

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**UNCTAD**



# TRADE, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

**ADVOCATING INCLUSIVE AND GENDER-SENSITIVE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON A GLOBAL LEVEL**



UNITED NATIONS

Improving the plight of women and girls is one of the central moral, political and economic challenges of our time. Across developed and developing countries, women do not enjoy the same opportunities as men and do not have the same chances to benefit from and contribute to the economic development of their countries. This is neither fair nor smart economics: underinvesting in women limits development and slows poverty reduction and economic growth. Only if policymakers consciously take into account the differences in opportunities afforded to men and women can they use economic policy to narrow the gender gap – and can they take advantage of the full potential of their citizens.

### The Doha Mandate

The Doha Mandate, adopted by member States at the thirteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII, Doha, 21–26 April 2012), reaffirms the links between gender equality and inclusive development.

It lists gender equality and women's empowerment among the goals which are essential for all countries (Doha Mandate, para. 8). It states that "the empowerment of women is of crucial importance, among others for harnessing the potential for inclusive growth and development" (para. 51); and recommends that member States tackle obstacles to women's empowerment, including gender bias and income inequality, through appropriate measures. It calls on UNCTAD to "Reinforce its work on the links between gender equality, women's empowerment, and trade and development..." (para. 56(n)).



## I. WHAT IS UNCTAD DOING?

Through its work programme on trade, gender and development, UNCTAD supports its member countries in making economic policy, in particular trade policy, a force for inclusive development.

The work programme is carried out by the Trade, Gender and Development Section in the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities. In addition to its regular work, the Section contributes to a United Nations-wide gender action plan and is responsible for gender mainstreaming within UNCTAD.

### “Mainstreaming gender into trade policy” – what does it mean?

Incorporating (mainstreaming) gender considerations into economic policies means assessing the impacts of such policies on the well-being of women and men. In other words, it entails evaluating how policies affect gender relations. For example, do they widen or close the gender wage gap? It also entails taking into account these differing effects when formulating and implementing policies.

Mainstreaming gender in trade policy is done to (a) better understand the specific challenges and opportunities that trade policies present to women and men; (b) design and implement trade and other macroeconomic policies to maximize opportunities for all; (c) facilitate the successful integration of women into more technologically advanced and dynamic economic sectors; (d) avoid increasing gender disparities and contribute to mitigating existing ones; and (e) facilitate women’s empowerment and well-being.

The work of UNCTAD in this area includes:

#### A. Analysing trade and gender at the country level

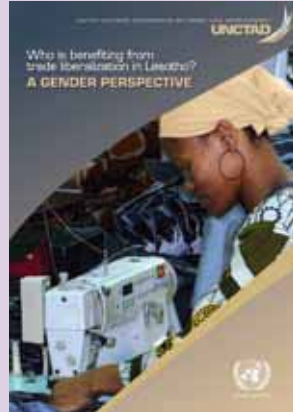
Through a unique portfolio of country case studies, UNCTAD is mapping women’s roles in the economy and testing different methodologies that serve chiefly to determine how best to gauge the impact of trade policy on women in productive sectors. In the studies, UNCTAD also examines the impacts of trade policies on women as consumers and in other dimensions of their lives. Three countries have been analysed so far: Bhutan, Cape Verde and Lesotho. Work is continuing on additional countries, including Angola, Rwanda and Uruguay.

#### Country case studies

*Who is benefiting from trade liberalization in Lesotho? A gender perspective* (August 2012). The Lesotho case study examines women in the apparel sector and confirms that trade policy – in this case privileged access to the market of the United States of America – can play a catalytic role in job creation for women, including relatively unskilled women who otherwise would have little chance of being formally employed. In addition, women working in the country’s apparel factories have access to innovative workplace health programmes that provide free HIV care and treatment in a context in which the spread



of HIV and AIDS has had a disproportionate impact on women. However, there are qualifications to be made. While women are present in all segments of the textile industry (including human resources, sewing supervision and administration), they are predominantly employed in the unskilled/labour-intensive links of the chain (sewing, cutting and packaging) which attract the lowest wages and offer the fewest opportunities for skill development. The study stresses the vulnerability of a growth strategy centred on low value added work and dependence on preferential treatment access to a single market. The study also questions the sustainability of this approach, especially for women.



*Who is benefiting from trade liberalization in Cape Verde? A gender perspective* (December 2011, available in English and Portuguese). The report explores the effects of trade policy on households as consumers and income earners, with a focus on female-headed households. It illustrates that European Union-Cape Verde reciprocity in trade, and the consequent lowering of tariffs on imports, can have important effects on women's well-being. On the one hand, simulations of lower food prices due to tariff reductions on agricultural imports show a decrease in the number of those living below the poverty line (particularly for female-headed households). On the other hand, tariff reductions would lower revenues available for public services provision, thus increasing women's care/work burden. The study



also shows that remittances are an important source of income for families in Cape Verde, and makes recommendations on how trade policy can favour remittances. Finally, the report delves into the distributional consequences in Cape Verde of a growth strategy based on tourism and draws attention to the related risk of rising patterns of income inequality that could be especially detrimental to women.

### *Who is benefiting from trade liberalization in Bhutan?*

A gender perspective (March 2011). By analysing the main sectors and trade patterns of the Bhutanese economy, the study assesses the gender impacts of trade expansion and identifies sectors of potential growth that might especially benefit women. The study recommends that, by capitalizing on its image and its unique development strategy based on the concept of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan could gain brand identification through intellectual property rights instruments and could strategically position its products in high-value markets. Since women are involved in manufacturing goods such as organic agricultural products, forest-based products and traditional textiles, value added strategies would make women's participation in these economic sectors more profitable.



## **B. Supporting women in the least developed countries**

The Enhanced Integrated Framework in support of least developed countries (LDCs) was conceived as a process leading to the integration of trade policy into national development strategies, and to the coordinated delivery of trade-related technical assistance by development partners in response to identified needs. An essential part of the Enhanced Integrated Framework process is the preparation and the updating of a Diagnostic Trade Integration Study as the analytical foundation for policy recommendations and related capacity-building interventions at the country level. To enhance the usefulness of Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies as tools for inclusive development, UNCTAD is supporting the inclusion of gender considerations and pro-women interventions in related analysis and action plans.

In this framework, UNCTAD produced a study that analyses the fisheries sector in the Gambia and its prospects for value addition and social inclusiveness, with a focus on women. It shows that the expansion of the export-oriented fish processing industry is likely to generate significant employment opportunities for women. However, as men traditionally dominate the export-oriented segment of the chain, upgrading may magnify existing gender disparities. The study suggests possible corrective measures (e.g. equal access for men and women to new and refurbished infrastructure) and provides ideas for improving income-earning opportunities for women (e.g. shrimp farming and oyster culture) that could materialize through technical assistance activities.

### From rhetoric to practice: Translating aspirations into reality

There are gaps between rhetoric and practice, and difficulties in translating the political resolve to promote gender equality into effective implementation mechanisms. Across countries and regions, gender considerations are seldom taken into account when economic policies are designed or implemented. They are often neglected prior to or during the negotiation of trade agreements. UNCTAD believes that the inclusion of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of macroeconomic policies – including trade policy – is a way to give substance and meaning to commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment. One way in which economic policy can promote gender equality is through multilateral development assistance frameworks, such as Aid for Trade and the Enhanced Integrated Framework. These can provide entry points for using international trade as an instrument for women's economic empowerment.

## C. Training researchers and academicians

The work programme is not confined to the pillar of research and analysis or to work within the Division. The UNCTAD Trade, Gender and Development Section and the Virtual Institute are pooling their expertise to develop a teaching package on trade and gender. The package aims at strengthening teaching and research capacities on trade and gender at developing/transition country academic institutions. It also aims at enhancing the capacity of developing/transition country stakeholders to mainstream gender into trade policy.

The teaching material will consist of:

- a set of multimedia presentations that will provide an introduction to the trade and gender problematique
- a publication that will consist of a substantive/qualitative part and a methodological/quantitative part
- an online course on trade and gender.

Also to be included in the package will be a regional workshop for sub-Saharan researchers and mentored research projects to facilitate the application of knowledge on trade and gender to countries' specific realities.

These activities will unfold during the 2013–2015 period.

## II. HOW DO WE WORK?

### A. Enhancing local capacity, sharing information and providing national partners with ownership of the results

The research work of UNCTAD is conducted in close cooperation with national partners, who are the ultimate owners of the process and the results. They are the ones who can translate research into policy action.

Fact-finding missions are conducted during the preparation of the country case studies to gather real-life information and to gain in-depth insights into the effects of trade policies on women, men, girls and boys.

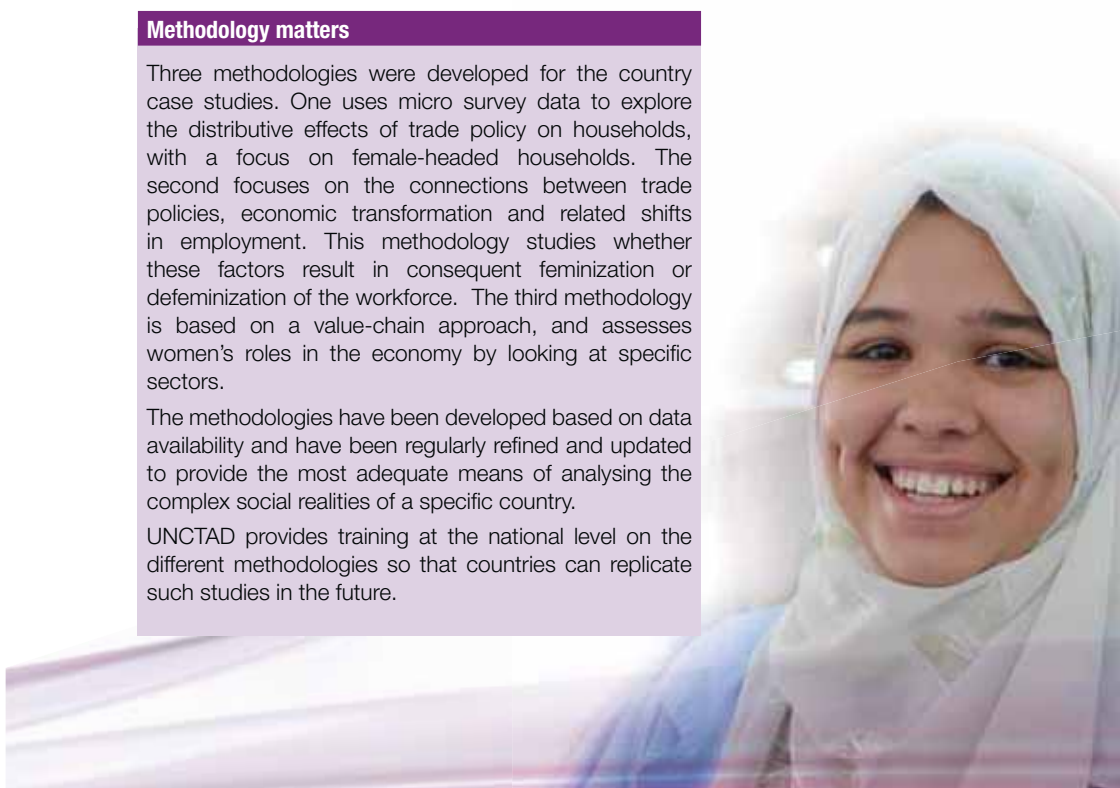
Following the publication of country case studies, national workshops are held. The workshops have two objectives: to sensitize local policymaking on the gender ramifications of trade and to familiarize relevant national stakeholders in a hands-on way with the methodologies used. Participants in the national workshops include Government officials, civil society representatives, representatives of United Nations country teams and international experts.

#### Methodology matters

Three methodologies were developed for the country case studies. One uses micro survey data to explore the distributive effects of trade policy on households, with a focus on female-headed households. The second focuses on the connections between trade policies, economic transformation and related shifts in employment. This methodology studies whether these factors result in consequent feminization or defeminization of the workforce. The third methodology is based on a value-chain approach, and assesses women's roles in the economy by looking at specific sectors.

The methodologies have been developed based on data availability and have been regularly refined and updated to provide the most adequate means of analysing the complex social realities of a specific country.

UNCTAD provides training at the national level on the different methodologies so that countries can replicate such studies in the future.



## B. Raising awareness among policymakers, stakeholders and donors

UNCTAD promotes debate on gender and economics, in particular trade, with a view to (a) taking the gender issue to a higher level of political prominence; (b) yielding new insights into the relationship between macroeconomic policies, development and gender; and (c) launching initiatives to further those objectives.

### Discussing trade and gender where it makes a difference

*High-level Event on Women in Development, UNCTAD XIII (Doha, 23 April 2012).* UNCTAD XIII was convened in the wake of the global economic and financial crisis. One goal was to build consensus on the way forward towards a more inclusive and sustainable globalization. Gender-related issues were at the centre of the debate through the High-level Event on Women in Development, under the assumption that it would not be possible to tackle inclusive development without delving into women's roles in society. At the event, it was generally felt that persistent patterns of inequality and exclusion represented a source of social instability and a drag on economic growth. It was stressed that the economic slowdown was no reason for lack of progress on this issue.





*Making trade work for women in LDCs, Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Istanbul, 11 May 2011).* This special side event was jointly organized by UNCTAD and UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and provided an opportunity to showcase the positive role trade can play in the economic empowerment of women in LDCs. Through the presentation of country case studies conducted by UNCTAD and UN Women in a number of LDCs, the event also focused on the many challenges women face. For example, women face challenges in gaining access to market information and to finance. They also frequently struggle to comply with increasingly strict standards and regulations. And they face difficulties in benefiting from intellectual property rights instruments.



### III. HOW DOES UNCTAD CONTRIBUTE TO A UNITED NATIONS-WIDE GENDER ACTION PLAN?

UNCTAD is actively contributing to a United Nations-wide gender action plan. The inter-agency work has involved co-organizing events and participating in high-level meetings dedicated to addressing gender issues from an economic point of view. These meetings also aim to reinforce inter-agency coordination and capacities to conduct gender research relevant for policy.

During the second half of 2012, UNCTAD participated in the Global Consultation on Addressing Inequalities. The Consultation reviewed progress on the Millennium Development Goals in relation to major inequalities in all fields and gathered perspectives on how best to address these issues in the post-2015 framework.

**The post-2015 development agenda: An opportunity not to be missed**

The ongoing process of designing a post-2015 development framework, including the setting of sustainable development goals, provides a key opportunity for ensuring that gender equality and women's economic empowerment are firmly anchored in the new development agenda. As part of this process, UNCTAD has contributed to the global consultations on addressing inequalities with a paper entitled "Trade policy and gender inequalities: A country-based analysis", which studies the relationship between trade policy, gender equality and overall development. The paper offers evidence-based policy recommendations.



As the Task Manager of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Trade, UNCTAD spearheaded a resource paper entitled "Gender equality and trade policy" published in 2011.

**Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Trade: The collective views**

The resource paper "Gender equality and trade policy" presents the collective views of the United Nations system on the links between gender equality and trade policy. It provides a summary overview of key questions, concerns and policy recommendations, while providing reference to related United Nations resolutions, United Nations official documentation, publications and websites.



## IV. GENDER MAINSTREAMING WITHIN UNCTAD

The Trade, Gender and Development Section performs an advocacy role to enhance the inclusion of gender considerations in the work of UNCTAD. A strategy meant to mainstream gender concerns into the substantive work of the organization was developed by the Section and approved by the UNCTAD Secretary-General in December 2011.

The Section is responsible for preparing the UNCTAD report on the newly established System-Wide Action Plan (on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). The Action Plan establishes performance standards and provides guidance to senior managers so that they can lead, and be held accountable for, the gender equality and the empowerment of women in their mandated work.



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