholders in Aid for Trade.

Since then, gender has been one of the key components of the Aid for Trade work programme.

The next work programme will seek to go further, given the interest from Members on this issue.

➤ ***Including gender in trade policy reviews (on voluntary basis)***

The objective is twofold: raising awareness and gather information.

TPR processes usually start with a questionnaire filled by the country under review. To integrate the gender component in TPRs, WTO Members will be offered (on voluntary basis) to fill in an additional questionnaire asking about their policies on gender and trade. The questionnaire will be developed by the focal point in collaboration with the TPR division.

Changes adopted by the General Council in the TPRs frequency may affect the current schedule, but the best approach would be to first work with Member candidates for TPR within the 2018-2019 cycle, one developed, one developing and one LDC. It could be helpful to adjust the questionnaire or its focus if necessary and according to feedback received from Members. On that basis, the offer could be generalised to all Members.

➤ ***Using accession negotiations (on voluntary basis)***

The objective is twofold: raising awareness and gathering information.

The same process used for TPRs (please see above) will be used. The TPR gender questionnaire will be adapted for the acceding countries and developed in collaboration with the Accession Division.

This could also be applied to Art XII recently acceded Members. Two countries have already been identified as potential candidates to participate in this mapping exercise: Sudan and Liberia.

➤ ***Using technical assistance***

The objective is to gather information from participants to regional courses who will be asked to fill in a questionnaire on trade and gender. Those participants constitute a captive audience and the informality of the courses will allow the Secretariat to gather information in a smooth way.

➤ ***Internal process***

The relevant divisions involved in these various monitoring processes will be consulted on the way forward and on implementation. Hence, the importance to nominate a divisional contact points on gender (on this particular point, please see Action5 on "Building knowledge and awareness" on page 9).

➤ **Analysing and reporting**

The analysis of the information will be conducted by the focal point with the help and collaboration of the relevant divisions and will be published.

Action and timeline:

- *Consultations with relevant divisions on why and how this exercise can be conducted: first with TPR and Accessions Divisions: September/ October 2017*
- *Developing standard questionnaire for TPR and Accessions: November 2017*
- *Implementation will depend on TRPs and Accessions' calendars: timeline tbd with relevant divisions*
- *Aid for Trade will follow a parallel path also depending on Members views for reforming the Initiative (CTD - Aid for Trade meeting in September/October 2017)*
- *TA: consultations are ongoing with ITTC with the objective of including gender training modules into ITTC's activities (see Action4 below)*

Action4: Developing external and internal training programmes

The training programmes will have 3 different targets: government officials, women entrepreneurs and WTO staff.

The first objective is to raise awareness on gender and trade amongst WTO members. The ITTC's mandate is to train trade officials. The current TA plan has now been set and some suggestions to include trade and gender into the plan have been discussed. Work is now ongoing.

A training course and/or modules will be developed for country officials. This programme will be offered on a voluntary basis to all WTO Members. While the programme will be focusing on developing countries, developed Members will also be invited to participate.

The involvement of developing countries will be covered by ITTC, while developed countries will have to cover their participation. A step by step approach could be adopted and "friendly" candidates could be identified and approached to benefit from the first courses.

In a longer term perspective, a women entrepreneurship programme will also be created because they are the end users of trade rules and access to information is essential to develop their business. This programme will be twofold: an information package on trade rules will first be developed and a tailor made training module will be created to teach them about trade rules. Partnerships will have to be built using the model of the outreach programme of ITTC/IERD.

Internal trainings of WTO Staff will also be conducted to build awareness and knowledge within the Secretariat.

➤ **Revamping technical assistance and integrating gender into the WTO biannual TA plans**

This Action Plan will first focus on Geneva based trainings before expanding to regional courses in a longer-term perspective. The WTO owns these programmes and will have more space and flexibility.

- "Gendering" Geneva Week: Geneva based trainings are full in terms of budget and content. Therefore, instead of having only one module dedicated to trade and gender, the issue will be imbedded into Week by adding or adjusting the existing language or by including short introductory modules specifically underlining what the "gender considerations" of a particular agreement are.
- Integrating gender modules into Geneva based and regional trade policy courses: a gender-specific module or training on how to think about trade and gender and what are the most relevant areas of trade policy/WTO agreements that may impact on women and men differently will be developed. The modules will have to be tested before implementation. As a first step, these modules could be offered on voluntary basis to Members.
- The WTO e-Learning programme could also include a specific module on gender (on going).
- Learning from other international organisations: UNCTAD has developed training programmes on trade and gender and the WTO could use its experience and expertise.

All these activities and tools will have to be developed with ITTC and relevant divisions, hence the need for divisional contact points on gender (on this particular point, please see also Action5 on "Building knowledge and awareness" on page 9).

➤ ***Women entrepreneurship programme: providing concrete tools for women to use trade for their economic development (longer term project 2018-2019)***

One of the key challenges for women entrepreneurs is having access to information on trade in general, to market information and knowledge about trade rules. This programme will therefore be twofold: provide packaged information on trade rules and create training modules specifically targeting women entrepreneur and SMEs to teach them about trade rules.

- Packaged information on trade rules available online to all: This package will give women traders the information they need to know about international trade, trade rules, and the WTO. The package will contain information about how to use trade rules, where and how to find the information, how to read the information and data, who to call, etc.
- Training programme targeted at women entrepreneurs and SMEs: Before devising a training programme, we need to understand what women entrepreneurs need in terms of information and training. Therefore, a survey should be conducted worldwide targeting women entrepreneurs and women-owned SMEs. This survey may be done in collaboration with ITC, and other private sector partners such Chambers of Commerce or the World SME Forum.
- Integrating this programme into ITTC plans: This programme could be integrated into the ITTC training programme using the Outreach programme model. If facing budgetary and mandate related constrains, the programme could also be conducted outside the ITTC and in partnership with the ITC and other organisations working with SMEs such as World SME Forum (especially for the survey). Partnerships may also be envisaged with Chambers of Commerce, and especially Women Chambers of Commerce to disseminate the information and the tool kit.

➤ **Internal training: Train the trainer programme and tool kit**

In order to include gender into TA activities, trainers need to be qualified to talk about this issue. For this purpose a number of internal workshops will be organised to train the trainers. These workshops will also be used to raise awareness of WTO staff members on gender.

A training kit will also be developed by the focal point.

NOTE: Sensitising on the links between trade and gender will be key. For this reason, nominating a contact point on gender in each division will also be key in this sensitising process.

Regarding internal activities, see also Action5 below.

Action and timeline:

1. *Technical Assistance:*

- *Gendering Geneva based activities: September/December 2017*
- *Developing gender modules: September/December 2017*
- *Developing train the trainers modules: September/December 2017*
- *Implementation: 2018-2019*

2. *Train the trainer modules:*

- *Developing gender modules: September/December 2017*
- *Implementation: 2018-2019 (with first sessions end of 2017)*

3. *Women's entrepreneurship programme (mid 2018-2019)*

- *Developing and conducting SME survey: April/June 2018*
- *Analysis of SME survey: July/August 2018*
- *Developing training module: September/December 2018*
- *Testing training module: January 2019*
- *Conducting/delivering first trainings: 2019*

Action5: Building knowledge and awareness: information sharing, monitoring and reporting

The objectives are threefold:

- Sharing information and experience inside the WTO.
- Monitoring new developments inside and outside the WTO.
- Reporting to DGO, Secretariat and WTO Members.

➤ **Internal survey**

There is a need to understand where the WTO stands on the issue of trade and gender and what has been done so far. For this purpose, an internal survey will be conducted targeting all divisions and requesting them to provide information on their current work in this field.

Even if nothing is being done presently, it is important to understand where we are starting from and where to pull material/resources from and for.

Action and timeline:

- *Developing survey questionnaire: early 2018*
- *Launching internal survey: early 2018*
- *Conducting analysis of answers: early 2018*

➤ **Creating a Trade and Gender Task Force within the Secretariat**

The DG will set up a Task Force composed of representatives of all divisions. The nomination process will be conducted in collaboration with the Focal Point.

The first purpose of the Task Force is to share information and experience, and monitor new developments on gender in expert areas.

The second is to make sure that work on gender, including messaging and communication, is conducted in a coordinated manner, as Staff members may also talk about gender issues in relation to their field of expertise outside the WTO, in TA activities, but not exclusively. Coordination is crucial if the WTO wants to voice a coherent message.

Monthly meetings will be organised by the Focal Point to coordinate and review work in various specialised areas.

Action and timeline:

- *Create Task Force: as soon as the Action Plan is adopted by DGO.*
- *First meeting: as soon as the Action Plan is adopted by DGO. Purpose of first meeting will be to present the action plan and explain clear objectives of the Task Force*

NOTE: The Task Force will focus on trade and gender issues and as such should be distinguished from the work of the focal point on HR issues in the Secretariat or the WTO Gender Network.

➤ **Building knowledge and awareness: reporting internally**

- *DGO reporting:* In its role of support to the DGO, the focal point will keep the Cabinet informed on regular basis, reporting on internal and external discussions (WTO committee meetings, international organisations and conferences, etc). A bi-monthly (or quarterly) formal report will also be produced to recap all activities (including for instance the work done by the Task Force) undertaken on gender.
- *Internal reporting and communication:* information about trade and gender work will be communicated to the whole Secretariat on regular basis, either by email or through the intranet. The objective is to raise awareness within the Secretariat about the WTO's work on gender.
- *Reporting back to WTO Members:* As part of the objective n°1 (building awareness), the Secretariat will inform WTO Members on the various developments regarding trade and gender inside and outside the WTO. Through a "DG Information Note to Members", material and updates will be communicated to Members every 6 months.

Action and timeline:

- *Continue ongoing reporting work to DGO*
- *Establish communication lines internally: second quarter of 2017*
- *1st report to Members: July General Council 2018.*

Action6: Outreach and communication

Many communication tools can be developed and used to support the objectives of the Action Plan and to raise visibility of the WTO's work in this field.

While designing a tailor made communication strategy for each public activity undertaken would be essential, some tools can already put into place to promote the issue.

The elements of the communications strategy are listed below and will be further developed once the Action Plan is put into place.

- ***Development of a trade and gender webpage:*** The website is the main communication tool of the WTO. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a webpage where all the information about the WTO's work, events, publications, reports brochures, or videos on gender will be publicised. The link to the webpage should be integrated in the "trade topics" section. It will be updated on regular basis by the focal point with any relevant information to the issue.
- ***Messaging to drive all communication activities (see Action1):*** The 4 overarching messages described above on page 3 will be integrated into all of the WTO's communications and activities on gender. These messages can be accompanied by 'sub-messages' intended for different target audiences.
- ***"News/event hooks" to showcase WTO's work on gender:*** International Women's Day, Public Forum, Davos meeting of the WEF, Aid for Trade Global Review, Trade Advocacy events, Trade Dialogue events, others.
- ***WTO trade and gender event:*** The WTO will use the International Women's Day on 8 March with the aim to organize a high level event, and put trade at the centre of gender discussions.
- ***Traditional and social media activities***
- ***Publications and brochures***
 - Include a gender chapter into all WTO publications: to be discussed with relevant divisions. This could be difficult to achieve but UNCTAD has adopted this approach for many years. Typically, the WTR 2016 focused on SMEs with only a few mentions regarding women owned SMEs; whereas it could have included several chapters on the issue.
 - Building on the trade and gender brochure developed last June: on that basis, a series should be developed focussing on more specific and narrower issues related to trade and gender: women owed SMEs and trade, Intellectual Property (innovation and gender), trade environment and gender, etc. These brochures could be used in all activities and as communication tools. They will be developed in collaboration with the relevant divisions.

➤ **Outreach to other organisations and private sector**

- The focal point has started to meet with key players in other international organisations to understand how they work, what they do and which are the issues they are focused on. This work is ongoing.
- The objective is to develop stronger links with other organisations such as (but not exclusively) UNCTAD, World Bank, and ITC for information sharing purposes and potential joint actions.
- The focal point is already part of various networks such the Informal Impact Groups led by ITC and some WTO Members, the International Gender Champions Geneva, the Trade and Gender Task Force recently created by the ICTSD.
- Trade Dialogues could be used as one of the channels of discussion and communication with the private sector on trade and gender.

Action and timeline:

- *Webpage: Starting work November 2017*
- *On all other plans: actions, timeline and a more comprehensive outreach and communication strategy to be determined/developed once the Action Plan is approved*

Assessment and adjustments processes

All activities will need to integrate assessment processes to understand what works and what needs to be improved.

General timelines of implementation

- First actions (surveys, database, reports, building the internal Trade and Gender Task Force, etc): late 2017/early 2018
- Tools to be developed in the last quarter of 2017
- Gradual implementation of the plan through 2017-2019
- July 2019: release of the publication on trade and gender.
- Overall plan to be adjusted according to new developments and new priorities at the end of 2018.
- The timelines included in the actions boxes above are tentative and tight on purpose (a lot of groundwork needs to be completed). Once the Action Plan is approved, all the activities to be undertaken will be prioritised and timelines adjusted.

Budget and support

In order to implement the Action Plan effectively, some budget will be necessary.

➤ ***Budgetary needs are related to the following items***

- Participation in events and conferences in and outside Geneva: a budget will be needed for future participation in international conferences in and outside Geneva. This includes a travel budget.
- Buying books and publications: for training purposes
- Participating in trainings
- Organization of events or workshops
- Conducting surveys
- Temporary assistance would be needed to implement some of the key elements of the Action Plan. The new policy on "Adaptation of temporary assistance to organizational needs" (OFFICE(17)/58) could be used for this purpose: from HR temporary budget.
- Other possible outputs not yet foreseen

Next steps: receiving a mandate from WTO Members

A longer term objective would be for WTO Members to give the Secretariat a mandate to work on gender issues, using the NGO model (Ministerial Declaration followed by a General Council Decision). Therefore, MC12 could be contemplated as a target to achieve this objective.