



**United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
AFRICAN TRADE POLICY CENTRE**

**Report of the Inception Workshop on
Mainstreaming Gender into Trade Policy**

21- 22 April 2009

I. Introduction

An inception workshop on “Mainstreaming Gender into Trade Policy” was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 21 to 22 April 2009. The African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) organized the workshop. The main objective of this workshop was to strengthen the capacity of African countries and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to formulate more gender responsive trade policies. By increasing the capacities of African countries to mainstream gender analysis into trade policy, they will be in a better position to exploit the potential opportunities for both African men and women within the international trading system, and derive the benefits from unlocking the potential derived particularly from women as both producers and cross border traders in Africa. They will also be more successful in ensuring coherence between trade policy and the empowerment of African women, part of the national development policies of all African countries.

The workshop was opened by Mr. Mahamat Abdoulahi, officer in charge of the Trade, Finance and Economic Development division (TFED) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Mr. Mahamat, expressed his gratitude to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for their financial support of ATPC, which has enabled ATPC to invite more experts. He welcomed participants and explained that the workshop objective was to create, through ATPC, a platform for dialogue where practitioners can exchange views on the role of women in trade and assess existing gaps in national trade policies. He highlighted that despite women’s important role in production and trade, it is often overlooked. He explained that the workshop deliberations were intended to result in significant recommendations to be carried forward by stakeholders with the engagement of ATPC.

Ambassador Peter Robleh, Officer in Charge of ATPC, welcomed participants and gave some background on the mandate of ATPC. He explained that the ATPC was embedded within ECA’s Trade Finance and Economic Development (TFED) Division and established with the support of CIDA and other partners. The first phase of ATPC was designed to assist African countries and institutions to build capacity in trade negotiations. The evaluation of the first phase indicated that ATPC had had a key role in assisting African states in negotiating better outcomes. The second phase is now focusing on institutional capacity building, particularly with three pilot Regional Economic Communities (RECs); SADC, EAC and ECOWAS. The second phase of ATPC has 3 main pillars; provision of capacity building for the RECs, provision of capacity building for trade constituencies and mainstreaming cross cutting issues. Mainstreaming gender falls under pillar 3 together with environmental and HIV/AIDS issues in trade. As

the ECA has convening power to call on African ministries, ATPC uses this to further the trade policy agenda. The ATPC uses various communication methods such as its website, newsletter and regular publications to raise awareness and build capacity in trade issues throughout Africa.

II. Participation

The workshop brought together leaders in gender networks addressing trade issues, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) representatives in gender and trade, civil society advocates, and businesswomen. Together they examined the important role that women currently contribute to African trade patterns and explored the ways in which the promotion of women as legitimate partners in trade can be enhanced and integral to the success of future African growth in trade. The workshop provided a forum for African gender advocates, researchers, and academics to make recommendations directly to African trade policy makers about the better utilization of gender issues and analysis in trade.

The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) attended the workshop: Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African development Community (SADC), Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and East African Community (EAC). The workshop also benefited from the participation of the following organizations: Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, COA/ FEB (Burkina Faso), Economic Policy Research Center (Uganda), CEMRA (Algeria), Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche et Development (Republique Democratique du Congo), Promotion de la femmes (Republique du Congo), Association des Femmes Chef d'Entreprise du Togo (AFCET), East African Law Society, Association des Femmes Commerçante de Zabre-Daaga, Uganda Investment Authority, Ministry of Trade and Industry (Republique de Djibouti), Chamber of Commerce (Benin), Brooklyn college (United States), AFEM- Association des Femmes chefs d'Entreprise au Maroc, Collaborative Center for Gender and Development (CCGD; Kenya), The Trade Collective (South Africa), Development Bank of Southern Africa, Salon International de l'Artisanat pour la femme Niger, Houoyoco (Djibouti), ODHA (United Kingdom), Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs (GAWE), Groupement des Femmes d'affaire de Guinee, Centre International du Commerce Exterieur du Senegal (CICES), Small Industries Development Organisation (Tanzania), Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (Ethiopia), International Trade Center (Switzerland), UNIFEM, APRODEV (Belgium), Ethiopian Women Development Fund – MoWA (Ethiopia), NAWORG, NACCIMA (Nigeria),

ROSESAO/COCOVIKO (Cote- d'Ivoire), FAWE Ethiopia, UNECA, FEMNET (Ethiopia).

III. Summary of discussions

1. Participants converged on the view that engendering trade policy was not an easy task, as it implied the ability to assess the impact of specific trade policies, strategies and trade instruments on women. Such an assessment would require, among other things, the availability of gender-disaggregated data. Linking gender issues with trade policy making is an onerous task and is usually seen as the domain of gender desks rather than the accountability of governments.
2. While it was noticed that free trade agreements increasingly included commitments to gender equality and fair working conditions for women, the implementation of those commitments remained weak. It was suggested that something similar to the environmental impact assessments of trade agreements may be carried out in the case of gender. In other words, in parallel with or prior to the negotiation of a trade agreement, an assessment could be carried out concerning the potential gender-related implications that the trade agreement may have. Some participants pointed out, however, that the ability of many African countries to undertake such assessments may be limited and that gender assessments may represent an additional burden on the limited human and financial resources available in many African countries. African countries training material and impact assessment tools, sharing lessons coming from country studies, setting up a network of scholars and researchers specialized on trade and gender were mentioned by the participants as useful initiatives to enhance policymakers' capacity to assess the impacts of trade policies on women.
3. Most participants felt that the move from political commitment to action on the ground was not happening. This was related to the lack of awareness of policymakers on gender issues, limited capacity to make a thorough assessment of the impact of trade policy on women, lack of women's voices in policy institutions, and lack of coordination between women affairs ministries and ministries of trade, finance and economic development. In other words, the frameworks in which gender and trade policies were negotiated were artificially separated. Some participants felt that the lack of women representatives at the parliamentary and cabinet level was also a problem in many countries and stressed that female

ministers had been particularly absent from the WTO Doha Round of trade negotiations.

4. Some participants suggested that, in order to facilitate mainstreaming gender in trade policy, “gender- sensitive” products and sectors needed to be identified, meaning sectors where female employment was particularly high and products mainly manufactured by female work force. Accordingly, analysis on how trade policies and trade liberalization agreements- such as the WTO agreements, and regional and bilateral trade agreements- affect these products and sectors should be conducted. Moreover, once the sensitive sectors were identified, women entrepreneurs could be encouraged in those sectors. It was also pointed out that sectors with low export potential could have a large development potential for women. Therefore, gender analysis should not be limited to main export products but should focus on products in the production of which women were more present. Granting more favourable trade conditions to gender-sensitive products/ sectors should be supportive to other development goals, such as pro- rural policies or environmental preservation policies.
5. It was noted that although trade may create some opportunities for women, the real winners are the owners of capital who employ women to take advantage of their acceptance of low pay and precarious working conditions. The women performing the menial tasks in trade related sectors are market takers and are unable to negotiate better working conditions and therefore are only gaining survival from these jobs and not much more. Moreover, African governments do not have the necessary protection systems to safeguard their poor people, including women, from the effects of financial and liberalization crises.
6. It was also stressed that the positive aspects of women’s role in trade should be emphasized rather than always concentrating on their vulnerability. For example women working in EPZs are felt to be more reliable, have more integrity and have specialized skills.
7. Some participants argued that rather than always looking at the constraints that women face, lessons should be learnt from successful initiatives implemented on the ground e.g. Equity Bank in Kenya increasing access to capital for women’s SMEs.
8. Some participants noted that one of the root causes of women’s marginalization is African culture itself, which often discriminates against

women in such areas such as public speaking, property ownership,... etc. They emphasized that the lack of a democratic environment in many African countries means that people, generally, and women especially, have very little power to challenge current trade policies or frameworks.

9. Some participants noticed that programmes for women usually focuses on the micro level e.g. micro finance, micro and small enterprises, etc and are not about empowering women to own and control a large proportion of resources.
10. Participants shared the view that efforts to support women in business are likely to be compromised and subsumed if the international trade agenda is driven in its current form.
11. One expert highlighted the fact that, the wage gap is narrowing is often due to men earning less rather than women earning more and therefore might not be a cause for celebration.
12. An expert noted that local analytical tools on how economic growth can lead to poverty reduction need to be developed. This will help to avoid the situations of jobless growth we see in South Africa for example, rootless growth in the DRC (where the basic infrastructure to funnel growth to the poor such as banking is not there) or voiceless growth (where the democratic space for citizens to make demands on the state lessens and the state becomes just a gateway for multinationals and trans national corporations).

IV. Draft recommendations by the participants on practical options and actionable outcomes

The following recommendations emerged from the presentations and the discussions at the inception workshop:

13. Many participants called for ATPC to organize a network of people interested in gender and trade to come together annually, discuss issues and move them forward, and to establish a virtual network of gender experts, based on participants in the inception workshop and linking into existing gender networks as appropriate. Building on initiatives such as the ECOWAS website where women traders can link up with and trade with women from other countries can help in this respect.

14. Recognizing the importance of gender- disaggregated data for conducting analysis on gender and trade links, participants encouraged all African countries to collect and harvest gender- disaggregated data, and encouraged ATPC to promote the collection and use of gender-disaggregated trade data. Governments need to be encouraged to collect gender-disaggregated data, as policies without statistics are policies with a disability, which have no targets against which to measure success. Some participants stressed the fact that we should not only collect information on which countries are trading but also which companies, as most companies are male dominated and may not have corporate social responsibility standards towards women.
15. The inception workshop pointed out to the fact that, women should be able to develop their talents, knowledge and skills. Programmes are needed for capacity building and training in various areas. Successful women entrepreneurs and traders could act as role models for other women in such programmes. Some participants expressed the view that the programmes to build the capacity of women entrepreneurs such as the Access programme benefit a very limited number of beneficiaries and many poor businesswomen are excluded due to the costs, lack of access to information regarding the programme, etc. Such capacity building programmes need to therefore reduce their fees and widely disseminate programme information to target the majority of poor women entrepreneurs.
16. The inception workshop recognized that mechanisms are needed to monitor the ease of cross border trade and remove barriers against women at these borders – otherwise regional agreements to encourage cross border trade will not succeed. Many participants called for greater efforts in building the capacity of women’s business associations to collect data from cross border traders and forward to relevant institutions for data analysis and use in policy making. The workshop emphasized the need to promote women cross border traders’ access to services, social safety nets, information on trade agreements and protocols, skills, finances and market opportunities.
17. Several participants felt that programmes targeting the grass roots level need to simplify and demystify trade related issues to educate and raise awareness among women. Policy documents are useful but disseminating them to the people that matter at the grassroots level, who are often illiterate, is the key to successful strategies.

18. Most participants converged on the view that there is a need for innovative programmes to increase women's access to finance particularly to access medium to long term and medium size loans, which are necessary to conduct international trade. For example, the establishment of a women's guarantee fund is one idea. Initiatives to help women to produce bankable documents are another.
19. The workshop highlighted the need to ensure that before going into what policies are needed we need more work on what the constraints affecting women are and systematic studies at the regional level on the issue of women and trade. An observatory on women and trade in Africa should be established with the aims of a) identifying the main constraints women face, b) evaluating trade policies and their impact on women and c) promoting the correct policies and sharing experiences.
20. Some participants stressed the fact that export development strategies should not only highlight the sectors which have a high contribution to economic growth but also those with significant poverty reduction / gender empowerment potential e.g. the silk sector highlighted for this purpose in the Cambodian Export Development Strategy (showcased by ITC).
21. An expert discussed an idea to establish an African Ombudswomen Organization for EPAs, which would look at the specific gender impacts of these agreements and receive complaints or comments from women affected.
22. Some participants suggested that policies to promote decent work for women should be implemented and not just policies to increase women's employment.
23. Many participants emphasized the issue of building on Kenya's good experience mobile phones facilitating pro-poor trade and increasingly use ICT to facilitate trade, especially among poor women.
24. The workshop noted that common negotiating positions within African RECs, developed with women's participation, are an important way in which African countries can strengthen their negotiating power. Regional trade agreements need to include a gender component and strategy on how the agreement will benefit women producers and consumers.

25. Discussions in the inception workshop pointed to the importance of building capacity at the national and regional levels to enable stakeholders to appreciate the need to mainstream gender into trade policy. Capacity building among ministries of trade, other ministries, as well as the private sector organizations and international institutions is needed to integrate gender analysis in trade negotiations, policies and implementation, focusing firstly on policy makers within trade ministries. Ownership of such approaches must rest with the ministries of trade themselves, for while National Gender Machineries must be collaborative partners within this endeavor, effective gender mainstreaming will only take place if trade officials themselves are ready and willing to understand the linkages, and to lead on emphasizing how important these linkages are within national trade policies that actually make a difference to poverty alleviation and equitable development. In order to facilitate this, there is a lot of work to be done. A rich and factual database of the differentiated impacts of trade on men and women must be developed.
26. Given the complicated linkages between trade policy and gender equality, the workshop underscored the need for more research on this issue and greater gender sensitivity among policy makers. Policy makers should consider including gender assessments when designing trade policies in order to reach a better understanding of the implications for gender equality. These gender assessments will help the governments to design complementary policies for reducing the negative impact of trade liberalization policies on women, and to identify measures to help women benefit from trade liberalization.

V. Closing ceremony

Mr. Mahamat Abdoulahi and Ambassador Peter Robleh thanked participants for the wealth of information and recommendations gathered during the workshop and committed to follow up activities in order to maintain momentum towards achieving better outcomes for women in trade.

Annex 1

Final Programme

21 April 2009

8:00 – 9:00

Registration

9:00 – 9:15

Opening Ceremony

- Opening remarks by Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division (TFED), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr. Abdoulahi Mahamat
- Opening remarks by African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), ECA, Amb. Peter Robleh

9:15 - 10:30

Session I: The Case for Mainstreaming Gender in Trade in Africa: Why Women, Why Trade? An Overview of the Issues.
Chair: Amb. Peter Robleh

- Ms. Nancy Spence
- Prof. Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome
- Mme. Candide Leguede
- Mr. Sebastien Turrel and ACCESS team

10:30 - 10:45

Coffee and tea break

10:45 – 12:15

Discussions

12:15 – 14:15

Lunch

14:15 – 15:45

Session II: Concepts and Approaches to Gender Mainstreaming in Trade: Its “gendered” impacts on women producers and workers through current Trade Agreements.
Chair: Ms. Christine Kipsang

- Ms. Karin Ulmer
- Mme. Moubaraka Adjao Akinotocho
- Ms. Liopollo Lebohang Pheko
- Ms. Ngone Diop

- 15:45 – 16:00** Coffee and tea Break
- 16:00 – 17:30** Discussions
- 18:30- 19:30** **Keynote speech**
- Mme. Mariam Traore

22 April 2009

- 9:00 – 10:30** **Session III: Realities on- the Ground: The Female Face of Intra- African Trade: Gender in Cross Border Trade.**
Chair: Ms. Fatima Khadra Ibrahim
- Ms. Tacko Ndiaye
- Mr. Daniel Tanoe
- Dr. Masheti Masinjila
- Mr. Frederick Mugisha
- 10:30 – 10:45** Coffee and tea break
- 10:45 – 12:15** **Session IV: Regional Experiences from the RECS.**
Chair: Ms. Halima Noor
- Ms. Magdeline Madibela
- Ms. Perpetue Miganda
- Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo
- 12:15 – 14:15** Lunch
- 14:15 – 15:45** Discussions

ATPC website presentation

- Ms. Gerawork Getatchew

- 15:45 – 16:00** Coffee and tea break
- 16:00 – 17:15** **Session V: Recommendations to African Policy-Makers for The Way Forward.**
Amb. Peter Robleh
- 17:15- 17:30** **Closing Ceremony**
Mr. Abdoulahi Mahamat, Amb. Peter Robleh

Annex 2

List of Participants

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