

ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES

The Heart of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Future We Want for All

Global Thematic Consultation

**TRADE POLICY AND GENDER INEQUALITIES:
A COUNTRY-BASED ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of three country case studies which analyze the relationship between trade policy, gender equality and overall development; and make “evidence-based” policy recommendations.

The country case studies were created to “map” the gendered effects of trade in each country, while testing three different methodologies. The study of Cape Verde used micro survey data to explore the distributive effects of trade policy on households as consumers and income earners, with a focus on women-headed households. By combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study of Lesotho focuses on the interconnections between trade policies and structural transformation in the economy, and related shifts in employment, with consequent feminization or de-feminization of the workforce. Building more on qualitative methods of inquiry, a third methodology aims to assess women's role in the economy by looking at specific export-oriented sectors; such as the fishery sector in The Gambia.

In the paper, we will outline how each of the studies shows that trade (and trade policy) can serve either to exacerbate or diminish inequalities between men and women; and how gender inequality often builds upon other inequalities (for example those related to class, or geographical location) with a detrimental effect on women’s well-being and economic participation. We will also delve into how gender inequalities impact on trade performance and on the gains from trade. We will therefore highlight the need to put in place measures that contribute to make trade policy more instrumental to achieving inclusive development.

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Introduction

Gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in every society under various forms, from labour segregation and gender wage gaps, to gender-based discrimination in asset ownership, to huge differences in responsibility for house and care work. According to the ILO, nearly half of the female population above the age of 15 remains economically inactive, compared to 22.3 per cent for men; and when women do find work, they tend to receive lower wages and less benefits than the male workers in similar positions (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2010). Of the nearly 775 million illiterate adults worldwide, two thirds are women (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2010). On average, women still hold about only 20 per cent of seats in national parliaments worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU], 2012). These are just a few examples of a disparity in outcomes that is systemic and pervasive; which warns us of a likely inequality of initial opportunities (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development [UNRISD], 2012).

Gender equality is not only a basic human right by itself; in the long term, it is also desirable from a utilitarian, efficiency perspective, given the strong correlation between gender equality, national competitiveness and economic development. While there is growing consensus as to this theoretical grounding, more needs to be done to translate theory into action. This calls for the design and implementation of key interventions to counteract deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms. The inclusion of a gender perspective in macro-economic policies, including trade policy, is a way to give substance and meaning to gender equality and women's empowerment commitments subscribed by all countries.

UNCTAD research points to the multifaceted aspects of the interplay between trade and gender, whereby trade can create opportunities for women's empowerment and well-being, though it can also magnify existing gender-based inequalities. The relationship between gender and trade is indeed multidimensional and context-specific. It is also a mutual relationship, whereby trade policies affect men and women differently, and in turn gender-based inequalities can impact significantly on trade policy outcomes and trade performance (Cagatay, 2001; Fontana, 2003; UNCTAD, 2009; UNCTAD, 2012a; UNRISD, 2012).

As regards the first side of the equation (how “trade affects gender”), there are multiple transmission channels through which trade policies affect men and women differently, including: the impact of trade policies on domestic prices of goods and services (consumption effect); the effect on households’ income, including wages and earnings from traded goods or services (income effect - this effect may be either positive or negative depending on whether households are mostly employed in sectors that expand due to export growth or, conversely, contract because of import competition); and the revenue implications of tariff liberalization (revenue effect). The extent to which men and women are impacted differently through these channels depends, among other things, on existing patterns of labour segregation by sex, coupled with structural inequalities between groups in asset ownerships and educational entitlements. These, in turn, are often shaped by socio-cultural norms. Because gender-based inequality intersects with other inequalities -including ethnic and class-based ones -it is imperative for policy makers to anticipate how trade policies will redistribute wealth within the economy between men and women, so as to prevent the deepening of dynamics of social polarization and exclusion, and take corrective actions.

On the other side of the equation, “gender affects trade” in that gender-based inequalities can significantly impact on trade policy outcomes and trade performance. For example, gender wage inequality can stimulate labour-intensive manufacturing exports through low female wage costs (Seguino, 2000). In this case, firms' competitiveness is based on cheap labour costs rather than on more sustainable competitive strengths, such as innovation. Also, gender-based constraints may influence the supply response to trade policy incentives; therefore incentive-schemes that fail to address gender-specific constraints in accessing productive assets and services -most notably credit and inputs -may fall short of expected results. It is critical to acknowledge gender structures that may impact on trade performance and trade policy outcomes.

Against this background, UNCTAD research has provided an attempt at unravelling the complex gender ramifications of trade policy in country-specific contexts, while testing different methodologies. This paper presents some of the results of this on-going research. It starts with

a summary overview of the country case study of Cape Verde. The methodological approach in this case was to empirically explore two links: one connecting trade policies to prices of goods and factors of production, and a second one relating prices to household welfare. Results were then aggregated by the relevant dimension – region, gender, income – so as to identify any subgroup that would gain or lose from the trade policy. The paper then presents findings and conclusions from the case study of Lesotho. The approach here focuses on the interconnections between trade policies and structural transformation in the economy, and related shifts in employment, with consequent feminization or de-feminization of the workforce. This approach looks at employment generation and changes in the gender composition of the labour force at the aggregate level, without tracing these effects back to the household level. The last country case study - The Gambia - introduces a third methodology that, by more extensively combining quantitative and qualitative methods, assesses women's role in the economy by looking at specific sectors selected on the basis of criteria such as export dynamism, female-intensity of the workforce, or potential impacts on poverty reduction. The paper concludes by sharing some lessons learnt.

The use of different methodologies reflects data availability, as well as the search for an approach that allows for the analysis of complex social realities by using different "entry points"; the overall goal being to make analytical work useful for gender-sensitive policy-making.

1. Insights from a micro-simulation approach: Cape Verde

The Cape Verde study - "Who is benefitting from trade liberalization in Cape Verde? A gender perspective" (UNCTAD, 2011) used a micro-simulation approach to assess the distributional effects of trade policy, with a focus on women. Based on households' survey data, the analysis sought to identify who would benefit from trade liberalization/facilitation policies and, in particular, whether there would be a gender bias in the gains from trade. In the report, the gender dimension (female-headed households versus male-headed households) was intersected with two other patterns of inequality, namely income status (poor versus non-poor households, as assessed against national baselines) and spatial location (rural versus urban).

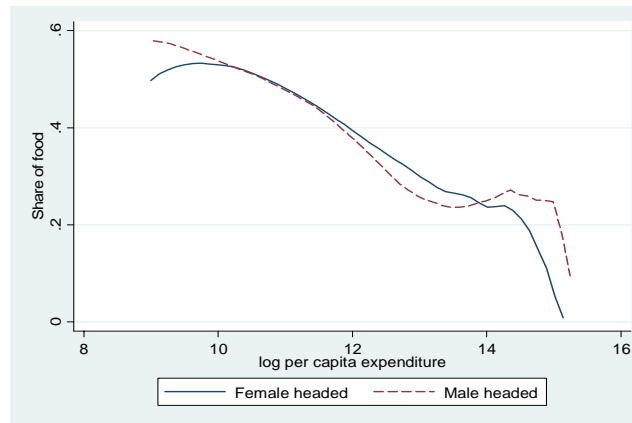
The study assessed the welfare implications of changes in food prices, increases in remittances, and the expansion of the tourism sector, with a focus on gender. These dimensions emerged as important transmission channels through which trade policies affect gender relations in Cape Verde. They were identified in light of their critical significance to Cape Verde and Cape Verdean women, and based on considerations of data availability. The main findings of the analysis are presented below.

a) Food prices

The analysis found that food price developments have discrete effects across class (income), gender and spatial location lines.

It was observed that, in both urban and rural locations, and for both male- and female-headed households, the share of household expenditure devoted to food declined sharply the higher the level of income. Consequently, lower food prices would have a remarkable “pro-poor” bias, in that the poor would benefit significantly more from declining food prices than the better-off. Conversely, soaring food prices would disproportionately impact the poor. Possible increases and decreases in food prices were assessed, taking into account a trend of high and volatile food prices in the international markets during the last four- five years on the one hand; and the ongoing negotiations between Cape Verde and the EU of an Economic Partnership Agreement on the other. The conclusion of such an agreement would imply the progressive removal of tariffs at the border, and would therefore lower prices for imported food products in Cape Verde's market. It was estimated that, at the national level, a 10 percent increase in food prices would result in a 2.6 percentage point increase in the proportion of those living below the poverty line (and a 1.8 percentage point increase in those below the extreme poverty line). According to the simulation, the impacts tend to be larger in female-headed households -especially in the case of extreme poverty -and they have more severe negative repercussions in rural than urban areas.

Figure 1: Share of food and log of per capita expenditure



Source: Estimation based on IDRF 2002 (Household Expenditure and Income Survey)

Conversely, a 10 percent decrease in food prices would alleviate poverty in Cape Verde: the fraction of the population below the poverty line would decrease from 36.7 to 34 percent. The positive impact would be particularly significant for female-headed households, as they tend to allocate a higher share of their expenditure to purchasing food.

The analysis also revealed that, for all households and for female-headed households in particular, the share of food in total expenditures was, on average, higher in the poorest islands (Santo Antão, Brava, Fogo), and in some specific poor rural areas (for example in Santiago). It follows that an increase in food prices would disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged locations, although this would ultimately depend on the extent to which food requirements are met through the market rather than through subsistence production.

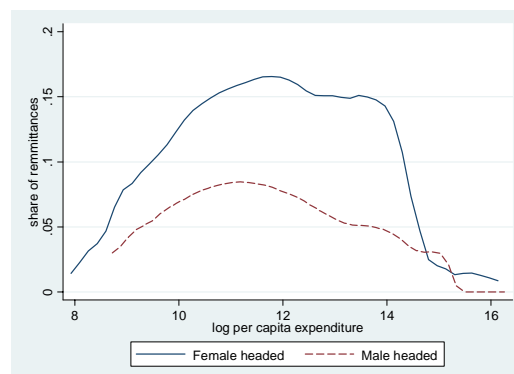
These findings unveil the discrete effects of food price movements within society, and help to better define and target policy interventions for socially inclusive development. Food insecurity in Cape Verde is structural in nature due to agro-ecological constraints. With only 10 percent arable land, the Cape Verdean islands are heavily dependent on food imports and greatly exposed to external food price shocks. Hence the importance of national policies and programmes that mitigate the domestic impacts of spikes in international food prices. These

include safety net programmes (cash, food, vouchers, or subsidies) as well as pro-active agricultural policies aimed at securing basic livelihoods. Enhancing the trade links with countries in the region and deepening South-South cooperation could also prove beneficial for Cape Verde, considering its large food deficit.

b) Remittances

The analysis revealed some key features of the way remittances redistribute wealth within the economy. It was found that remittances are essentially poor-friendly and have an equalizing effect on overall income distribution in the country. The analysis found that remittances were an important source of income, particularly for the middle and lower middle classes (although their direct effects on the poorest layers of society may be limited). The analysis also provided some evidential support that households that receive remittances rapidly attain standards of living greater than those who do not.

Figure 2: Share of remittances and log of per capita expenditure - National

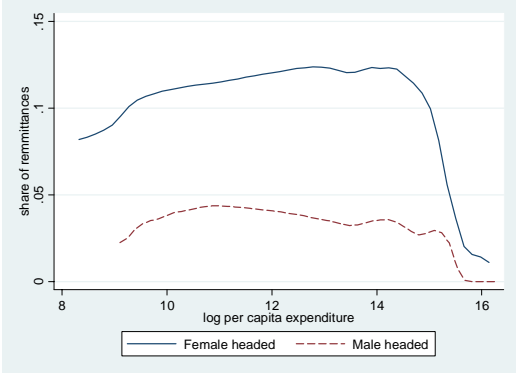


Source: Estimation based on IDRF 2002

In terms of distributional effects across gender and locations, the analysis found that remittances are more important for female-headed households than for male-headed households; and that they are a more important source of income in rural areas than in urban ones. Remittances and external rents represent 10.5 percent of total household income, reaching 18.6 percent for female-headed households in rural areas.

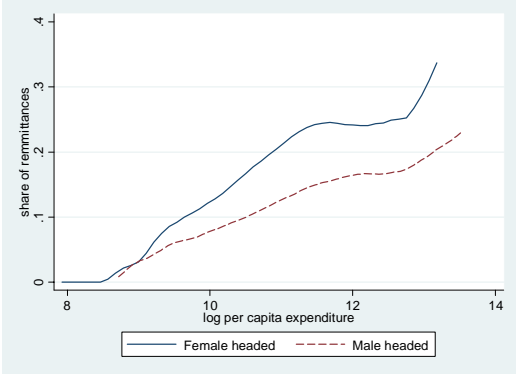
Cape Verdean women migrate at similar rates than men, to join family members already established abroad, but also independently. These single women are reported to remit regularly to their children and to other close relatives, and to send more money home than men.

Figure 3: Share of remittances and log of per capita expenditure - Urban



Source: Estimation based on IDRF 2002

Figure 4: Share of remittances and log of per capita expenditure - Rural



Source: Estimation based on IDRF 2002

In light of these poverty- and gender-specific findings, Cape Verde may consider ways and means to sustain and facilitate remittance flows, given their pro-poor impact. This is a complex issue where Cape Verde may wish to carefully weigh the positive effects of migration and remittances (financial inflows, transnational networks linked to the Diaspora, the return of highly qualified individuals, etc.) against their negative repercussions (“brain-drain”, just to name one). Trade and migration instruments can be used to make migration beneficial to both

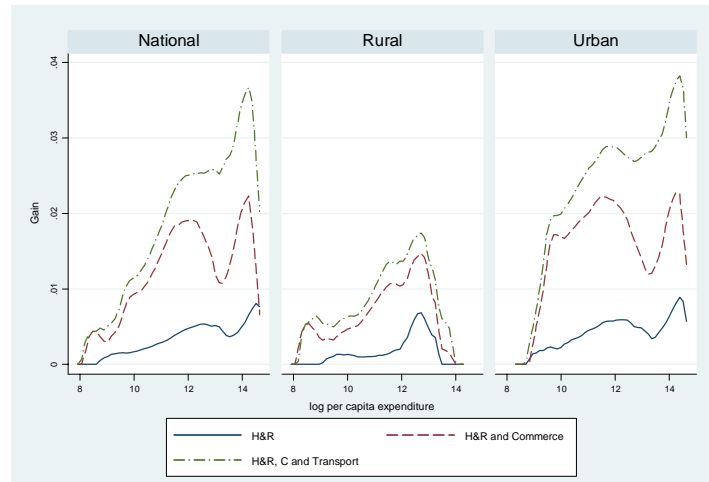
the sending and receiving countries. Cooperation agreements between origin and destination countries on “temporary” and “circular migration” have become a way to address a wide range of issues including migrant rights, labour and social protection, and facilitation of remittance flows. Within the framework of these agreements, there are several policy areas that Cape Verde may wish to consider, including: targeted negotiations to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications relevant to the Cape Verdean Diaspora; co-financing return programmes for highly-skilled migrants; and ways and means to lower transfer costs and formalize remittance flows.

c) Tourism

Tourism has become the primary source of growth and foreign exchange in Cape Verde, and represents one of the most important opportunities for economic development, poverty reduction and women’s empowerment in the country. With a focus on three discrete tourism-related sub-sectors (Hotels and Restaurants (H&R); Commerce; and Communication (C) and Transport), the analysis sought to measure how an expansion of tourism would impact different segments of the population.

The analysis found that, overall, the welfare gains from tourism would not be significant for the poorest households, especially gains originating in the H&R sector. Larger gains would accrue from an expansion of Communication and Transport, but these gains would still be concentrated at the middle and, especially, at the top end of the distribution spectrum (i.e. richer households would be more likely to benefit). Conversely, gains from an expansion of Commerce seemed to be more concentrated at the bottom-to-middle end of the income distribution (i.e. the expansion of this sub-sector would have a “pro-poor”, or progressive bias). In rural areas the gains were very small because few household heads tend to work in the affected sectors. On the other hand, the simulated effects were important in urban areas, which in fact drove the results reported at the national level.

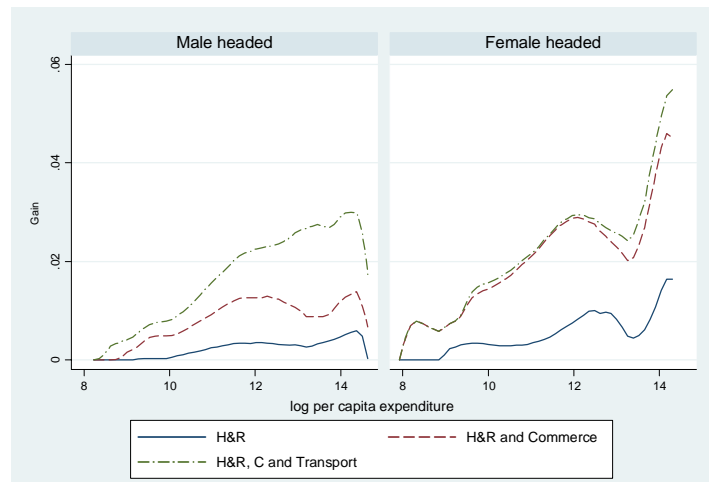
Figure 5: Gains from tourism



Source: Estimation based on IDRF (2002). Note: The regression labelled H&R assumes an expansion of the Hotels and Restaurant sector only. The regression labelled H&R and Commerce adds the gains from the expansion of commerce. And the regression labelled H&R, C, and Transports also adds gains from an expansion of Transport

Female-headed households would gain relatively more than male-headed households by an expansion of Commerce, and, to a lesser extent by an expansion of Hotels and Restaurants. The gains from an expansion of Commerce for female-headed households in urban and rural areas were observed along all the per capita household expenditure distribution. Conversely, male-headed households would benefit more than female-headed households from an expansion of the Transport sector, with the gains more concentrated in the upper end of the expenditure distribution (i.e. relatively richer).

Figure 6: Gains by Gender



Source: Estimation based on IDRF 2002

This analysis sheds light on the distributional consequences in Cape Verde of a growth strategy based on tourism. It is undeniable that an expansion of tourism has been beneficial for Cape Verde, as it has had a significant positive impact on growth. However, there seems to be some evidence that an outward-oriented growth strategy based on tourism may also possibly magnify patterns of income inequality, as the relatively richer would be more likely to benefit from an expansion of tourism-related activities while the poor and very poor would remain at the margin. This implies the need to put in place some corrective actions, such as the promotion of community-based and cultural tourism that could be particularly beneficial for poor rural communities, including women.

The study also looked at the gender and location effects of poverty alleviation programmes implemented during the period 2002-2007. While remarkable poverty reduction achievements were recorded during this period, the study concluded that they benefitted especially male-headed and urban households. More specifically, overall poverty declined by 10 percentage points: in 2002, 36.7 percent of Cape Verdean individuals were poor, while in 2007 26.6 percent were poor. However, regional disparities increased: in 2007 more than 40 percent of total individuals lived in poverty in rural areas, while only around 10 percent did in urban areas; in 2002 these figures were 50 percent and 21 percent, respectively. In addition, gender disparities

widened. In 2002, the poverty rates for female-headed and male-headed households were 39.6 and 34.6 percent, respectively. In 2007, these rates were 33 percent for female-headed households and 21 percent for male-headed households.

The Cape Verde study has yielded important insights into the distributional effects of trade. Yet, the analysis has also confirmed the limits of using a household-level quantitative approach in exploring the trade-gender linkage. In particular, this level of analysis overlooks inequality in intra-household resource allocation. In the specific case of Cape Verde, the female- versus male-headed household approach was unable to capture important features of the society. Notably, on the Cape Verde Islands it is customary for men and women to live together without being officially married, and have children from different relationships. This *de facto* polygamy challenges the use of the household as an analytical unit. These shortcomings confirm the need to construct more sophisticated frameworks that will capture intra-household decision-making and resource allocation.

2. Seizing the gender-trade link through macroeconomic analysis: Lesotho

Lessons learned from the previous case study pointed to the need to combine quantitative and qualitative methods, so as to favour a richer understanding of the gender ramifications of trade policies.

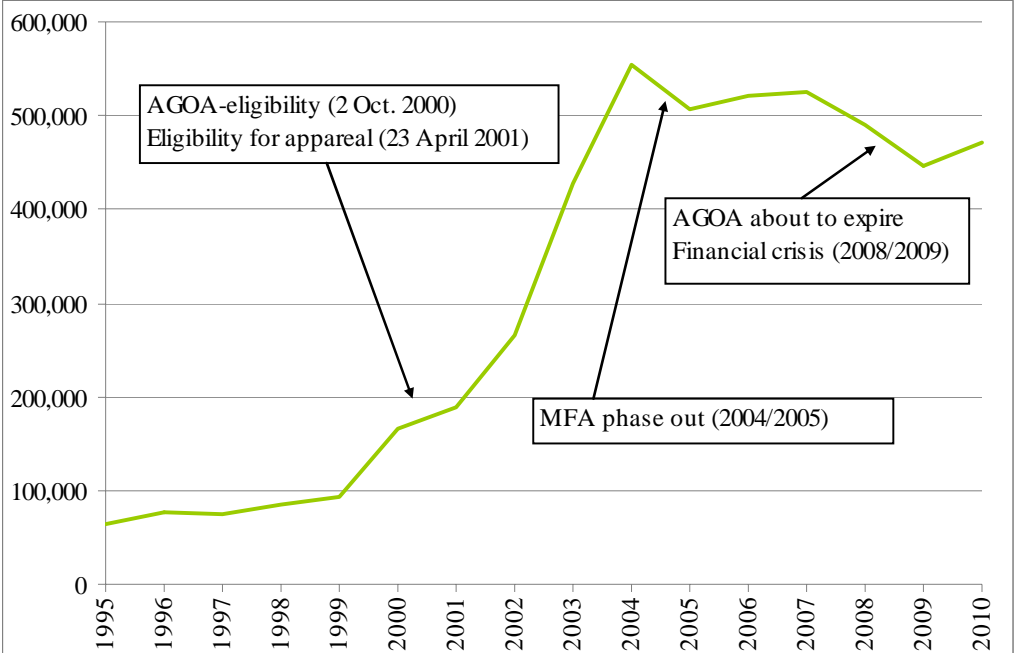
Accordingly, a different methodology was adopted in the country-case study of Lesotho, "Who is benefitting from trade liberalization in Lesotho? A gender perspective" (UNCTAD, 2012b). The report was based on a standard macroeconomic model for assessing the trade-labour linkages, while also including in-country visits and consultations to test and fine-tune the findings from the quantitative analysis.

The Lesotho case study first evaluated structural transformations in the economy of the country by reviewing changes in the structure of production and trade over the last thirty years. It then considered the major trade policy developments underlying these structural changes. Finally, it assessed the gender implications of trade-led structural transformations by looking at: female job creation in export-led sectors, the quality of the employment created, the spillover

effects within the economy, and at patterns of vulnerability to external shocks. Although the study considered the industrial structure as a whole, it focused on the textile and apparel sector.

There have been major changes in Lesotho’s structure of production and trade over the past thirty years – most notably the fast expansion of supply capacity in the apparel sector, and a relative shift in the composition of exports towards apparels. These structural developments largely reflected the outcome of trade policy. One instrument in particular was critical in shaping Lesotho’s competitive edge in apparel exports: unilateral, non-reciprocal duty-free and quota-free access to the United States for Lesotho’s apparel products under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) initiative; coupled with a relaxation of the rules of origin under AGOA to permit the use of inputs from third-countries in the production of Lesotho’s apparel exports to the United States. Under AGOA, Lesotho’s apparel exports to the US increased steadily from 2001 to 2004 (they almost tripled), peaking in 2004.

Figure 7: Lesotho’s apparel exports to the United States, 1995-2010 (thousand \$)



Source: UNCTADstat online database. Note: SITC Rev. 3; Articles of apparel & clothing accessories Code 84).

The study argued that the trade-led expansion of Lesotho's apparel industry has created opportunities for women's empowerment and well-being through job creation in export-led sectors; but it has also contributed to new patterns of inequality and vulnerability.

On the one hand, it was found that the fast expansion of supply and trade capacity in the apparel sector created opportunities for women's empowerment and well-being through job creation in export sectors. Under AGOA, Lesotho's clothing industry grew to be the country's single largest employer with some 48,000 jobs in 2004, compared with only about 10,000 in 1999. Women still make up the bulk of this workforce. The Lesotho case study thus confirms that trade policy (in this case, preferential access to US markets) can play a catalytic role in job creation for women. Most significantly, trade-led developments have created a large number of new jobs for underprivileged, relatively unskilled women who would otherwise have little chance of being formally employed. The advantages of formal employment in the textile and apparel sector in Lesotho have extended beyond the income earned. In particular, women working in the apparel factories have access to innovative workplace health programmes that provide free HIV care and treatment. In a context where some 40 percent of workers in the textiles and apparel sector are HIV-positive, this industry-wide initiative is critically important.

However, there are qualifications to be made, and some aspects that need to be critically assessed. Some of the major areas of concern raised by the study include the quality (wages, working conditions and skill development) of the employment created, the spillover effects within the economy, and new patterns of vulnerability to external shocks.

Above all, wages in the textile and apparel sectors are low in real terms and allow only for the coverage of basic subsistence expenses. Working conditions are hard. Furthermore, female job segregation in the unskilled/labour intensive nodes, and the segregated nature of tasks within each node, have significantly limited skills development.

Moreover, the spillover effects within the economy have been modest. There have been limited effects on government revenue, as manufacturers exporting to markets outside the Southern African Customs Union (SADC) benefit from a number of tax incentives that curtail their

contribution to the national budget. Nor have any significant industrial linkages involving local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and fostering local skills been developed.

Finally, although formal employment in the apparel sector has been a positive development for many women, it has also made them particularly vulnerable to external shocks and changes in the international trade environment. More specifically, Lesotho apparel workers now face the threat of what we may refer to as trade preference “expiration” (the scheduled phase-out of AGOA and its special rules of origin), preference “erosion” (arising from the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade liberalization) and “preference dilution” (the possible extension of duty-free and quota-free access to the US market to the Asian LDCs that do not currently enjoy such treatment).

Vulnerability to trade policy changes is further exacerbated by the relatively poor ability of Lesotho’s unskilled apparel workers to relocate elsewhere. This is due to the segregated nature of the tasks performed, which has limited the acquisition of transferable skills; and the low wage level, which has not allowed women to build up substantive savings or start independent business activities. Moreover, vulnerability is the result of the close correlation between export fluctuations and labour contractions in Lesotho’s apparel sector, where flexible layoff schemes cause workers to be dismissed during periods of tightening orders, and possibly reinstated when needed.

3. Zooming in: A value-chain approach combining multiple methods of inquiry

In The Gambia country case study (UNCTAD, 2013, forthcoming), the methodology used qualitative methods of inquiry, including semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and first-hand observation. Also, the analysis was sharpened by concentrating on a specific sector of the economy: fisheries. By deepening the approach adopted in the Lesotho study, the analysis attempted to disentangle value-chain structures and processes in the fisheries sector, while also unravelling gender-specific structures and outcomes throughout the value chain. In this approach, quantitative and qualitative methodologies built upon each other's findings. The fisheries sector was selected at the outset because of its potential to grow rapidly in terms of

international trade; but also because of its promise to provide employment to relatively unskilled women and to boost women's entrepreneurship, with significant impacts on poverty alleviation.

Women in The Gambia play a very active role in the fisheries sector: about 80 percent of fish processors and 50 percent of small-scale fish traders are women (UNCTAD, 2013). There are rather specific gender-based trade patterns throughout the chain, based on three interlocking aspects, namely: i) the range of markets served (urban, inland, sub-regional, international (EU and United States), including the Diaspora niche); ii) the assortment of species and the type of products (fresh and frozen fish, cured (smoked/dried) products, by-products) offered, each serving different market outlets; and iii) the scale of the operation (small-scale and large-scale trade). Women tend to be mostly concentrated in the artisanal fisheries sector as small-scale processors and retailers. They are essentially engaged in the domestic marketing and distribution of both fresh fish and cured products, and in the processing of cured products. They are also major actors in the “Diaspora” market and in shellfish harvesting, processing and distribution.

Box 1: Women in the Fisheries Sector

Fresh fish marketing and distribution

In the fresh fish trade women tend to be small scale dealers. They mainly buy a few trays of fresh fish from large-scale mongers and transport it to various urban markets where the fish is retailed. They sometimes collectively hire a commercial vehicle to transport the fish to the urban markets, or use local taxis.

Large scale dealers are mainly men: they often buy big quantities (e.g. one or more canoes of fish). The fish is unloaded from the canoes by carriers (who used to be predominantly women, but are increasingly being replaced by men who are quicker and stronger) and loaded onto refrigerated trucks or pick-up vans, for distribution to inland markets.

Some large-scale specialist fish dealers (usually men) export the fish to Senegal, or to Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, etc. in smoked or dried forms. Processing factories also procure their supply from large-scale fish suppliers (who tend to be men). Local hotels and restaurants are also supplied by this category of dealers, though within this group of suppliers a few women are quite often active as they too enter into contracts with the hotels and restaurants, especially during the tourist season. This trade offers substantially bigger returns to women than those had by the small scale processor who takes her produce to the market every morning. This category of women traders usually requires a bit more working capital and better cash flows because the hotels and restaurants usually do not pay on receipt of produce; the women are paid fortnightly, or monthly. Thus, a credit line extended to this category of

women traders will help them expand their business, and thus increase their level of income to get them out of poverty. In addition, these women require training in the various aspects of the fish value chain, small business management, etc.

Cured fish distribution and marketing

Artisanal fish processing is constituted by small family or women-owned business enterprises with rudimentary processing technologies, and often located close to the beaches or areas of towns around the landing sites. Cured fish products are mainly sundried and/or salted and smoked. Fish dryers tend to be women. They produce salted, sun dried fish for urban and inland markets, or for regional export dealers. The same women who process the fish often market it (small-scale traders).

Their operations are often labor intensive and characterized by small-scale direct marketing and low profit margins. Due to poor hygienic conditions during the smoking process, fish is often contaminated with dust and infested with blow flies and maggots. Transportation to market centers is usually by commercial vehicles, and at this stage too a good part of the product could be lost due to spoilage, with financial loss for the processor.

The Diaspora Trade

The sale of smoked fish products in the Diaspora trade to the EU (UK and the Netherlands mainly) and to the US is currently, by and large, a women-led small-scale business. Between 2004 and 2010, these exports constituted 3-18 percent of all fish exports from The Gambia. Currently, the women operate from Rosamond Trade, the only processing facility in the country certified to export cured fish to the EU. The target clientele for this product type is usually familiar with this form of product and is of Gambian or similar cultural background, and therefore tend to crave it whilst in Europe or America.

Cross-border Trade

Another system of niche marketing involves both men and women who travel from the countries of export destination to process the products in The Gambia. In this case it is worth noting that gender interacts with other factors such as nationality and ethnicity. Gambians, Senegalese, Ghanaians, Guineans and Malians are variously involved in the Gambian fish trade.

Source: UNCTAD, Observations, interviews and reports.

Moving from these patterns of labour segregation by sex, the study argues that a “dynamization” of the fisheries sector in The Gambia -and particularly an expansion of the export-oriented fish-processing industry -is likely to generate significant employment opportunities for relatively unskilled women downstream (factory processing), with positive effects in terms of poverty alleviation. However, it may also unleash dynamics of social polarization and exclusion. In particular, the selective upgrading and segregation of the export-oriented segment of the chain (serving mainly the EU market) may magnify existing disparities and cleavages between the relatively empowered and the relatively disempowered, between large-scale dealers and small-scale traders, between men (who traditionally dominate the

supply side of the export-oriented segment) and women (who are disproportionately present in domestic small-scale fresh fish marketing and distribution).

Some corrective measures may be needed. Prioritized investment should continue to include domestic facilities, and particularly infrastructure catering for small-scale operators (and indirectly women) who play a critical socio-economic role (nutritional). Some of the facilities (ice plants, etc.) that serve the export-oriented sector should also cater for small-scale operators that serve the domestic market. In this context, measures need to be taken to redress the situation of women's lesser access than men to them, including community-managed smoking and drying facilities. Observations at the landing sites of Gunjur and Brufut, for example, have evidenced women's unequal access to productive assets, including community-managed smoking and drying facilities. The overall tendency seems to be that women tend to receive "diminished" assets, while sectors that attract investment tend to "defeminize". Concrete measures to ensure that facilities used by women are upgraded -or that upgraded facilities are assigned to women -may include quotas, informal complaints procedure, etc. Community mobilization in the identification and enforcement of suitable measures is critical, as the whole process should be endogenous, from within the community. Parallel action should be taken in favoring women's access to credit, in order for them to be able to upgrade and scale-up their operations. As discussed, large-scale traders servicing hotels and restaurants – an area of commercial potential for local women - usually require significantly more working capital and better cash flows than small-scale traders, as hotels and restaurants usually do not pay on receipt of produce. In addition, women entrepreneurs would require training in the various aspects of the fish value chain and in business management.

Finally, it is important to identify and invest in niches or products that can generate value added for women. The study identifies specific high-value niche products with significant dynamic potential that can generate value added through women. Two areas of (partially) untapped potential include shrimp farming and oyster culture, where a product differentiation strategy could be put in place with a focus on high-value niche markets (e.g. gourmet restaurants in Europe). A different niche is that of traditional ethnic foods of value for the Gambian Diaspora

in Europe and North America. This is a lucrative trade, currently undertaken mainly by individual women. These sectors open up new opportunities for women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, with significant implications in terms of poverty alleviation.

4. Conclusions

UNCTAD's country case studies, presented above, show how trade policy impacts different segments of the population - men and women, urban and rural populations, the poor and the well-off - in different ways; the assumption that economic policies, including trade policy, are "gender-neutral" is therefore subject to serious challenge. Only if policymakers consciously take into account these horizontal differences can economic policy play a critical role in narrowing inequalities.

The trade-gender linkages are, however, complex. All studies point to the multifaceted aspects of the interplay between trade and gender, whereby trade can create opportunities for women's empowerment and well-being, though it can also magnify existing gender-based inequalities. One important lesson drawn from the studies is that reductionist formal models of causation are unsuitable to grasp the complexities of these linkages, as they cannot adequately describe the multifaceted mechanisms through which trade affects gender and gender affects trade. Country-specific, contextual analysis is needed when assessing the gender ramifications of trade policies. In particular, context-specific socio-cultural factors should be fully acknowledged and factored into the economic analysis. To seize these aspects, research in the field of trade and gender should integrate qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry, so as to realistically gauge socio-economic dynamics in their real world setting. The availability of data based on individuals instead of on the household as an analytical unit would greatly facilitate the analysis. This call for the design of more sophisticated frameworks that will capture intra-household decision-making and resource allocation. Furthermore, the adoption of a sectoral focus will lend depth and policy-relevance to the analysis.

A common finding from the country studies is the disconnect between commitments towards gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and trade policy instruments. The countries reviewed above have all made commitments to gender equality at the national level,

for example by including equality between women and men in their constitutions and other principle legal texts. They have also ratified a number of gender-specific conventions at the multilateral level, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and at the regional level, such as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. They have also committed to adhere to the principles enshrined in regional instruments such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. However, gender considerations seem to disappear or to become marginal once trade and other macroeconomic policies are designed and implemented, or trade agreements are negotiated and ratified. One way to bridge the gap between commitments and action is through multilateral development assistance frameworks, such as Aid-for-Trade and the Enhanced Integrated Framework, which provide entry points to use international trade as an instrument for women's economic empowerment. The inclusion of a gender perspective in the design and implementation of macro-economic policies, including trade policy, is a way to give substance and meaning to gender equality and women's empowering commitments.

UNCTAD's case studies also highlight the ways in which the gender perspective can contribute to a deeper and richer understanding of trade policy and performance. By acknowledging social structures, the gender dimension brings new insights into trade policy analysis, alongside some subversive potential. To start with, the gender perspective challenges the mainly aggregate focus of conventional trade policy analysis, which overshadows the concomitant redistributive effects of trade at country level. Moreover, if meaningfully articulated, the gender perspective is instrumental in bringing to the forefront of the analysis intersecting patterns of inequality – including inequalities of income and wealth, as well as horizontal differences rooted in race/ethnicity/cast or spatial location – that would otherwise be overlooked in mainstream trade policy analysis. Finally, by delving deep into social norms and power relations, the gender approach integrates social and cultural factors into economic analysis. This, in turn, encourages a shift from formal models to real life economics. In sum, the gender perspective provides a framework for a reassessment of macroeconomic policy, and trade policies in particular, in ways that magnify their social meaningfulness and inclusiveness (UNCTAD, 2012a).

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