

UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality
Task Force on Gender and Trade

Trade and Gender

Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries

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UNCTAD



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Preface

Few causes have been as persistently advocated in the history of the United Nations as that of gender equality. Equal rights between men and women are enshrined as a fundamental human right in the UN Charter, and many international conferences have been held to further that goal. The outcomes of these conferences have been reflected in various internationally agreed instruments, the most important of which are the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Notable progress has been achieved in some areas. Women's participation in the labour force has increased in most regions of the world; women's education, at the primary, secondary and university levels, has also improved significantly; and there are signs of a narrowing of the wage gap between men and women in many countries (most of them industrialized). However, in most nations women are still at a disadvantage in terms of their role and position in the economic and political arenas.

Against this background, the forces of globalization, of which international trade is one of the most important channels, may bring additional challenges and opportunities. Questions arise as to how the costs and benefits of trade can be evenly distributed by gender, and whether trade rules and policies deepen, or, on the contrary, reduce existing gender inequalities. There is therefore a need to assess the impact of trade on gender equality in order to assist countries in designing appropriate strategies and policies to support the objective of gender equality in the context of an open multilateral trading system.

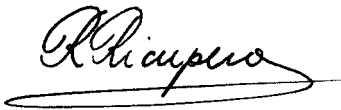
It was with the dual objectives of deepening the understanding of the gender dimension of trade and identifying policy challenges and responses to meet the goal of gender equality that, in February 2003, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality created a task force on gender and trade, of which UNCTAD was designated task manager. The Task Force comprises UN agencies and regional commissions, the World Bank, WTO, OECD and the Commonwealth secretariat.

Preface

Various members of the Task Force have been studying the interconnections between trade and gender from different perspectives. Some of the findings of the analyses undertaken by UNCTAD, FAO, UNIDO, OHCHR, ITC and UNIFEM are published in this book. As the subject is novel and complex, a variety of views are expressed, which are not necessarily those of the Task Force or of the United Nations. Rather, the objective is to identify and review some complex technical issues with a view to sensitizing policy-makers on the importance of these issues, fostering discussion among experts and providing a good basis for consensus-building.

The eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XI) in June 2004 is an important forum for debating the policy implications of the trade and gender nexus. It is hoped that this publication will help policy-makers reinforce the role of trade as an instrument for truly inclusive development, and in the process ensure the equal rights of men and women to earn a decent living.

Geneva and New York, 14 April 2004

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ricupero', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Rubens Ricupero
Secretary-General of UNCTAD

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela E.V. King', with a stylized, flowing script.

Angela E.V. King
Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-
General on Gender Issues
and the Advancement of Women

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This publication benefited from the comments and inputs of many experts. Particular thanks go to: Mehmet Arda, Juliana Gonsalves, Robert Hamwey, Victor Ognivtsev, Christoph Spennemann, Amos Taporaie, UNCTAD and Meagan Bovell, UNIFEM.

The WTO secretariat informally contributed with technical comments on different chapters. Helpful comments were also received from the World Bank and WIPO. Given the novelty and complexity of the subject, the papers included in this volume do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, or a shared view by all of the members of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade.

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Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific (group of countries)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act (of the United States)
AoA	Agreement on Agriculture (WTO Agreement)
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ATC	Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (WTO Agreement)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COMESA	Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa
EBA	Everything-But-Arms (Initiative of the EU)
EPZ	export processing zone
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services (WTO Agreement)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
ICT	information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Office (or Organization)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPR	intellectual property right
IT	information technology
ITC	International Trade Centre, UNCTAD/WTO
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LDC	least developed country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MFA	Multi-Fibre Arrangement
MFN	most favoured nation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization

Abbreviations

NTAE	non-traditional agricultural export
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RTA	regional trade agreement
SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary
TBT	technical barrier to trade
TNC	transnational corporation
TRIMs	trade-related investment measures (also a WTO Agreement)
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO Agreement)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

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