



# GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS

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# WHY GENDER MATTERS IN TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS

Ms Norah Rukoma is a 64-year-old timber trader and saleswoman of Kigongi, a small village in Uganda situated approximately 23 km from the Katuna border with Rwanda. Ms Rukoma has been leading her family timber business since her husband died in 2003. For the past 18 years, she has been buying timber from small individual forest owners that cultivate timber trees in rural areas close by. She sells them to different Rwandese and Ugandan customers, ranging from individuals to institutions, such as carpenters,

welders, schools, churches, or construction companies.



Ms. Norah Rukoma at her Timber Shop

As a businesswoman in her country, she has constantly faced struggles against prejudices and misconceptions towards women. “You are doing the wrong business meant for men only” is the mantra that many interested customers have said to her, after entering the shop and discovering it is a woman who leads the business.

For the past two years, Ms Rukoma has not only been fighting against social conventions and stigmatisation, but she is also suffering from the restrictive measures at the border. Since 2019, the

flow of goods at the Katuna border between Uganda and Rwanda was stopped, following a disagreement between both countries. Then, COVID-19 arrived, restricting even more cross-border trade activities.

There are many women like Ms Rukoma who face significant challenges operating businesses, including time constraints, costs of burdensome procedures, discrimination and harassment at borders.

Despite multilateral calls to address these issues and to make trade policies gender-responsive, notably the Revised Buenos Aires Declaration, limited progress has been made on gender equality in trade.

The gender-based barriers at borders should be addressed through gender-responsive trade facilitation measures. National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) can be game changers for these women if they become gender-sensitive bodies that advocate for gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation reforms, and propose measures for women traders, starting with the implementing the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) with a gender perspective to maximize benefits for women involved in formal and informal trade.

# UNCTAD ONLINE TRAINING ON GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS

The course was delivered between July 2021 and April 2022 in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish to members of the National Trade Facilitation Committees of 25 countries in Africa and Latin-America

AT THE END OF THIS COURSE, PARTICIPANTS ACQUIRED A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TRADE FACILITATION AND GENDER ISSUES ARE INTERLINKED AND WHY DISCUSSING TRADE FACILITATION THROUGH A GENDER LENS IS ESSENTIAL. PARTICIPANTS BECAME WELL POSITIONED TO IDENTIFY CROSS-BORDER WOMEN TRADERS AND THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES THEY FACE, AND HOW THE WTO TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT ADDRESSES THOSE CHALLENGES. FINALLY, THEY HAVE LEARNED WHAT SHOULD BE THE WAY FORWARD FOR INTEGRATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS.

The course entails 27 short videos, five quizzes, a multiple-choice exam, and a final assignment. It was complemented by 12 live webinars (three in each language).

The objective of the webinars is to allow participants to dive deeper into the topic, raise any questions that they have about the specific lesson and exchange best practices among countries.

The Programme leveraged international and national experts (at no extra cost) from UNCTAD, WCO, the African Development Bank, Ministry of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, the Federation of Enterprises of Congo, World Bank, Malawi Cross border Traders Association, and Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration – SIECA.

## RESULTS

The course was successfully completed by 281 trade facilitation stakeholders (53 per cent women, 16 per cent from the private sector) from 25 countries. The outcome is that these participants now have an awareness of the importance of gender in delivering trade facilitation reforms.

The impact of the course is evident in the final assignments where participants provide useful insights into the experiences of women traders in their countries, share examples of the wide-spread levels of gender-based violence across those countries, including

coercion, extortion, discrimination, exploitation, as well as physical, verbal and sexual harassment by border personnel, and present policy recommendations/ actions to deal with these issues.

At the end of the courses, participants are invited to complete an evaluation form.

The following results were collected:

- 97,44% of participants affirm that the course has helped them **improve (very) significantly their knowledge** on trade facilitation and gender.
- 93,45 % of participants feel more comfortable to **apply trade facilitation and gender principles and concepts in their daily job**.
- 85.15% of participants are confident that **trade facilitation and gender principles and concept will be applied in future policy making decisions**.

The course has increased an awareness of gender issues amongst the NTFs, and although it is too early to measure the long-term impact of these initiatives, these are encouraging results. The extension of the Programme will allow UNCTAD to keep building on the momentum from the course in its new phase (2022-2025). It will also help the NTFs to support their countries to better respond to the specific needs of women traders and implement targeted policies that could improve the experience of women like Ms Rukoma and realise inclusive growth and development within the countries.

THE REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS GATHERED BY THE 281 FINAL ASSIGNMENTS DRAFTED BY THE COURSE PARTICIPANTS WERE USED TO COMPILE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE WERE PRESENTED IN AN UNCTAD POLICY BRIEF ON GENDER AND TRADE FACILITATION, DRAWING ON THE KEY FINDINGS AND LEARNING POINTS FROM THE COURSE AND DESIMINATED TO **ALL UN MEMBER STATES**.



Several other publications and presentations were produced in relation to the course, including a [news article](#) on the UNCTAD website, blog posts written by the participants, UNCTAD [newsletter articles](#), a session on trade facilitation and gender organised during the Global NTFC Forum, among others.

To showcase the impact of the course, the Madagascar Customs authority shared one of the blogs on their social media which further contributed to raising awareness on the importance of this subject.



SIMONETTA ZARRILLI



ÉLIANE MUNKENI KIEKIE



CHANTAL TUYISHIMIRE



NAA DENSUA ARYEETYE



ARI TIASTARY

## HOW CAN NTFCS BECOME PROMOTERS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN TRADE FACILITATION POLICIES?

### 3 FEB

SUB-COMMITTEE:

**NTFCs CAN BE AGENTS OF CHANGE**

Focus Today: • GOALS & CHALLENGES

- SMALL-SCALE & INFORMAL CROSS-BORDER TRADE

**CHALLENGES:**

- BASIC EDUCATION PROVISION
- LANGUAGE BARRIERS
- SCOPE OF VISION BLOCKED
- DANGERS OF VIOLENCE & RAPE
- POLITICAL INSTABILITY
- FINANCIAL EXCLUSION
- BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS
- AWARENESS OF NTFC ↓

**INDONESIA:**

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING**  
IN CUSTOMS & EXCISE

- STEREOTYPE of 'LAW ENFORCEMENT = MALE' LEADS TO HR GENDER IMBALANCE

**IMPROVE RELATIONS**

BETWEEN SMALL BUSINESSES & BORDER OFFICIALS

- ENHANCE ACCESS TO CREDIT
- PROVIDE MARKET SUPPORT
- ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY
- E-COMMERCE TRAINING
- FORMALIZATION SUPPORT

**ENCOURAGING FORMALIZATION**  
MAKE IT EASIER

**BALANCING REPRESENTATION**

CONSIDERING FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES!

SUPPORT FORM-FILLING

SUPPORT OUTREACH FOR WOMEN

**EMPOWERED & ENABLED & SAFE**

MORE WOMEN in the ROOM!

HELPS OVERCOME STEREOTYPES

TRAIN OFFICIALS

ADDRESS CORRUPTION

LOCAL LANGUAGE

DIGITAL SYSTEMS for EASE of SUBMISSION.

OUTREACH: EG. EXPORT CLINIC

LOCAL TRADE OFFICE

PAYMENTS MAKE ME LESS VULNERABLE TO THEFT?

**PUT A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON NTFC MEMBERSHIP**

ADDRESS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN TRADE FACILITATION.

TERMS of REFERENCE

- DEVELOP MECHANISMS
- CONSULT WOMEN
- IDENTIFY MEN AS GENDER CHAMPIONS
- BUILD A STRONG SECRETARIAT

RAISE AWARENESS of the RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADE & GENDER

PLATFORM for INFORMATION

SUPPORT OUR TRADERS! - OUR ECONOMIC BACKBONE!

The illustrations are those of the artist and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD or its officials or Member States.

# TESTIMONIALS

UNCTAD has collected dozens of testimonials from participants, acquired through the course evaluation. of them:

**Alex Kanyama Zulu**  
Kenya  
The Intergovernmental Standing Committee on Shipping (ISCOSS)



*"The course has come at the right time as the NTFCs should be accommodative to gender issues on trade facilitation. The link between gender and WTO TFA was well explained."*

**Neelo Nicole Lekgotla**  
Botswana  
Companies & Intellectual Property Authority



*"Course was short and precise, fun to do and it brought to my mind what I never thought was important, in terms of trade facilitation and gender."*

**Mathew Kamau**  
Kenya  
State Department for Trade



*"The one thing I liked the most was that it offered me flexibility; I chose when to read or listen to the lessons. The webinars were also recorded and available."*

**Assumpta Mukabaranga**  
Rwanda  
Rwanda Revenue Authority



*"I learned about challenges faced by cross-border women traders, and then get the good news that WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement has solutions to address those challenges. This course should be helpful to representatives of all border agencies."*

**Patience Alitubeera**  
Uganda  
Uganda Revenue Authority



*"I stuck to the end because the topic was presented in a chronological manner that kept me expectant after every topic I completed."*

**Joab Otieng' Omole**  
Kenya  
Kenya Revenue Authority




*"The course was an eye-opener on gender issues in relation to trade facilitation. It dawned on me that much is yet to be done to ensure gender mainstreaming in policy making and decision making."*

**Chantal Tuyishimire**  
Rwanda  
Ministry of Trade and Industry



*"I am sharing this course outcomes to other NTFC members in coming meeting. I recommend this course be extended to other interested people who did not even facilitate in previous trainings. I loved it!"*

**Ruth Khanali Ogolla**  
Kenya  
Pan Africa Youth Union on Peace And Security



*"Trade Facilitation and Gender is a very interesting and necessary topic in today's world. I found the course to be very useful and empowering that I enjoyed learning it. This should be everybody's read. Thank you so much UNCTAD!"*