

Trade and gender

Addressing barriers to women's decent work through trade policy

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* This chapter represents the opinions of an individual staff member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and is the product of professional research. It is not meant to represent the position or opinions of the WTO or its Members, or the official position of any staff members of the WTO. It focuses on outlining current policy trends adopted by WTO Members with regard to trade, gender and decent work. This analysis is based on information provided by the WTO through Members' Trade Policy Reviews, the WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercises, and Members' notification of their free trade agreements and regional trade agreements to the WTO. This chapter also looks at some provisions of WTO agreements and development-related decisions through a gender lens. In no way does it provide an interpretation of these rules and decisions; it simply provides a gender perspective on how trade rules and policies could support women, and how WTO Members have actually been using them and translating them into their national trade policies, as reported in their Trade Policy Reviews.



► Introduction

Women are key economic agents. They greatly contribute to countries' labour workforce – even if, overall, their participation is often lower than that of men – as is shown by decades of evidence gathered nationally, regionally and internationally. Worldwide, a gender gap in employment exists and persists; less than 47 per cent of women globally hold a formal job, compared with 72 per cent of men (ILO 2022a). This is, however, an oversimplification of the picture. In many countries and export-oriented sectors, employed women outnumber male workers, and sometimes more than half of the job holders are female.¹

In fact, the evidence shows that firms that engage in trade employ more women than those companies that remain focused on the domestic market. The average representation of female permanent employees in export firms is 33 per cent, compared with 24 per cent in non-exporting firms and 28 per cent in non-importing firms. Moreover, women make up 36 per cent of employees in firms engaged in global value chains (GVCs) and 38 per cent in foreign-owned firms (WTO and World Bank 2020). Indeed, in some countries, the female share of employees in exporting firms is even higher; for example, “in Morocco, Romania, and Vietnam, women represent 50 per cent or more of the employees of exporting firms, which have created jobs for more than 5 million women, roughly 15 per cent of the female population working in these countries” (WTO and World Bank 2020, 36).

Nevertheless, overall, women still face numerous barriers that hinder their integration into the formal employment market, including jobs in export firms, because they lack access to safe transport, or carry most, if not all, of the burden of unpaid care work, among many other reasons. Also, when they are employed, they may find themselves working in difficult environments (this is explored further in section 7.3.4 below). This situation is mostly due to negative gender social norms,² which often adversely affect women's economic empowerment.³ For example, because of these norms, women tend to experience greater financial dependence and earn

1 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 1.

2 Negative gender social norms are defined here as cultural mindsets and stereotypes that determine societal values and define roles *between* men and women; these norms hinder and limit women's economic life by preventing them from accessing *economic* opportunities, developing their entrepreneurial activities, and reaping the benefits of trade (der Boghossian forthcoming).

3 World Bank (2022a) estimates that “a woman has just three-quarters of the rights of men”, impeding women's economic empowerment and therefore creating economic barriers.

lower salaries in comparison to men (WTO 2022a); and they frequently have limited access to certain jobs and opportunities and face obstacles to retention (WTO 2022b, 99).

Some governments are addressing these negative gender social norms through their regional trade agreements (RTAs) (WTO 2022c). They establish a link between trade, social norms and gender equality. Two, in particular, include provisions that focus on “eliminating customs that are discriminatory against women through legislation with the objective to abolish prejudices against women and promote gender equality”.⁴ Others, more broadly, recognize the importance of cooperating on trade-related aspects of social policies in order to achieve the objectives of the RTA,⁵ or refer to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁶ as a means to increase “the equal participation and opportunities for men and women in all sectors of political, economic, social and cultural life”.⁷

It is crucial to focus on these norms when trade is concerned because obstacles based on gender bias or negative social norms could constitute a new type of trade barrier, limiting women’s access to economic and job opportunities created by trade and in turn limiting development and poverty reduction (der Boghossian, forthcoming). An example of a chain of effects that may lead to such trade barriers is illustrated in figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Chain of effects in property rights, access to finance and trade due to negative gender norms



Source: der Boghossian (forthcoming)

- 4 [Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community \(EAC\)](#), Ch. 22: “Enhancing the role of women in socio-economic development”, Art. 121: “The role of women in socio-economic development”; [Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa \(COMESA\)](#), Ch. 24: “Women in Development and Business”, Art. 154: “Role of Women in Development”.
- 5 [Framework Agreement Establishing a Free Trade Area between the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Turkey](#), Ch. 5: “Trade and Sustainable Development”, Art. 5.10: “Cooperation”; in force since 2013.
- 6 [CEDAW](#) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979.
- 7 [Agreement Establishing an Association between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and Central America on the other](#), Part III: “Cooperation”, Title III: “Social Development and Social Cohesion”, Art. 47: “Gender”; in force since 2013.

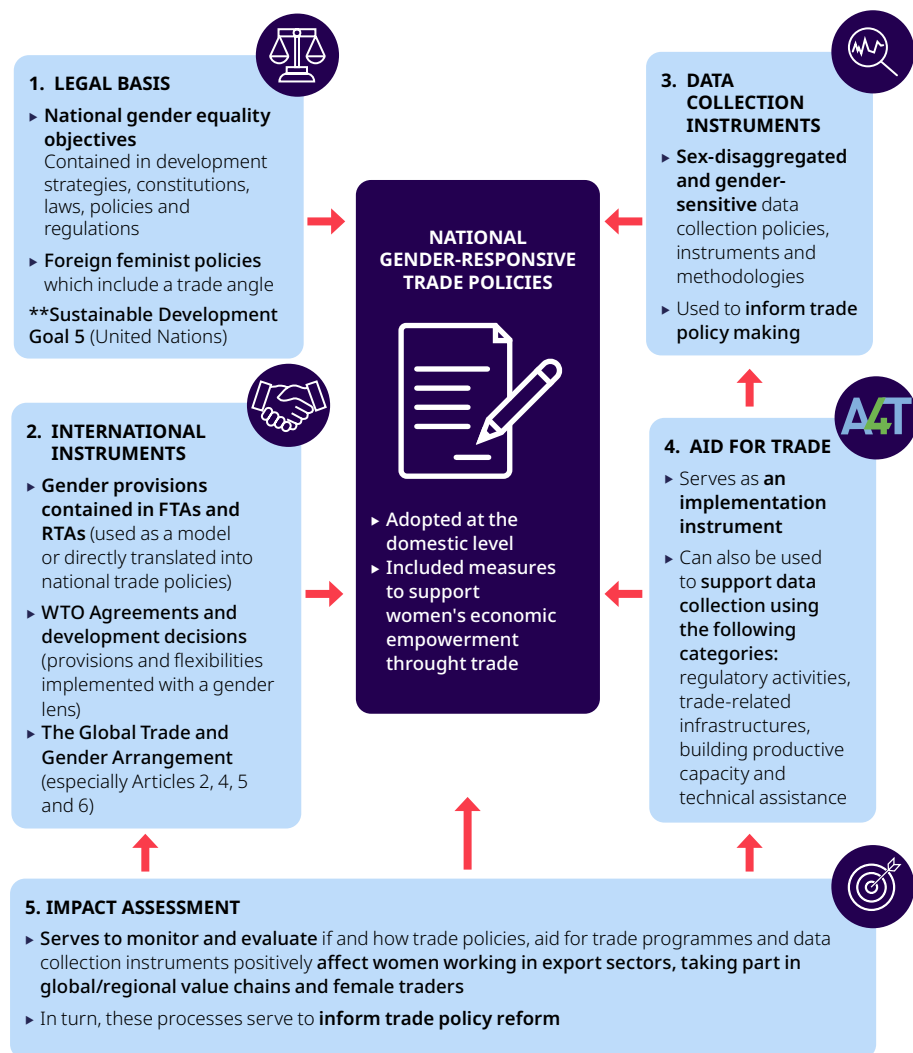
For this reason, it is not just about how many women participate in the workforce; it is mostly about the quality of those jobs, and if they are skilled, high-level and high-paying. In fact, when working in export-oriented sectors, women are largely confined to low-paid, low-level and unskilled jobs, putting them in vulnerable economic situations; about 80 per cent of female workers in firms that export hold medium- and low-skilled jobs (WTO and World Bank 2020). Examples are provided in section 7.2.2 below. It is also about supporting women to enter formal employment and leave the informal sector, where they face many risks because they lack access to social benefits and protection, among other reasons (OECD and ILO 2019).

Within this context, governments are using various trade policies, ranging from national development strategies and sectoral national trade policies to RTAs and Aid for Trade programmes, to foster women's access to formal employment in export-oriented sectors (der Boghossian 2023a). However, governments tend to work in "policy silos", for two reasons: first, because there is a lack of interministerial collaboration, which is especially important for gender issues as they are cross-cutting by nature; and second, because they adopt various types of trade policy without making a connection between them and using them in a combined and integrated manner.

In the literature, trade policy is defined as the use by governments of import/export tariffs, as well as non-tariff measures such as quotas and antidumping duties, to regulate the trade of goods and services (WTO 2020; WTO and UNCTAD 2012). This, however, is not the focus of the current chapter. Instead, it explores four types of trade policy instruments: (i) national trade policies or strategies (including domestic sectoral trade policies, such as tourism or textile and garment); (ii) gender provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) and RTAs; (iii) Aid for Trade programmes; and (iv) provisions in World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, including development-related decisions adopted by the WTO.

In fact, the types of trade policy enumerated above could, if combined, be used to form a supportive and transformational web of measures that not only supported women's access to formal employment but also promoted decent work for female workers and created sound working conditions for them. This is a new concept developed by the current author, who calls it the "blended approach" to gender-responsive trade policymaking (der Boghossian 2023b). Figure 7.2 shows how this mix of trade policies could be used to design gender-responsive national trade policies, which lie at the centre of the blended approach, allowing the measures adopted and implemented to produce policy efficiency and concrete impacts.

►Figure 7.2 The blended approach to gender-responsive trade policymaking



Source: der Boghossian 2023b

In recent years, governments have taken steps to develop gender-responsive trade policies. The measures include addressing employment barriers for women in trade-related sectors, improving women's working conditions, reducing or eliminating pay discrimination, and enhancing women's skills to access better-paid, high-level jobs and decision-making positions. Sometimes, they may also address issues related to gender-based violence in and outside the workplace, and give additional support to female workers by providing them with better access to healthcare (targeting mothers and childcare, in particular). By doing so, some governments have implicitly established a clear link between trade policies and more socially oriented complementary measures to specifically reinforce and sustain women's economic empowerment through trade.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline these various types of trade policy and to explore how they have been combined with socially oriented measures to support formal employment for women. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender issues, more and more governments have come to realize that, unless this policy combination is translated into their gender-responsive trade measures, it will be difficult to satisfactorily achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their poverty reduction objectives.⁸

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 7.1 outlines how women's economic empowerment implicitly sits at the centre of the WTO objectives and explores the link between women's extensive roles in the economy and trade. Section 7.2 looks at how trade policy implemented by WTO Members can foster employment opportunities for women. It shows that women, while taking advantage of these policies, remain in low-level, low-paid jobs. This leads on to section 7.3, which explores how existing trade policy solutions tackle these gender gaps in export-led employment, by improving women's skills and addressing difficult labour conditions, pay discrimination and gender-based violence. Section 7.3 then goes on to consider how trade policy fosters women's participation in male-dominated sectors, thereby improving their economic strength. Finally, sections 7.4 and 7.5 examine how some WTO Members have implemented WTO agreements and development decisions with a gender focus, favouring women's decent work, and how the WTO has institutionalized the gender issue in recent years. Section 7.6 concludes.

8 United Nations, "The Sustainable Development Agenda".

► 7.1 Social improvement through economic development and trade: The links between the WTO objectives, decent work and women's economic empowerment

The WTO was established in 1995 after the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations (1986–94) and following the adoption of the Marrakesh Agreement (the WTO Agreement);⁹ it incorporates the rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT 1947), as well as its objectives.¹⁰ The Preamble of the GATT stipulates that trade should be “conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income”.¹¹ The WTO Agreement inherited these objectives and added that trade should be “conducted allowing for the optimal use of the world’s resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development”.¹²

According to the United Nations (UN), sustainable development includes notions of inclusivity and resilience (UN 2022). To be achieved, inclusive and equitable economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection would need to be combined.¹³ The concept of sustainable development was similarly described in the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report.¹⁴

9 Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, 15 April 1994, 1867 UNTS 154, 33 ILM 1144 (1994) (Marrakesh Agreement or WTO Agreement).

10 The original General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT 1947), signed in October 1947, was updated in 1993 (GATT 1994), incorporating the creation of the WTO. While the GATT focused on trade in goods, the WTO also covers trade in services and intellectual property.

11 First recital, Preamble, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, 15 April 1994, 1867 UNTS 187, 33 ILM 1153 (1994) (GATT 1994).

12 First recital, Preamble, Marrakesh Agreement.

13 United Nations, “The Sustainable Development Agenda”.

14 United Nations, *World Commission on the Environment and Development, “Our Common Future”, 1987 (Brundtland Report)*, Section 3: “Sustainable Development”, Art. 27.

The ILO defines decent work as:

[O]pportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.¹⁵

Decent work is also part of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. In particular, SDG 8 promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. SDG target 8.a provides for an increase in Aid for Trade, portraying the Initiative as an instrument to implement this goal. The Aid for Trade Initiative was launched in 2005¹⁶ and operationalized in 2006¹⁷ by a set of recommendations developed by the Task Force on Aid for Trade. Interestingly, these recommendations include “gender equality” as a cross-cutting issue throughout the Initiative. All these definitions and concepts are in line with the WTO’s objectives, so trade could contribute, as an economic agent, to populations’ social well-being and therefore indirectly to decent work. In fact, when it comes to supporting women’s economic empowerment, many trade policies include provisions and measures, or are accompanied by socially oriented policies, that support female workers in export-oriented sectors.

Women are at the centre of multilateral issues and play a key role in the achievement of the SDGs, as highlighted by the UN and SDG 5.^{18,19} Women are sustainable economic growth drivers. Globally, there are over 500 million female entrepreneurs who are actively engaged in various forms of entrepreneurship, including established business ownership, startup ventures, and informal private sector activities. These women play a significant role in enhancing the productive capacity of their respective

¹⁵ ILO, “[Decent Work](#)”, accessed 12 July 2023.

¹⁶ The WTO [Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration](#) stipulates that “Aid for Trade should aim to help developing countries, particularly LDCs (least developed countries), to build the supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure that they need to assist them to implement and benefit from WTO Agreements and more broadly to expand their trade” (Para. 57).

¹⁷ The Task Force on Aid for Trade, composed of WTO Members, presented its report and recommendations ([Recommendations of the Task Force on Aid for Trade](#)) on the operationalization of the Initiative at the General Council meeting on 27 and 28 July 2006.

¹⁸ United Nations, “[The Sustainable Development Agenda](#)”: “At the core of the 2020–2030 decade is the need for action to tackle growing poverty, empower women and girls, and address the climate emergency.”

¹⁹ United Nations, SDG 5: “[Gender Equality](#)”.

countries (GEM 2022). They act as job creators, especially for other women, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.²⁰ They are also innovators, and about 30 per cent of female entrepreneurs globally offer innovative products. There is also evidence that firms led by female chief technology officers (CTOs) demonstrate greater levels of innovation than those led by male CTOs (Wu et al. 2021).

In addition, as highlighted in statements made at the World Trade Congress on Gender in December 2022:

Women are also climate change mitigators, and in developing countries they are managers of natural resources. Through this role, women have actually become experts in maintaining biodiversity on land and at sea by developing eco-friendly techniques. Women are, indeed, circular economists, and they are agents of food security. Female farmers mostly work in subsistence agriculture. As cross-border traders, they play a key role in food security, nutrition and health, as they mostly deal in essential food products for poor consumers, thereby supporting balanced diets in populations. Through their trade, they also deliver food to places where supply is lacking. In West Africa, for example, female informal traders in essential food represent about 30 per cent of total trade in the region. Women also are peacebuilders. Gender-equal participation in peacebuilding processes results in longer and lasting peace post-conflict. All women's roles bring them back to trade that can strengthen them economically and in turn reinforce their social roles.²¹

Therefore, by adopting sustainable development as one of its key objectives, the WTO has implicitly put women's empowerment at the centre of trade. And the key element in making trade work for women is understanding how these objectives translate into trade policies and development strategies; how governments explicitly include measures supporting women's decent economic empowerment in their trade policies; and how they use WTO agreements, implementing provisions using a gender lens for the economic and social benefit of women.

20 Fifty-seven per cent of workers employed in micro companies owned and led by women are female, according to an unpublished WTO survey of more than 800 women entrepreneurs in Latin America, South Asia and East Africa, conducted in 2019 and 2020 ("Assessing Women Entrepreneurs' Knowledge Gap on Trade in East Africa, South Asia, and Latin America"). Also, according to the survey, 50 per cent of women entrepreneurs were motivated to create their business in order to create jobs for others, and 41 per cent in order to be their own bosses.

21 [Closing speech given by the current author](#), in her capacity as Head of the WTO Trade and Gender Office, World Trade Congress on Gender, 7 December 2022.

► 7.2 How trade policy creates opportunities for women to enter the economy and the workforce

7.2.1 Using trade policy to promote women's access to formal employment in export sectors

Today, most governments have largely acknowledged that trade can support women's economic empowerment and that it can be a catalyst for women's formal employment. They also recognize that, if they invest in women, women will, in return, support their growth and poverty reduction objectives (Fernández et al. 2021). About 92 per cent of developing countries include women's economic empowerment as a priority in their national or regional development plans and objectives (WTO and OECD 2022). Most governments now include gender equality objectives in their trade policies, Aid for Trade programmes (der Boghossian 2019b) and RTAs (Bahri 2021). Some have explicitly acknowledged that closing the gender gap is crucial for per capita income, growth, development and poverty reduction.²²

Interestingly, in some countries that are geographically isolated and highly dependent on international trade for their economic survival, women are at the centre of their trade strategies. In fact, trade and women are seen as moving hand in hand, as two major parts of economic and trade development. For instance, most small island developing States acknowledge that women's economic empowerment fosters their export expansion and their integration in global markets, and that gender issues should be an integral part of their trade policies (der Boghossian 2023a). While this may be a new trend starting to emerge among some WTO Members, it is not the first time that governments have invested in women to boost their trade. Some have already done so to remedy an economic crisis or a decline in trade in the country.²³

In their national trade and investment initiatives, the vast majority of governments prioritize women's economic empowerment and labour force participation.

22 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 1.

23 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 1.

Some governments have designed national trade policies that are intended to support economic growth and development, and address employment gaps in export-oriented sectors or key sectors that lack foreign investment. These policies are designed to be gender-responsive and encourage women's employment. Other governments provide financial incentives to the private sector to employ women. Such incentives are typically very specific; they may, for instance, target unemployed women or women who have been on career breaks, or they may provide tax credits to support small enterprises to provide jobs to "career-disconnected women" (der Boghossian 2019a). Sometimes, employment of women can also constitute one criterion for grant eligibility for cooperative enterprises.²⁴

In addition to national trade policies, in most of their RTAs, governments have adopted provisions to enhance the participation of women in employment, essentially through equal access to job opportunities. In these cases, access to employment is linked to decent work conditions, in contrast to national trade policies, which are more often concerned with encouraging women to access employment (with some exceptions, highlighted in sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3 below). In fact, many RTAs contain labour chapters that include such provisions.²⁴

Similarly, some Aid for Trade programmes follow this trend and include objectives to eliminate gender discrimination in employment that go beyond adopting supportive measures to integrate women in the economy.²⁴

7.2.2 Why fostering access to poverty-reducing jobs is not enough

As outlined above, women are better paid in trade-related sectors as they move from informal to formal employment, but they are often employed in the lowest level of positions (WTO and World Bank 2020). This is the case in many export-oriented and trade-related sectors, such as tourism, healthcare and the air transport industry (to name but a few). Statistics reveal that in these three sectors, taken as examples, women are often relegated to low-level, low-skilled and therefore low-paid jobs.

In the tourism sector, about 54 per cent of workers are women, and they are under-represented in senior management. While employment in tourism is low-paid for both genders, women earn 10–15 per cent less than men for equivalent work (UNWTO 2019).

²⁴ For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 2.

Similarly in the healthcare sector, 70 per cent of formal health and social workers worldwide are women, but they are concentrated in low-level and low-paid jobs. Globally, 90 per cent of nurses and midwives are women (WHO 2020). Women working in this sector earn 11 per cent less than men (in similar jobs and working similar hours). In the global healthcare sector and industry, women hold 25 per cent of senior leadership roles (senior management, board membership, executive positions) (Women in Global Health 2023).

Lastly, in the air transport industry, women rarely hold senior or high-skilled positions. Only 6 per cent of the world's commercial airline pilots are female (Ahn and Jakub 2020). According to the International Air Transport Association, the proportion of women holding C-level (high-level) roles in the industry is just 3 per cent (IATA 2022; Egnatia Aviation 2023). Most air traffic controllers are male: in the United States, about 17 per cent are female (RGN 2021). Thus, women remain concentrated in low-level jobs, such as flight attendants, airport cleaners and duty-free shop assistants.

Overall, while there is a strong economic demand for female workers in many trade-related sectors, especially in the post-COVID-19 world, women's economic contributions to these industries are often not valued to the same extent as men's, in the wages they earn or the positions they hold. Women also frequently engage in unsafe and discriminatory working environments. Responding to this situation, some trade policies address these gaps and other barriers that women face in accessing decent employment and working conditions.

► **7.3 Using trade policies to address gender gaps in employment**

7.3.1 Tackling female workers' participation gaps through skills enhancement and trade policy

While designing their domestic trade policies, many governments integrate capacity-building programmes or include training elements in their trade promotion measures targeting women (der Boghossian 2019a). While many, if not most, target women entrepreneurs and traders, they also focus

on female workers in export-oriented sectors. Some governments have established training programmes targeting female workers in export sectors or supporting their access to employment in trade.²⁵

Some RTAs also integrate gender-focused education provisions. About 15 per cent of RTAs notified to the WTO integrate education, training and capacity-building provisions targeting women, either directly or indirectly. In fact, RTAs essentially approach the gender education gap in a broader sense, rather than focusing solely on trade aspects.

Regional trade agreements include provisions that generally target women's lack of education and focus mainly on giving them equal access to education and encouraging their capacity-building and skills enhancement. Sometimes these provisions target women at work and in business. A few trade agreements include more targeted trade-related provisions that focus on women's capacity-building in specific sectors and areas, such as fisheries or agriculture.²⁶ Also, some RTAs include provisions on training women in financial literacy;²⁷ on improving women's technical and industrial employment through vocational and on-the-job training programmes;²⁸ on women's and girls' access to education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that could yield high-paying jobs for women;²⁹ and on strengthening women's digital skills.³⁰ Also, interestingly, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) States and Indonesia aims to protect the welfare of women through education and training on sustainability.³¹ Some

25 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 3.

26 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 3.

27 [Argentina–Chile FTA](#), Ch. 15: “Género y comercio”, Art. 15.3: “Actividades de cooperación”. [Brazil–Chile FTA](#), Ch. 18: “Comercio y género”, Art. 18.3: “Cooperation Activities”.

28 [Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa \(COMESA\)](#), Ch. 24: “Women in Development and Business”, Art. 155: “Role of Women in Business”; [Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community \(EAC\)](#), Ch. 22: “Enhancing the Role of Women in Socio-Economic Development”, Art. 122: “The Role of Women in Business”.

29 [United Kingdom–Australia FTA](#), Ch. 24: “Trade and Gender Equality”, Art. 24.2: “Trade and Gender Equality Cooperation Activities”. [Brazil–Chile FTA](#), Ch. 18: “Comercio y género”, Art. 18.3: “Cooperation Activities”; [United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA](#), Ch. 25: “Trade and Gender Equality”, Art. 25.5: “Cooperation”.

30 [United Kingdom–Australia FTA](#), Ch. 24: “Trade and Gender Equality”, Art. 24.2: “Trade and Gender Equality Cooperation Activities”; [United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA](#), Ch. 24: “Small and Medium Enterprises”, Art. 24.3: “Cooperation to Increase Trade and Investment Opportunities for SMEs”.

31 [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#), Ch. 8: “Trade and Sustainable Development”, Art. 8.5: “Social Development”.

RTAs also mention CEDAW, which includes provisions on equal access to education (Art. 10).³² Lastly, a few RTA provisions target education for women on health issues, a key imperative for women's decent work.³³

Looking at Aid for Trade programmes, very few focus on women's skills enhancement.³⁴ In fact, while most national trade policies and Aid for Trade programmes do include training and skills enhancement schemes for women, they mostly target female entrepreneurs and farmers, their knowledge gap of trade rules or their digital skills. They seldom address issues related to female workers in export-oriented sectors.

Of course, by supporting women entrepreneurs, these policies also indirectly support female workers, as they constitute much of the workforce of companies owned and led by women, including in the informal economy (as highlighted in section 7.1 above).

7.3.2 Addressing gender issues related to labour conditions in trade

As described above, integrating women in formal employment and in export-related sectors reinforces countries' trade growth, development and poverty reduction, and boosts GDP expansion. However, while employed, female workers face complex labour conditions which may prevent them from remaining in their formal jobs. This is why some governments use their national trade policies to improve working conditions for women in export sectors, with the objective of removing the discrimination they face in employment or in pay.³⁵

About 15 per cent of RTAs notified to the WTO include provisions focusing on improving women's labour conditions, overall and in export-led sectors, as described in section 7.2 above. The provisions mostly establish a principle of non-discrimination regarding access to employment, linking it to equal treatment in the workplace and decent work for both men and women.

32 EU–Central America Association Agreement, Part III: “Cooperation”, Title III: “Social Development and Social Cohesion”, Art. 47: “Gender”. Canada–Israel FTA, Art. 13.2: “International Agreements”; Canada–Chile FTA, Art. N bis 02: “International Agreements”. United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA, Art. 25.4: “International Instruments”.

33 EU–Central America Association Agreement, Part III: “Cooperation”, Title III: “Social Development and Social Cohesion”, Art. 44: “Public Health”.

34 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 3.

35 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 4.

In their RTAs, most State parties have reaffirmed their commitment to international instruments focusing on decent work, and it is becoming common practice for parties to integrate ILO Conventions that protect women at work in their trade agreements. Moreover, many RTAs reference the ILO Decent Work Agenda, which has a strong gender focus,³⁶ and provide for cooperation activities on trade-related aspects of the ILO agenda. Similarly, 70 per cent of RTAs integrate labour provisions and refer to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which includes commitments to the “elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation” and to provide “a safe and healthy working environment”.³⁷

Also, interestingly, some provisions contained in RTAs and addressing working conditions of women can be very specific. For example, such provisions may focus on the adoption of employment policies creating better jobs and working conditions in the informal sector,³⁸ consider protective measures in employment of pregnant women or recent mothers,³⁹ establish “job-protected leave for birth or child adoption”,⁴⁰ or recognize and value women’s unpaid care work through policies supporting flexible working arrangements or access to affordable childcare.⁴¹

Access to healthcare is also a key aspect in fostering women’s decent work, especially when it comes to maternity and childcare issues. As detailed in the Appendix, some national trade policies are accompanied by social programmes supporting lactating mothers at work or introducing nutrition programmes in export-led firms.

36 In the context of the [Decent Work Agenda](#), the former ILO Director-General Juan Somavia declared that “the primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”.

37 [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#).

38 [Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part](#), Title V: “Other Cooperation Policies”, Ch. 15: “Employment, Social Policy and Equal Opportunities”, Art. 85(b).

39 [Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part](#), Annex 31: “Transport of goods by road”, Section 2: “Posting of drivers”, Art. 4: “Terms and conditions of employment”.

40 [United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement](#), Ch. 23: “Labour”, Art. 23.9: “Discrimination in the Workplace”; [Iceland–Liechtenstein–Norway–United Kingdom FTA](#), Ch. 13: “Trade and Sustainable Development”, Section 13.2: “Trade and Labour”, Art. 13.14: “Non-Discrimination and Equality in the Workplace”; [United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA](#), Ch. 23: “Trade and Labour”, Art. 23.8: “Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality in the Workplace”.

41 [United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA](#), Ch. 23: “Trade and Labour”, Art. 23.8: “Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality in the Workplace”.

According to the *World Medical Journal*, “gender is a social determinant of health and health problems” (WMJ 2019), while a “lack of gender representation and diversity within the medical profession may lead to female patients and their children not having equitable access to health care” (WMA 2021). Many women and girls fail to access healthcare because of gender-based bias. Similarly, in many countries, social norms make it difficult for female doctors and nurses to practise their profession. A vast majority of women work in the informal sector without the protection of health insurance, maternity benefits or paid sick leave. Even some women working in formal sectors, mostly in part-time jobs or as foreign immigrants, may have no or restricted access to health cover and maternity benefits. Some RTAs include various provisions on healthcare, ranging from maternity benefits to childcare and compulsory access to medical insurance (Bahri 2020).

Lastly, and interestingly, in one agreement State parties commit to “sharing data insights, lessons, and best practices for analysing gender segregation in the labour market, and on the working conditions of women in export-oriented industries and sectors impacted by trade”.⁴²

7.3.3 Reducing pay discrimination through trade policy

In employment, globally, pay discrimination between men and women exists and persists (ILO 2022a). In fact, it is one of the two most persistent gender gaps in employment (World Bank 2022a), so removing gender barriers to equal wages, including in export sectors, is one of the key objectives in trade policy action for governments when supporting women.

First, some national trade policies foster women’s participation in male-dominated sectors, often to address workforce shortages in trade-related and export-led industries that are driving countries’ economies and attracting foreign investment. Such jobs provide women with higher pay (they can earn two or three times more than in the traditional sectors in which they are concentrated), where they require specialized skills and therefore occupy higher-level positions. Second, some of these policies focus on reducing pay discrimination.⁴³

42 United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA, Ch. 25: “Trade and Gender Equality”, Art. 25.5: “Cooperation”.

43 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 5.

A few RTAs also include provisions specifically affirming equal pay between men and women⁴⁴ and protecting women against pay discrimination.⁴⁵ Some provisions are highly specific and outline ways to implement equal pay, such as “developing analytical and enforcement tools related to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value”,⁴⁶ or give an extended definition of the gender pay gap.⁴⁶

Aid for Trade programmes do not generally focus on pay discrimination, although there are some exceptions.⁴⁷

7.3.4 How trade policy is starting to address gender-based violence in trade

By addressing the poor working conditions of female workers, trade policies build a first foundation to tackle violence against women; they can make women’s work environment more secure and put them in less vulnerable employment conditions. Such policies can indeed constitute preventive measures against gender-based violence in the workplace.

Gender-based violence exists in trade-related sectors. In some Latin American countries, female workers in the banana or pineapple industry, which are heavily export-oriented, face sexual harassment in the workplace, which is often justified by local and industry culture. Also, women as internet users are increasingly targeted in cybercrime incidents, including cyber harassment. For example, in India, according to National Crime Records, the number of cybercrime incidents in 2021 had gone up by 18.4 per cent since 2019, and the number of such cases against women had increased by 28 per cent (Sawhney 2022). Women are increasingly threatened over

44 United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, Ch. 23: “Labour”, Art. 23.12: “Cooperation”. [Agreement on the European Economic Area](#), Part V: “Horizontal Provisions Relevant to the Four Freedoms”, Ch. 1: “Social Policy”, Art. 69; Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Part III: “Union Policies and Internal Actions”, Title X: “Social Policy”, Art. 157 (ex Art. 141 TEC); United Kingdom–Australia FTA, Ch. 21: “Labour”, Art. 21.8: “Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality in the Workplace”; [Taiwan, China–Nicaragua Agreement](#), Part 7: “Labor and Environment”, Ch. 18: “Labor”, Annex 18.01, Art. 18.02: “Enforcement of Labor Laws”; United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA, Ch. 23: “Trade and Labour”, Art. 23.8: “Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality in the Workplace”.

45 United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement, Ch. 23: “Labour”.

46 Agreement on the European Economic Area, Part V: “Horizontal Provisions Relevant to the Four Freedoms”, Ch. 1: “Social Policy”, Art. 69; Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Part III: “Union Policies and Internal Actions”, Title X: “Social Policy”, Art. 157 (ex Art. 141 TEC).

47 For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 5.

the internet, especially in financial data loss and violations of security and privacy, which can affect their income and employment. In fact, cyber insecurity can prevent women from using new technology and thereby cause them to miss opportunities to gain skills that could support them in accessing higher-paid jobs.

Trade policies are starting to address these issues, but they remain few. A limited number of RTAs focus on gender-based violence. Some provisions are very broad and aim to shape programmes addressing violence against women, often focusing on prevention. Others link efforts to build good working conditions with the elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Also, some RTAs explicitly refer to CEDAW, an international instrument that can support the elimination of gender-based violence, and State parties have reaffirmed or recalled their commitments under CEDAW. In June 2019 the ILO adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention (Convention 190), which came into effect two years later, in June 2021. It is the first Convention to establish international commitments preventing and responding to violence and harassment in employment. Some RTAs have actually made references to Convention 190.⁴⁸

No specific national trade policy addresses violence against women. The issue is included mostly in countries' development strategies or action plans, which also apply to trade-related sectors.⁴⁹

Aid for Trade strategies have started to focus on violence against women (WTO and OECD 2022). Some countries have included objectives to eliminate gender-based violence, including child marriage, in their Aid for Trade initiatives, as it constitutes an obstacle to their development goals. While programmes often focus on addressing violence faced by female cross-border traders, some include activities to promote "women's rights in trade" and at the same time reduce their "vulnerability to violence and exploitation" (Netherlands). Other Aid for Trade initiatives require that projects include activities to address gender-based violence, with the particular aim of making jobs free from sexual harassment (Australia).

Private companies heavily integrated in global value chains are also addressing this issue, sometimes in direct collaboration with workers. One transnational company in the garment sector has been working with trade unions at the local level, and with suppliers in the value chain, to raise awareness of gender-based violence in the industry. It has also provided workers and management with specific training tools to enable employees

⁴⁸ ILO [Labour Provisions in Trade Agreements Hub](#).

⁴⁹ For examples, see Appendix, Policy table, Part 6.

to resolve issues. The company is currently working on designing joint global guidelines for its supply chain, clearly outlining how suppliers should act when it comes to creating a safe workplace environment and ending gender-based violence and harassment (H&M Group 2016).

In the Latin American banana industry, COLSIBA, the Regional Coordinating Body of Latin American Banana and Agro-industrial Product Unions, has organized campaigns promoting the elimination of gender-based violence in the sector and was successful, for example, in getting a big multinational corporation to introduce the first sexual harassment policy in the Latin American banana sector.

These private sector initiatives, combined with government trade policies, could play an essential part in limiting, if not eradicating, gender-based violence, as both public and private sectors can reinforce each other's initiatives.

7.3.5 Using trade policies to foster women's participation in sectors where they are less represented

With a few exceptions, most trade policies include measures that support women in export-oriented sectors where they are already relatively well represented. Very few look to foster women's participation in industries where they are less represented and could earn more, thus reducing pay discrimination. For instance, as described in section 7.3.3 above, a few policies include programmes to integrate women into male-dominated sectors. Some policies also look to increase the number of female workers in sectors that drive their economy and are non-traditional industries for women, such as the business process outsourcing (BPO) or information and communications technology (ICT) sectors (der Boghossian 2023c).

Also, a few RTAs include provisions that support women and girls' education in STEM subjects, with the objective of improving their access, participation, leadership and education in these fields,⁵⁰ as well as in innovation, e-commerce and other high-income economic areas.⁵¹ Such provisions could open up opportunities for better employment and better pay for women in new areas of work, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and cybersecurity, where there is globally a workforce shortage of more than 3 million professionals (Xie 2023). The evidence shows that STEM workers earn more than double

50 United Kingdom–New Zealand FTA, signed in 2022.

51 Chile–Paraguay FTA, signed in 2021.

the pay of non-STEM workers (Özdemir 2023). However, women currently account for only two out of every ten cybersecurity professionals (World Bank 2022b).

► 7.4 Using flexibilities and policy space in WTO agreements and development decisions to support women's decent work

7.4.1 Examples of flexibilities in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture: The “green” and “development” boxes

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture, which came into force at the time of the establishment of the WTO in 1995, “allow[s] governments to support their rural economies, but preferably through policies that cause less distortion to trade. It also allows some flexibility in the way commitments are implemented” (WTO n.d.).

This flexibility is regulated by the Agreement on Agriculture, which includes three types of subsidy or (in WTO jargon) “boxes”.⁵² Annex 2 of the agreement⁵³ includes a provision that stipulates that domestic subsidies

52 The WTO refers to agricultural subsidies as “boxes”, which are colour-coded (amber, blue or green) depending on how much they distort trade. WTO legal texts – [Marrakesh Agreement](#).

53 WTO, [Agreement on Agriculture](#), Annex 2: “Domestic Support – the Basis for Exemption from the Reduction Commitments”.

qualify as “green box” subsidies if they do not “distort trade, or at most cause minimal distortion”.⁵⁴

Some governments have used their “green box” flexibility to design training programmes for small producers in agriculture which include gender bias issues, or for female farmers with the objective of increasing productivity and production (der Boghossian 2019a). Others have established various types of agricultural support programme, using their “green box” for training and educating women in rural areas to assist them in land development (der Boghossian 2019a).

Also, the Agreement on Agriculture includes other flexibilities that could be used for the benefit of female farmers if implemented using a gender lens, depending on a country’s needs at the national level. Article 6.2 of the agreement, also named the “Development Box”, allows developing countries to provide input subsidies (following certain criteria) to their “low-income or resource-poor producers”. Evidence shows that female farmers lack access to productive resources often because they lack capital to buy them (Van De Velde, Stanley and Stickler 2020). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, if women had access to productive resources at the same level as men do, they would increase their production by 20–30 per cent (FAO 2011; Van De Velde et al. 2020). Therefore, Article 6.2 could work for female farm-workers, who precisely lack support in accessing such resources. In 2016, The Gambia donated bags of fertilizer to women, on a very limited scale and in response to an emergency situation (WTO 2018, 53). This example shows that WTO rules could be translated into national policies for the benefit of women, depending on the country’s needs at the national level.

7.4.2 Multilateral development decisions in support of women’s economic empowerment: The LDC services waiver and “special and differential treatment” provisions

In recent decades, the WTO has adopted decisions to support developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) in integrating into the global

⁵⁴ “They have to be government-funded (not by charging consumers higher prices) and must not involve price support. They tend to be programmes that are not targeted at particular products, and include direct income supports for farmers that are not related to (are ‘decoupled’ from) current production levels or prices. They also include environmental protection and regional development programmes. ‘Green box’ subsidies are therefore allowed without limits, provided they comply with the policy-specific criteria set out in Annex 2.” WTO, *Domestic Support in Agriculture: The Boxes*.

market, with the aim of using trade as a development and poverty reduction agent. One such initiative is the LDC Services Waiver. Adopted at the 2011 WTO Ministerial Conference,⁵⁵ it allows governments to “grant preferential treatment to services and service suppliers from LDC members”.⁵⁶ The waiver’s objective is to improve LDCs participation in the global services market. So far, 51 WTO Members have granted such preferences to LDCs.

Such flexibility and preference could be to the advantage of female workers because they tend to be more involved in the services sector. In low- and lower-middle-income countries, women make up about 40 per cent of workers in the services sector workforce (WTO and World Bank 2020), while in low-income countries only, the share of female employment in services is 30 per cent (World Bank data, modelled on ILO estimates 2019). Therefore, preferences granted to LDCs in this sector could benefit women and boost their employment, bringing them better-quality jobs in the services sector. It could also help women to enter formal employment as, in LDCs, they are heavily represented in informal employment, holding vulnerable jobs (ILO 2022b).

The WTO agreements contain provisions that grant special rights to LDCs and developing countries. These “special and differential treatment” provisions can offer these Members longer time periods to implement their WTO commitments, allow them to adopt measures to increase their trading opportunities, or give them support to help build capacity to carry out WTO work, address potential disputes and implement technical standards. For example, the GATT 1994 includes 25 special and differential provisions, contained in Articles XVIII, XXXVI, XXXVII and XXXVIII.⁵⁷ In particular, the provisions aimed at increasing the trade opportunities of developing countries,⁵⁸ especially those that “promote the establishment of a particular industry with a view to raising the general standard of living”, could potentially be implemented with a gender approach, targeting women in certain economic sectors or fostering women’s participation in new industry areas, where wages could be higher. Also, technical assistance provisions could support governments’ efforts to integrate gender issues in their trade policies. Furthermore, the WTO Secretariat, based on Members’ requests,⁵⁹

55 WTO, [Preferential Treatment to Services and Service Suppliers of Least-Developed Countries](#), WT/L/847.

56 WTO, [Services Negotiations: Trade in Services and LDCs](#).

57 WTO, [Special and Differential Treatment Provisions in WTO Agreements and Decisions](#), WT/COMTD/W/271.

58 Arts XXXVI.2, XXXVI.3, XXXVI.4, XXXVI.5, XXXVII.1(a), XXXVII.4, XXXVIII.2(c) and (e).

59 Since 2018 the Biennial Technical Assistance and Training Plans have included requests from WTO Members to establish and conduct such trainings on the topic.

has set up a dedicated training programme with this objective (see section 7.5 below). Lastly, supporting developing countries in implementing technical standards, the work of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) on sanitary and phytosanitary standards includes a gender component that supports female farmers in complying with these standards and gaining access to export markets.

► 7.5 Gender equality, trade policymaking and the WTO

Gender equality is part of the WTO's work programme, and a group of WTO Members (constituting 85 per cent of the membership) institutionalized the issue in the Organization by establishing the Informal Working Group in Trade and Gender (IWG) in September 2020 (der Boghossian 2023c).⁶⁰ As part of its four work pillars, IWG members work on sharing their trade policy experience, practices and methodologies on women's economic empowerment. They build each other's trade policymaking capacity, exploring issues such as female entrepreneurship, e-commerce, the impact of FTAs on women, COVID-19 mitigation measures focusing on women, and policies of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with a focus on female small entrepreneurs.⁶¹ The IWG also focuses on understanding how to collect sex-disaggregated data in trade, which is key to informing trade policymaking; and on how to better integrate gender issues in Aid for Trade programmes and to mainstream gender issues in the daily work of the WTO and in the work of regular WTO committees, with the emphasis mainly on policymaking.

At the multilateral level, WTO Members have adopted the *12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) Outcome Document*, in which they recognize the importance of women's economic empowerment and the work of the WTO in this field.⁶²

Operating in parallel, the WTO Trade and Gender Office supports Members in this work, seeking to build Members' policymaking capacity and to integrate

60 WTO, *Interim Report Following the Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment*, WT/L/1095/Rev.1.

61 *Progress Report on WTO Members and Observers Technical Work on Women's Economic Empowerment*, 9 November 2021, INF/TGE/R/1.

62 WTO, *12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) Outcome Document*, 22 June 2022, WT/MIN(22)/24, WT/L/1135, Para. 13.

gender issues in their trade policies.⁶³ To this end, it has established dedicated training programmes for government representatives and is creating gender-responsive trade policy tools. These initiatives aim to assist WTO Members in data collection, monitoring, reporting and the promotion of inclusive trade policies. The WTO Secretariat also supports Members' work on Aid for Trade, gathering evidence on how gender is integrated in Aid for Trade programmes and developing specific indicators to support Members in including gender issues in them. The Trade and Gender Office has also mapped out the gender provisions in RTAs to support Members' negotiations, providing existing models of provisions they could use in the design of their RTAs. Similarly, the Office is working on categorizing all the national trade policies adopted by WTO Members to support their policymaking work.

► 7.6 Conclusion

Overall, in recent decades, governments have increasingly integrated gender issues in their trade policies, recognizing the link between trade and women's economic empowerment and acknowledging female workers' contribution to the economy, development growth and poverty reduction. For this purpose, they have used a wide variety of policy instruments, ranging from adopting trade policies domestically, negotiating gender provisions in their RTAs, and designing Aid for Trade programmes that include a targeted gender focus, to transferring some of the flexibilities in WTO agreements into their national trade policies and adopting measures that support women. Often developed and adopted in "policy silos", these policies, if combined, could be more effective and impactful in supporting women's entry into the formal workforce and addressing issues related to decent work and working conditions for them. For policy efficiency, governments could apply this "blended approach" to gender-responsive trade policymaking.

Additionally, governments could potentially explore how to focus their national trade policies and Aid for Trade programmes more directly on

⁶³ The Trade and Gender Office was established in the WTO Secretariat in May 2022, but the Secretariat's work on trade and gender started in 2016, when the former Director-General Roberto Azevêdo became an International Gender Champion. He commissioned an internal study to understand the links between trade, gender and development, and in 2017 appointed a trade and gender focal point in the WTO Secretariat to lead the work in the Organization. In 2017 the Secretariat adopted its first Action Plan on Trade and Gender 2017–19 and is now working on the basis of its second Action Plan for 2021–26.

female workers and their access to skills. This is especially important in the current context of future automation in trade-related sectors where women work the most (such as the garment industry), threatening their jobs and livelihood. For this purpose, they could use the gender provisions contained in their RTAs, which do focus on these issues, referencing ILO Conventions and its Decent Work Programme, as well as CEDAW; these could be translated into national trade policies using the “blended approach” described above.

While these policies focus mainly on female entrepreneurs and farmers, they also include measures and provisions that support women’s employment in export-oriented sectors. These policy trends are very clearly established. Another policy trend shows that governments, at the same time as devising support measures to foster female employment in exporting firms, integrate socially oriented issues in order to secure these positions for women and ensure that they remain in their jobs. They may, for instance, integrate social issues in their trade policy or adopt other policies that complement trade policies promoting female workers. These social measures range from providing female employees in export-led sectors with adequate working conditions and supporting their equal access to training and education, to reducing pay discrimination and addressing gender-based violence in the workplace.

These various trends show that governments intend to safeguard women’s working conditions in exporting firms and implicitly recognize, in some sense, that women’s contribution to the economy and poverty reduction could be impaired without such social support. In this way, trade policies are aligned with SDG 8, especially targets 8.3 and 8.5, promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with full and productive employment and decent work for all.⁶⁴ Given the cross-cutting nature of gender issues, this is the best recipe to successfully realize the impact of these policies and to realize SDG 5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”), which is, in reality, at the centre of all development goals.

64 Target 8.3: “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.”

Target 8.5: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.”

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► Appendix. Policy table: Examples of gender-responsive trade policies

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
PART 1. WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT RATE, WOMEN'S INTEGRATION IN THE WORKFORCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH			
Data collection	Women's participation in the economy	Barbados	In 2021 the labour force participation rate was 65.3 per cent for men and 57.5 per cent for women, of which more than 48 per cent were employed workers. But in some sectors, such as health, finance, insurance and food services, employed women outnumbered male workers, and sometimes more than half of the job holders were female. ¹
National policy	Gender mainstreaming/ link between gender, social and economic development	Argentina	Argentina's "policy philosophy" shows how economic, social and gender issues are intertwined. The Government outlined that: a productive system that fails to use women's talents loses opportunities for growth, innovation and improved productivity. Hence, the Government understands that productive policies must necessarily include incentives to increase equal opportunities in the labour market and to reduce stereotypes (through awareness-raising campaigns) that currently obstruct women's access to strategic branches for development. Greater diversity within these branches will help to create a wider range of ideas and approaches in enterprises, increasing the likelihood of innovation and business growth. In this regard, Argentina aims to create guidelines for the introduction of cultural changes in the operation of enterprises, by encouraging greater opportunities for women, eliminating gaps in equality and creating environments that prevent and penalize any kind of gender-based discrimination or violence. ²
National policy	Gender mainstreaming/ link between gender, social and economic development	Dominican Republic	The Dominican Republic highlights that the rationale underpinning its National Multi-Year Public Sector Plan is to ensure that policies take into account their impact on people's quality of life to improve gender equity (among others). ³ The Government stipulated that "ultimately, quality of life has become one of the Dominican Republic's core development objectives".

1 2021 Employment by Industry and Sex. Data produced by the Barbados Statistical Service; WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Barbados*, WT/TPR/M/431/Add.1, 3, 21 February 2023.

2 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Argentina*, WT/TPR/G/412, 20, 11 August 2021.

3 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Dominican Republic*, WT/TPR/G/435, 10, 24–26 January 2023.

►Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
Economic strategy	Women's participation in the economy	Peru	Peru's per capita income has increased while gender inequality has decreased, as measured by the gender inequality index. The massive entry of women into the Peruvian workforce, largely caused by a shift in the role of women in society, has driven economic growth and human development in the country. ⁴
National trade policy (foreign trade strategy)	Link between trade growth and women's economic empowerment	Dominican Republic	The Government highlights that its integration into international markets is dependent on women's empowerment and leadership in trade. ⁵ In its foreign trade strategy, it outlines its goals to develop women's trade culture in order to lift the country's overall exports and "turn women into drivers of growth and poverty reduction". ⁶
National trade policy	Link between trade growth and women's economic empowerment	Solomon Islands	Investing in women's productive potential is a crucial step towards enhancing its trade performance. ⁷
National Trade Policy and National Export Promotion Strategy (2019–2023)	Link between trade growth and women's economic empowerment	Zimbabwe	Between 2011 and 2017 the importance of trade in the Zimbabwean economy fell from 89.5 per cent to 50 per cent. To remedy this trend, the Government included gender mainstreaming in its National Trade Policy and National Export Promotion Strategy (2019–2023) by extending preferential access to finance, providing trade support in general for women and delivering trade information for women and young people. ⁸
PART 2. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT THROUGH TRADE; FILLING WORKFORCE SHORTAGES IN EXPORT SECTORS			
National policy	Industry policy (Industrial Transformation Agenda)	Ghana	Promotes gender inclusion as a key objective. ⁹
National policy	Foreign investment strategy	Nigeria	Through the creation of vocational and technical training centres, the Government fostered women's participation in the construction sector, a male-dominated sector, to develop their skills and fill a workforce shortage in the sector. ¹⁰

4 Statement made by the WTO Ambassador of Peru at the 26 February 2021 meeting of the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender.

5 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Dominican Republic*, WT/TPR/S/435, 8, 24–26 January 2023.

6 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Dominican Republic*, WT/TPR/S/435, 39, 24–26 January 2023.

7 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Solomon Islands*, WT/TPR/G/349, 5, 13–15 December 2016.

8 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Zimbabwe*, WT/TPR/M/398/Add.1, 47, 1 December 2020.

9 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Ghana*, WT/TPR/427, 12, 17 May 2022.

10 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Nigeria*, WT/TPR/G/356, 11, 7 May 2017.

►Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
National policy	Tourism policy	Djibouti	Between 2001 and 2010 the policy aimed to boost women's participation in economic development, which employs mostly women. ¹¹ Developing the tourism industry in Djibouti remains a key objective of the Government, with the aim to train skilled and unskilled workers, among them women, to become integrated in the sector, to gain jobs and to boost the country's economy. ¹²
FTA	Access to employment	United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA)	Chapter 23 of the USMCA promotes the elimination of discrimination in employment, and equality for women in the workplace. The agreement also provides that policies should be implemented to “protect workers against employment discrimination on the basis of sex, pregnancy, and caregiving responsibilities” among others.
FTA	Access to employment	UK–Australia	In this FTA, the State parties commit to “non-discrimination in employment, occupations, and places of work, and to take measures to advance anti-discrimination practices and address discriminatory practices, including those related to workplace sexual harassment, gender-based violence, gender pay gaps, and flexible working arrangements, as well as improve women's access to decent work”. ¹³
Aid for Trade	Eliminating employment discrimination	Australia	Supports initiatives that eliminate discrimination against women and girls, overall and more specifically in employment. Australia also supports developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region in designing policies and practices and in developing a work culture that is more favourable to women and their safety, incomes and career progress. ¹⁴ One of Australia's Aid for Trade programmes in Fiji targets obstacles that women face related to “time poverty” which are often ignored in trade policy. Through its Aid for Trade plans, Australia also invests in the ILO Better Work programme, which helps improve labour standards and reduce gender discrimination in garment factories in developing countries ¹⁵ with respect to sexual harassment and pay discrimination, and to encourage women's leadership and participation in decision-making. ¹⁶

11 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Djibouti*, WT/TPR/S/305, 51, 52, 17 September 2014.

12 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Djibouti*, WT/TPR/G/430, 11, 7 September 2022.

13 UK–Australia FTA, Ch. 21: “Labour”, Art. 21.8: “Non-discrimination and gender equality in the workplace”.

14 WTO, “Australia's Investing in Women”, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

15 Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

16 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

► Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
Aid for Trade	Eliminating employment discrimination	EU	EU Aid for Trade Strategy includes the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda ¹⁷ and advocates for the EU's Aid for Trade to build its new FTAs to support labour rights and the Decent Work Agenda, through binding social and environmental provisions contained in the trade and sustainable development chapters. ¹⁸
Aid for Trade	Eliminating employment discrimination	Sweden	Sweden focuses its Aid for Trade programmes on female employment and occupation. Through its International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), it supports its partners in promoting non-discrimination in the workplace, both in the formal and informal sectors. Sida's global aid also contributes to the ILO's Women at Work initiative. ¹⁹
PART 3. ENHANCING WOMEN'S SKILLS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPORT SECTOR AS WORKERS			
National policy	Promoting female formal employment in trade/capacity-building	Mauritius	With its "Back to Work" programme adopted in 2014, Mauritius provided training opportunities for women who wished to rejoin the labour force in 15 occupations, including export sectors. ²⁰
National and sectoral policy	Textile and apparel/ Promoting female formal employment in trade/capacity-building	Pakistan	Pakistan's economic and trade strategy aims to increase women's labour force participation, through skills development, targeting women coming from all social backgrounds in the country. ²¹ In its Textile and Apparel Policy 2020–25, Pakistan launched a "mass level training in industrial stitching for women", ²² Pakistan also created Women Empowerment Centres, where free training sessions are delivered to widows, orphans and poor girls in various skills, such as drafting, cutting, sewing, knitting, and hand and machine embroidery. ²³ These plans correlate with the Ministry of Commerce export projections and goals in the textile and apparel sectors for 2021–25. ²⁴

17 Standards and rights at work, employment creation and enterprise development, and social protection and social dialogue.

18 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

19 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

20 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Mauritius*, WT/TPR/M/304/Add.1, 10. 11 February 2015.

21 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Pakistan*, WT/TPR/M/424/Add.1, 31. 7 June 2022.

22 Pakistan, Ministry of Commerce, Textile Wing, *Textiles and Apparel Policy, 2020–25*, 7: "Export Projections", 23, section 4: "Human Resource Development".

23 Government of Pakistan, "Women Empowerment Centre".

24 The Government intends to grow from US\$20 billion of exports of textiles products in 2021–22 to US\$40 billion in 2024–25. For this purpose, the Government needs skilled workers and is investing in women.

►Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
FTA	Promoting female formal employment in trade/capacity-building	China-Peru	The China-Peru FTA includes a training provision for professionals in agriculture, including women, focusing on the use of new technologies for enhanced productivity and improved value-added product competitiveness. ²⁵
Aid for Trade	Promoting female formal employment in trade/capacity-building	Australia	Australia's Aid for Trade initiatives aim to increase women's access to training opportunities in order to create new employment opportunities in non-traditional and high-paid sectors for women, such as the green energy industry and digital trade. ²⁶
Aid for Trade	Promoting female formal employment in trade/capacity-building	Germany	Germany's Aid for Trade supports the Government's "Employment and Skills for Development in Africa" (E4D) initiative to improve employment situations in seven African countries. Six projects under E4D focus on women and one key priority is the promotion of green jobs. ²⁷
PART 4. ADDRESSING WOMEN'S LABOUR CONDITIONS IN EXPORT SECTORS			
National policy	Textiles and apparel sector/ Labour conditions/ Promoting women's formal employment in export sectors	Pakistan	Pakistan's Textiles and Apparel Policy 2020–25 contains measures to foster women's employment in the sector. Therefore, as part of its policy, the Ministry of Commerce is reviewing/reforming its labour laws to allow women to work in three shifts, to support women's employment and human resources development in this export-led sector. ²⁸

²⁵ China-Peru FTA, Art. 164: "Agricultural cooperation".

²⁶ Joint OECD-WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

²⁷ Joint OECD-WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

²⁸ Pakistan, Ministry of Commerce, Textile Wing, [Textiles and Apparel Policy, 2020–25](#), 7: "Export Projections"; section 4, 23: "Human Resource Development".

► Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
National policy	Business process outsourcing (BPO) sector/ Labour conditions/ Promoting women's formal employment in export sectors	Philippines	In the Philippines, the ICT and BPO sectors employ many women. The Government's trade policy has granted the ICT sector various incentives (ICT buildings qualify as vertical economic zones) to support its development and secure jobs for women. This has led to employment gains. The Philippines labour law that prevented women from working night shifts was abolished to foster female employment (BPO employees have to deal with customers located in different time zones). In addition to these measures, the Philippines required that companies provide their female workers with sleeping/resting space, and requested that they organize mandatory transport services for those working at night, that they cater for working mothers and provide them with breastfeeding spaces, and that they include breastfeeding programmes as part of the companies' development plans. ²⁹
National policy	Promoting female formal employment in trade/Fostering paid work over unpaid labour	Japan	To foster women's participation in its economy, with the objective of fulfilling its general workforce shortages, Japan opened its social services sectors to foreign housekeepers, to meet their needs for housework assistance, and to promote medium- to long-term economic growth through their involvement in employment. As a result, Japan has transformed unpaid care and domestic work into paid work. ³⁰
PART 5. REDUCING PAY DISCRIMINATION			
National policy	Transport/ Integrating female workers in male-dominated sectors	France	In the transport sector, women account for only 5 per cent of truck drivers. To bring more women into the profession and alleviate a labour shortage, the national recruitment agency, in partnership with training organizations, launched "Acting for Women" in 2020, a training programme for women only to help them obtain heavy goods vehicle driving licences. ³¹

²⁹ WTO, *Trade Policy Review: The Philippines*, WT/TPR/M/368/Add.1, 114, 28 May 2018.

³⁰ WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Japan*, WT/TPR/M/310/Add.1, question and answer session, 122.

³¹ "Transports routiers: des femmes pour sauver le manque de chauffeurs", news report from *TV5 Monde Info*, 23 April 2022.

►Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
National policy	Mining/ Integrating female workers in male-dominated sectors	Zambia	Women are making their way in the mining industry, occupying more and more high-level positions and skilled and highly technical jobs. Women now work as lawyers, engineers, department heads, managers, laboratory technicians, truck drivers, control-room operatives and blast supervisors. A combination of new technologies, university education and policies is the reason for this shift. ³² Of course, women's participation in the sector remains low, ³³ but a shift in the industry has begun. One of the objectives of Zambia's National Mineral Resources Development Policy (2022–2027) is to mainstream gender in the mining sector and include more women in the value chain (among other vulnerable groups). ³⁴
National policy	Pay discrimination	Switzerland	In 2020, aiming to eliminate gender-based salary discrimination, the reformed 1995 Swiss law on gender equality ³⁵ required that all firms with more than 100 workers conduct independent gender equality audits focusing on pay gaps. ³⁶ Also, in its procurement policy, the Government added requirements that only companies that guarantee equal pay for women and men could be awarded public contracts. To ensure that equal pay is adequately implemented, implementation investigations are conducted, obliging companies that are at fault to review their practices. In some firms, this has resulted in salary increases for female workers. ³⁷
National policy	Pay discrimination	United Arab Emirates	In the United Arab Emirates, the law has established a principle of equal pay between men and women in all economic sectors (public and private), including trade-related areas. The Government has developed implementation processes and carried out controls to ensure that the law is enforced and work is carried out without gender discrimination. ³⁸

32 "First Lady of Zambia Calls for More Women in Mining", *Times of Zambia*, 22 July 2015.

33 ILO, "Zambia: Preliminary Analysis of ILO Mining Employment Data by Sex", 15 March 2022.

34 Maimbolwa Mulikelela, "A Glance into the 2022 National Mineral Resources Development Policy by Sydney Mwamba", *Zambia Monitor*, 13 December 2022.

35 Switzerland, *Federal Act of 24 March 1995 on Gender Equality*, RS 151.1.

36 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: Switzerland and Liechtenstein*, WT/TPR/S/425, 26, 23 March 2022.

37 Anoush der Boghossian, "Trade Policies Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment: Trends in WTO Members' Staff", WTO Working Paper ERS-2019-07, 2019.

38 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: United Arab Emirates*, WT/TPR/S/423, 14, 15 February 2022.

► Appendix (cont'd)

Type of trade policy	Policy area/focus	Country, region or customs territory	Description
National policy and data collection	Pay discrimination	New Zealand	In 2022 New Zealand conducted national research which demonstrated that larger gender wage gaps existed in exporting firms than in non-exporting companies. This led the Government to adopt its new equal pay law (Equal Pay Amendment Act 2020), which allowed employees and unions to issue a complaint against an employer in the event of systemic gender discrimination. ³⁹
Aid for Trade	Pay discrimination	Netherlands	The Netherlands' Aid for Trade programmes support projects on sustainable trade chains, including issues related to a living wage. ⁴⁰
Aid for Trade	Pay discrimination	Australia	As part of its Aid for Trade contribution to the ILO Better Work programme, Australia's investments help to reduce gender discrimination in garment factories in Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam, with a special focus on the gender wage gap. ⁴¹
PART 6. ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN TRADE			
National policy	Gender-based violence	Democratic Republic of the Congo	In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the elimination of violence against women is a development policymaking objective. ⁴²
National policy	Gender-based violence	Madagascar	Within its National Gender and Development Action Plan and its Emergency Plan, Madagascar's objective is to enhance women's empowerment and protect them against violence. ⁴³
National policy	Gender-based violence	Pakistan	Pakistan has created by law a national women's ombudsperson and adopted its Workplace Harassment Act and Protection of Women against Violence Act, to specifically ensure that there is no gender discrimination in employment. ⁴⁴

39 WTO, *Trade Policy Review: New Zealand*, WT/TPR/G/426 19, 6 April 2022.

40 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

41 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

42 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

43 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.

44 Joint OECD–WTO Aid for Trade Monitoring and Evaluation Exercise for the Global Review 2022, WT/COMTD/AFT/W/92, 2 May 2022.