

# MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS





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## ABOUT THE PAPER

This report presents recommendations to boost the participation of women in trade through free trade agreements.

Policymakers and trade negotiators will find a new toolkit to gauge gender responsiveness in their agreements. These lessons are based on a research assessment of 73 selected free trade agreements in force among 25 Commonwealth countries, and top-line recommendations and model clauses for countries to adapt.

The recommendations include embedding gender provisions in the preamble, leveraging corporate social responsibility, using reservations, waivers and general exceptions, and strengthening monitoring and dispute settlement mechanisms.

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# Foreword

Gender equality is fundamental for economic growth and sustainable development, and can be a force for change.

Trade policies are beginning to reflect this. The fact that 127 countries have joined the 2017 Buenos Aires World Trade Organization Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment is a testament to this.

There is still a long way to go. An examination of more than 70 free trade agreements across 25 countries reveals that only 40% explicitly mention gender. Almost 70% have a limited level of gender responsiveness.

Free trade agreements are building blocks for larger, more integrated markets, and they open up opportunities in global value chains. In reality, the opportunities differ for women and men.

This publication answers the call of policymakers and trade negotiators to provide a practical guide to create more inclusive accords. Gender mainstreaming ensures that these agreements promote more equitable opportunities rather than perpetuate inequalities.

It offers a tool to measure the gender responsiveness of existing agreements, share best practices and provide concrete recommendations with model clauses to negotiate future trade accords.

I would like to thank the Government of the United Kingdom for its longstanding support of ITC's work on women and trade over the past decade and the SheTrades Initiative, which made this publication possible.

The International Trade Centre will continue to do its part by helping policymakers make their trade strategies more inclusive, through specialized toolkits, such as this publication, as well as *SheTrades Outlook*, an online policy tool on women and trade.

Our hope is that this knowledge sparks thought, commitment and action within the trade and development community. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the beginning of the Decade of Action towards the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the impetus to act is clearer than ever.



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