

Empowering Women: Bridging Trade, Gender, and Consumer Protection

Understanding specific challenges faced by women as consumers and entrepreneurs is crucial to empower women in the market. Vulnerabilities arise from insufficient knowledge or resources to navigate complex regulatory environments, often placing businesswomen at a disadvantage. Technical gaps due to the difficult understanding of or access to the latest technologies can hinder women-led SMEs' ability to compete effectively. Bargaining power disadvantages are illustrated by the often-limited negotiating capacity of women against larger suppliers or customers, impacting their ability to secure favorable terms as businesses and consumers.

As consumers women often face gender biases, discriminatory and unfair marketing practices, and stereotypes. This may happen in financial services, rendering access to credit difficult, involving higher interest rates, due to assumptions about women's financial knowledge or investment preferences. Sometimes women are not informed about products and services, especially in traditionally male-dominated areas like finance, automotive, and technology. This can hinder their ability to make informed decisions adjusted to their needs and means.

The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP), initially adopted in 1985 and lastly expanded in 2015, established recommendations to protect consumer rights and promote fair business practices. The guidelines cover a wide range of issues relevant to consumer protection and are particularly useful in addressing the disadvantages faced by women both as consumers and empower them.

Empowering women as consumers and entrepreneurs requires conscious efforts of policymakers and the society to recognize and mitigate gender biases encountered in the marketplace.

Webinar Concept Note – March 8

Title: Empowering Women as consumers: Bridging Trade, Gender, and Consumer Protection

Background: This webinar aims to explore the synergies between trade, gender, and consumer protection, offering insights into how to leverage consumer rights and improve women business resilience and growth.

Objectives:

- To highlight the importance of gender in the context of trade and consumer protection.

- To share practical knowledge on how women-led SMEs can use consumer rights to protect and empower their businesses.
- To discuss strategies for improving access to justice for women as consumers.
- To explore the impact of strong B2C relations on economic inclusion and the broader economy.

Target Audience:

- Consumer experts, consumer rights advocates
- Women entrepreneurs
- Policy makers and government officials in trade, gender, and consumer protection
- Academics and students interested in gender studies, trade, and consumer rights
- NGOs and international organizations working on women’s economic empowerment and consumer protection

Date and Time: March 8, 2.30 pm (Geneva time)

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Agenda

Introduction (5 minutes)- UNCTAD

- Opening – Ms. Miho Shirotori, Acting Director, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD
- Overview of the Webinar and introduction of speakers – Ms. Ana Cipriano, Legal Officer, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD

Session 1: Empowering Women as consumers (20 minutes)

- Bridging Trade, Gender, and Consumer Protection
- Protection Against Unfair and Deceptive Practices
- Role of policy in supporting consumer protection and gender

Speakers:

Mr. Sebastián Barocelli, University of Buenos Aires (UBA)
 Ms. Josephine Parmee, Director of Partnerships & Development
 Consumers International

Session 2: Trade and Gender: its role in economic inclusion (20 minutes)

- Overview of the current landscape of trade and its gender implications
- The role of policy in supporting women-led SMEs in trade
- Experiences of women-led SMEs as consumers

Speakers:

Ms. Mariangela Linoci, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Gender and
 Development Programme, UNCTAD
 Ms. Awa Caba, CEO Soreetul

Panel Discussion (35 minutes)

- Insights from experts in trade, gender, and consumer protection
- Open forum for questions from the audience to the panel

Closing Remarks (10 minutes)

- Summary of key takeaways
- Information on further resources and upcoming events
- Closing – Ms. Teresa Moreira, Head, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD

Registration: [Zoom Meeting](#)