UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Using regulatory information for gender-sensitive policymaking

NTMs & Gender



GAIN project Start-up meeting

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UN trade & development UNCTAD

Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Namibia
September 23 at 4:00 PM ·

Namibia ranks 4th in 2026 Global Gender Gap Index

Titles are generated by AI from Meta

🚨🇳🇦 WOW! NAMIBIA RANKED 4TH IN THE WORLD!

Namibia has climbed from 8th to 4th globally in the 2026 Global Gender Gap Index, achieving its highest-ever ranking since the index began in 2006.

🌍 4th in the world
🌍 1st in Sub-Saharan Africa
📈 84.5% of the gender gap closed

Namibia recorded near gender parity in education (99.8%) and health (98%), while progress in political representation helped drive the country's rise.

From 8th to 4th in just one year! 🇳🇦🔥

A WOW moment for Namibia! 🇳🇦

📄 Download/read the full Global Gender Gap Report 2026 here:
https://www.weforum.org/.../global-gender-gap-report-2026/

Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2026.

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NTMs and gender, how are they related?

- Trade can substantially improve economic outcomes for women, yet these positive effects can materialize only if the **barriers that limit their participation** in trade are minimized (World Bank, 2020)

- At the WTO ministerial conference in 2017 - 121 members endorsed the "Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade"– critical element is the **identification of barriers that limit women's participation in trade**.

- Amongst the challenges that women are facing, **regulatory factors** can have an important bearing on access to international markets, value chain upgrading, among others. **These challenges are mostly concerned with NTMs**.

NTMs in principle:

Primary objective is to protect public health, the environment, or national security among others.

They are **gender–neutral.**

NTMs in practice:

Women and men are **not equal** when it comes to the **compliance cost** of NTMs and the **protection provided.**

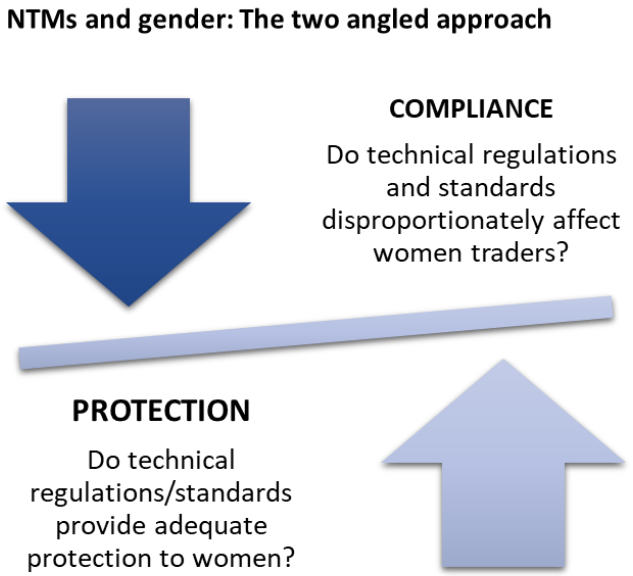
Why gender matters for NTMs

The same requirement can have different effects

Resources, sector concentration, business size, working conditions, household responsibilities and physical differences in men and women can influence compliance and protection.

The policy question

How can regulations achieve their public purpose while enabling more inclusive participation and adequate protection?



*Note: This approach is an adaptation based on the **UN Women Guidance Note on Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming (2014)**.*

Women's overlapping economic roles

Producers and traders

Market access and resources needed to meet requirements.

Workers

Jobs, working conditions and protection from workplace risks.

Characteristics of sectors where women are concentrated.

Consumers

Safety, quality, prices and availability of products for women and dependents

Taxpayers when relevant

Taxes and their distributional effects in the selected area.

Women as producers and traders

Mango jam from the Djiguiya Women Cooperative, Mali

Women participate heavily in Mali's mango value chain. The cooperative in Yanfolila produces mango jam.

Capacity to comply matters

The Government and partners provided a fruit processing unit. Sixteen women trained in quality and food hygiene, and the cooperative obtained ISO 22000 certification. The jam now reaches local and export markets.

Questions for GAIN

Which government requirement limits market access? What support would help women producers comply while preserving food safety?

Source: UNCTAD (2022), Box 4, p. 25. Documented example from Mali

Women as workers

Cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

UNCTAD reports risks for women sorting and washing ore without adequate personal protective equipment.

Availability and fit both matter

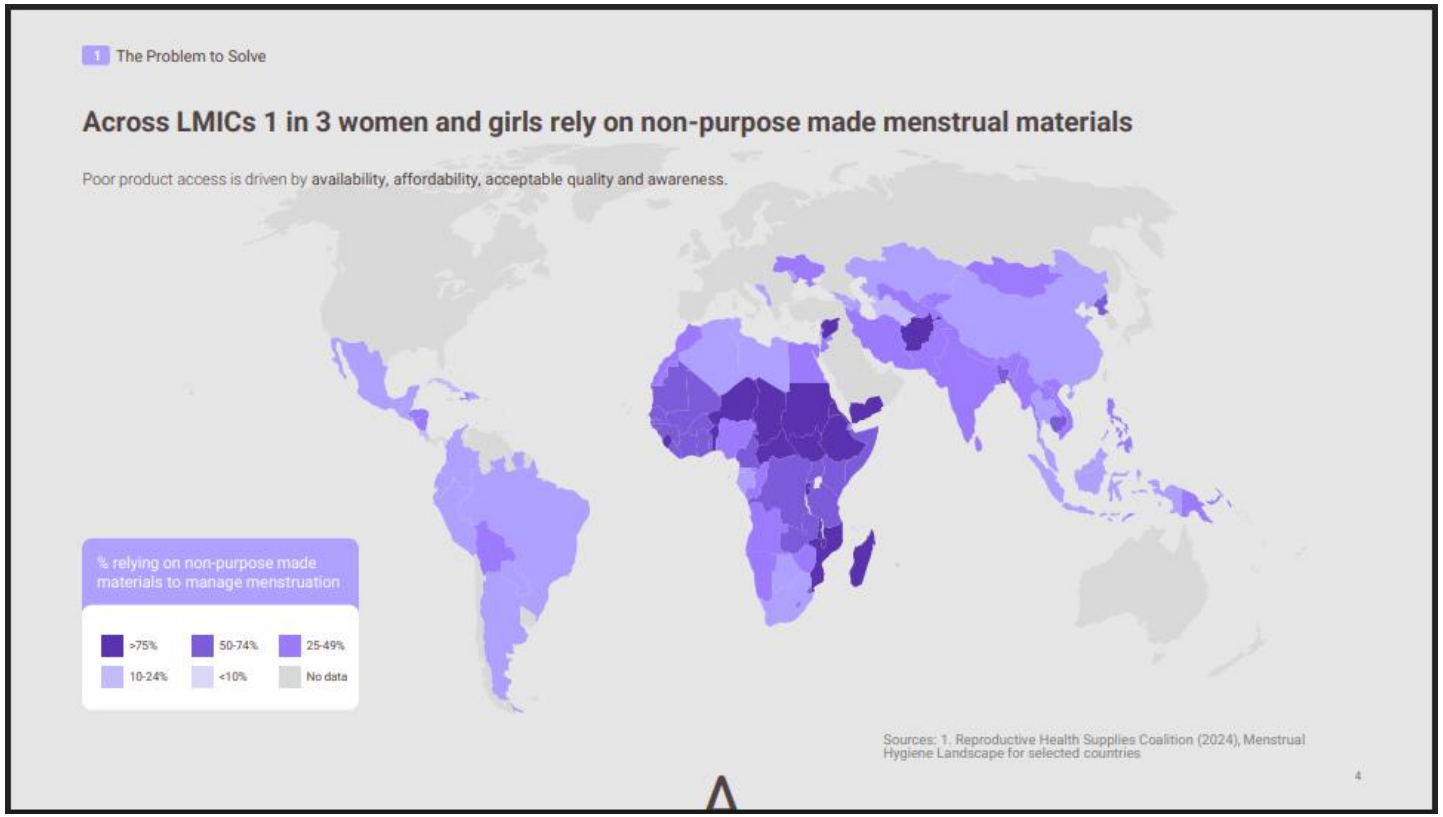
Protective equipment is often scarce in artisanal mining and may not adequately fit women.

Questions for GAIN

Do relevant equipment requirements address fit and protection? What additional evidence is needed on access, use and enforcement?

Source: UNCTAD, critical energy transition minerals report (2025), section 2.3.

Women as consumers



Source: Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF), *A Market-Based Approach to Menstrual Health*, presentation to the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs, 3 October 2025.

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/msmes_e/agenda_item_7_1_shf.pdf?utm

ISO Standards for Menstrual Products

Questions for GAIN

Do product requirements for women and dependents adequately protect them?

(Optional) Women as taxpayers

Sanitary pads and VAT in Kenya

The Kenya Revenue Authority lists sanitary towels, pads and tampons as VAT-exempt goods.

The gender question

How does tax treatment affect what users pay? Do lower tax costs reach buyers, including women on low incomes?

Use alongside the NTM review

Check relevant border taxes (tariff, excise duties, etc.) and charges separately from product standards.

Complementary fiscal example. Ordinary customs tariffs are outside NTM data.

Evidence for a gender-sensitive review

Regulatory information

Which requirements apply, to which products, and under which legal provisions?

NTM data collection assisted by AI

A baseline and complementary data

Who produces, trades, works or consumes? What are their current costs, conditions and access to services?

Sex-disaggregated data + research

Experience and data gaps

Consultations help explain practice. Missing data identifies questions for further investigation.

Policy recommendations depend on the cause

Regulatory design

Review whether the requirement addresses the relevant risks and different protection needs.

Implementation

Improve clarity, consistency and accountability in procedures and enforcement.

Capacity to comply

Address information and service gaps, including access to testing, certification or suitable training.

Steps for gender-sensitive policy making

DIAGNOSE	DECIDE AND ACT
1 Policy question and scope Which products and sectors should the review examine? **<- Now for initial inputs**	**5 Screening and prioritization** Which issues merit closer review, considering costs and protection? **<- 1st multi-stakeholder consultation**
2 Regulatory landscape Which rules and individual requirements apply? **<- NTM data collection assisted by AI**	**6 Root causes and policy recommendations** Does the problem concern regulatory design, implementation or capacity to comply? What are the policy recommendations?
3 Baseline, gender profile and data architecture What is the starting situation? Which evidence, indicators and data gaps matter?	**7 Validation** Do stakeholder experiences and other evidence support the initial findings? **<- 2nd multi-stakeholder consultation**
4 Likely channels of impact How could requirements affect costs, work, income, consumption, safety or time?	**8 Action plan and monitoring** Who will act, by when, with what resources and measures of progress? **<- 2nd multi-stakeholder consultation and follow-up support (if selected)**

National knowledge will guide the analysis

Trade ministries and regulatory agencies

Identify the relevant rules, implementation responsibilities and feasible policy responses.

Gender ministries and business associations

Help identify affected groups, practical experiences and gaps in available evidence.

Questions for the next stage

Which products or sectors deserve attention? What experiences and evidence can inform that choice?

Sources

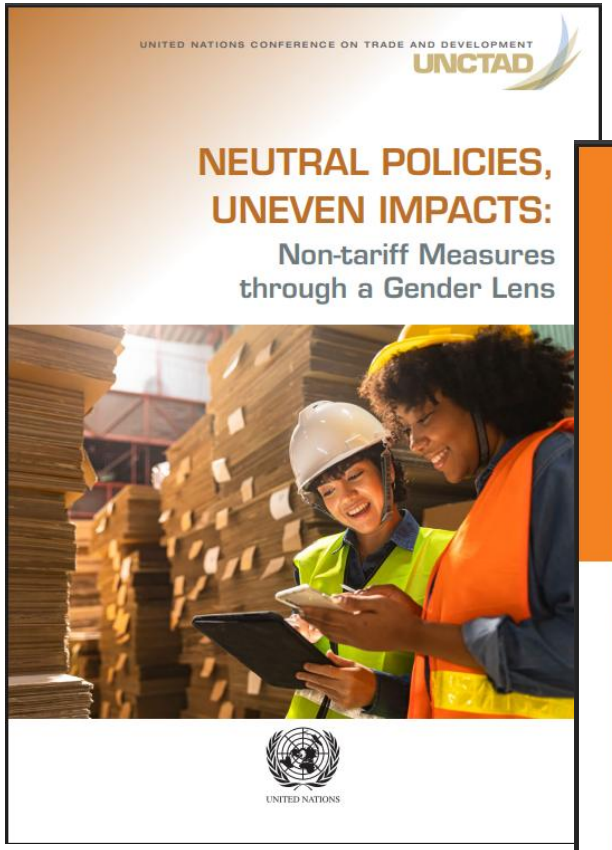
UNCTAD (2022), Neutral Policies, Uneven Impacts: NTMs through a Gender Lens.

UNCTAD (2025), The implications of critical energy transition minerals for women's participation in the mining sector

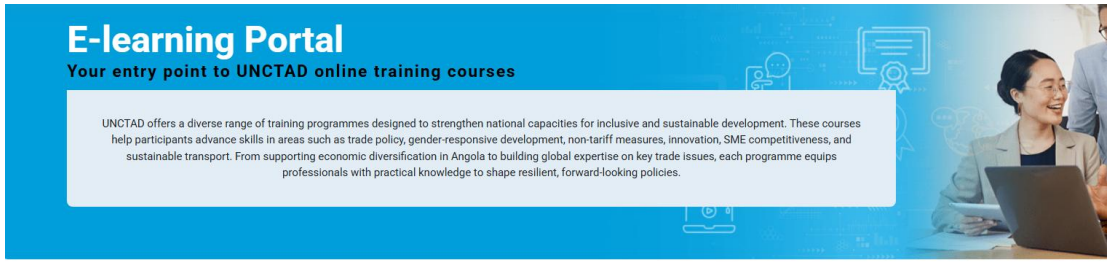
Online courses on NTM and Gender, Trade and Gender

Baria, Callahan and Schnerre (2026), VR headset standards.

KEBS sanitary-towel standard catalogue. WTO account of the menstrual-product side event.









Thank you

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Women as producers and traders

Fresh green beans for export

Consider a small producer supplying a market that requires pesticide-residue testing and certification.

A possible unequal compliance burden

Limited finance, distance to testing services and care responsibilities may make the same requirement harder to meet.

Questions for GAIN

Who can access information and testing? Could shared services or clearer guidance reduce costs while retaining food safety?

Illustration for analysis, not a finding about a beneficiary country.

Principles throughout the review

Evidence before conclusions

Combine NTM data with other evidence. Record limitations and alternative explanations.

Consultation throughout

Include the people affected and the agencies responsible for implementation.

Costs and protection together

Consider possible benefits as well as burdens across women's different roles.

Proportionate analysis

Use the fiscal lens where relevant. Deeper impact studies need a credible comparison with no reform.

Women as consumers

Sanitary pads

Kenya has a disposable sanitary towel standard: KS EAS 96:2024.

The WTO side event highlighted gaps in global standardization.

VR headsets

A 2026 study identified potential gaps in fit, discomfort and cybersickness evidence.

Researchers reviewed UL 8400, a voluntary safety standard.

Questions for GAIN

Do product requirements and testing address users' needs?
What evidence shows whether protection works in practice?