Making Trade Agreements Work for Women with Disabilities: What’s Been Achieved and What Remains Undone?

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Problem? Existing Barriers

Solution? Trade Agreements can Help

How? A Look at Good Practice Examples

Trade Agreements with Provisions on Sustainable Development Concerns

- **18%** FTAs with Climate Change
- **30%** FTAs with Labour Rights
- **75%** FTAs with Human Rights

*Numbers and percentage values are approximate*
Gender Provisions in Trade Agreements (FTAs)

- 74 FTAs with explicit mentions of gender
- 21% of 355 FTAs analyzed have gender-explicit provisions

Explicit keywords:
gender, women, woman, female, maternity, girl, childcare, sex and others
Disability Provisions in Trade Agreements (FTAs)

- 355 FTAs analyzed
- 27% of FTAs with disability-explicit provisions
- 98 FTAs with explicit mentions of disability

List of explicit keywords:
disabled, disability, disabilities, differently-abled, handicapped, invalidity, PWD
Top 5 Players

The UK, US, EU, Singapore and Chile have the highest count of disability-explicit provisions in their FTAs.

*The colour code reflects the aggregation of the number of times explicit words are used in all WTO notified FTAs signed by each country.
**The darker it is, the higher the frequency of explicit words included in its FTAs.
*** Only FTAs with explicit provisions were considered for the illustration.
**** Only trade agreements notified to WTO and currently in force (as of 15 February 2022) are included in this assessment.
The Barriers
Problems faced by persons with disabilities to access economic opportunities

Key Barriers

Access to professional and business networks

Access to finance

Access to decent employment, wages and working conditions

Access to digital learning and infrastructure

Discrimination and bias in the workplace

Cultural and social stereotypes

Reasonable accommodation in the workplace

Access to assistive and other medical products

Access to education and skills development opportunities
Can Trade Agreements Help Overcome These Barriers?

1. Yes, they can help
   - Creation of business and entrepreneurial opportunities
   - Creation of employment opportunities
   - Benefits for consumers

2. No, they can have adverse impacts
   - Reduction in scope and number of public-funded social security programs
   - Cost and availability of assistive devices and other medical needs
   - Strengthened intellectual property rights
The Frontrunners
The UK and EU are pioneers in terms of the number and content of disability provisions within their FTAs

**USMCA:** infrastructure, improvement in working conditions, market access expansion, labour standards protection, non-discrimination

**EU-South Africa:** Sustainable development, education, professional skills development, protection of labour standards, vulnerable groups protection

**EU-UK:** Consumer protection, access to information, special insurance benefits, invalidity benefits, social security payments

**CPTPP:** Elimination of employment discrimination, better working conditions, labour protection, protection of specialised goods and services, access to finance for vulnerable populations

**Australia-UK:** Protection of SMEs owned by persons with disability, access to published works through assistive devices, better working conditions, labour protection
What Remains Undone? Some Policy Recommendations

1. **Policy Recommendation 1**
   Define “disability” in future trade agreements.

2. **Policy Recommendation 2**
   Provide for implementation and enforcement of provisions.

3. **Policy Recommendation 3**
   Collect data, to inform content and scope of disability provisions.

4. **Policy Recommendation 4**
   Frame it right, and make it a business case.

5. **Policy Recommendation 5**
   Reaffirm commitments to the UN CRPD.
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