
The Gender Dimension of Trade

Case studies from Africa:
Lesotho, Gambia, Rwanda, Angola and Cape Verde

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Lesotho

- Significant structural transformation of economy: shift from agriculture to manufacturing
- Strong expansion in textiles & clothing due to preferential trade opportunities created by U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).
- Generated income and full-time permanent employment for relatively unskilled women
 - Highly "feminized" workforce: 70-98% female workers
 - Workplace clinics for free HIV treatment
- But women segmented into unskilled labor-intensive activities with poor opportunities for skill development and subsistence wages
- Vulnerability to shifts in trade policy



Gambia



Economy driven by services (tourism) but fisheries can become a critical point of poverty alleviation and food security

Fisheries sector is segmented or dualistic:

- Women mostly sell fresh and cured fish and are small-scale traders (labour-intensive, low profit); engage in export (diaspora). Men export dealers of frozen and smoked fish (capital-intensive, higher profit)

Women lack access to productive resources:

- Including community managed facilities such as fish landing sites, smoking and processing units, markets, credit and support services
- Receive "diminished assets" while sectors that receive investment defeminize

- **The development of the sector and increased export orientation** may benefit women if they get access to upgraded facilities, credit and support services



Angola

- Globalization has reinforced economy's primarily extractive character (oil and diamonds) and limited the development of manufacturing and other tradable sectors
- Urban informal sector (e.g., women selling food, drinks and imported goods) is large due to lack of employment opportunities
- **Women in agriculture**
 - Women in staple food production, small livestock and local marketing. Men predominate in commercial production and cattle raising
 - Trade liberalization has limited impact on women cultivators as they are subsistence oriented and insulated from trade flows. Import penetration also low due to high transport costs
 - But as infrastructure is developed cheap food imports may have a significant impact on producers. Diversification and commercialization may marginalize, exclude or displace women



Rwanda



- Agriculture, which employs 80% of the labour force and 8 out of 10 women, exports less than 6% of its production. Women are mainly employed in subsistence agriculture → relatively insulated from trade
 - Services: driving force behind the country's recent economic success. Occupy almost 17% of the female workforce. The sector is mainly non-tradable. Yet, in the tradable segment - tourism and informal cross-border trade - the bias is in favour of women
 - Central challenge is how to handle the gender implications of an intensification and increased market-orientation of agriculture:
 - traditional cash crops (tea and coffee) are re-orienting towards premium quality and specialty buyers;
 - the subsistence-oriented staple food segment is moving towards a more commercially oriented one
- these developments can create significant opportunities for women, but can also magnify existing gender disparities



Cape Verde

- Service-based economy. Heavily dependent on imports. Export sector small and limited to primary and low-technology-intensive goods
- EU main trade partner (receives 97 % of total exports and supplies 77% of total imports). EPA negotiations →



- **(i)** Positive impact of lower food prices on female-headed and rural households
- **(ii)** Elimination of customs duties on most EU imports could lead to a significant decrease in government revenue → effect on public services
- **(iii)** Possible loss of competitiveness for import-competing sectors → effect on women's employment
- Relevance of remittances (8.5% of GDP in 2008). Particularly important for female-headed and rural households
- Tourism expansion can significantly contribute to improving women's economic conditions

Common aspects with respect to gender

- Gender equality enshrined in key national laws; international commitments on gender equality
- Ministries/public bodies put in place to promote gender equality and enhance women's conditions
- Notable improvements in literacy & education, and political participation
- Yet, inequalities persist in terms of income; employment; wages; access to productive resources, services, education and training for higher skilled jobs → notable achievements in respect of gender equality have not proportionally translated in equal economic opportunities for men and women



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- Women mainly found in low value, subsistence or labor intensive activities in agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing
 - Gender specificities by and large ignored in macroeconomic policies and trade policy formulation & implementation – « Gender neutral policies »
 - Heavy burden of care work especially in light of poor infrastructure and inadequate healthcare systems
 - Widespread gender-based violence
 - Double legal system civil law – customary law (especially relevant as far as land ownership and inheritance are at stake)



A call for coherence

The challenge:

- dynamize sectors where women operate
- create opportunities for women in expanding sectors

Make trade policy more « gender aware »:

- Recognize that trade policy has discrete impacts on women in all economic roles they play – producers, consumers, tax payers, users of public services.

Free women's time:

- Increase spending on health, sanitation, electrification, transport and other services.

Upgrade women skills:

- Increase education and on-the-job training for women.

Improve access to productive resources and suitable technologies:

- Increase women opportunities by facilitating access to credit, land, inputs, technology, infrastructure, information and other resources
- Engender extension and advisory services



Favour gender-sensitive models of supply chains:

- Establish linkages with downstream actors in the chain (out-grower schemes, supermarket supply chains)
- Promote women's agrarian organizations

Develop product differentiation strategies and explore niche markets:

- Set up certification schemes for goods and services to attest origin and quality

Create gender-sensitive business incentives:

- Attract investment to sectors which directly benefit women
- Set up special tax rates, exemption, rebates, deductions, deferrals
- Establish publicly-backed microfinance schemes and innovative financing models

Overcome supply-side obstacles:

- Mobilize internal resources and pool and align external funds

Expand tourism:

- Improve transport infrastructure
- Link tourism with other economic sectors and promote community-based tourism schemes
- Enhance women's participation in tourism education (scholarships, targeted training programmes, internship opportunities)



Thank you for your attention

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