

Gender in Global and Regional Trade Policy: Contrasting Views and  
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Title: From analysis to action: gender, trade policy and export  
promotion – the Commonwealth Secretariat experience

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## **From analysis to action: capacity building for gender, trade policy and export promotion- the Commonwealth Secretariat experience**

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Many of the papers in this seminar deepen our understanding of the relationship between gender and trade. This paper, however, shifts the focus to the efforts of an organisation – the Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat – in developing a systematic approach to enhancing awareness and influencing those who are responsible for trade policy formulation, negotiation and implementation. This paper, therefore, shares ‘what’ and ‘how’ we have been working in multiple ways to move the agenda on gender and trade from analysis to action, and within this broader context the emphasis is on our recent work in capacity building and developing a training resource for wider dissemination and use.

### **The Context**

The pervasiveness and permanence of globalisation and trade liberalisation, their positive and negative impacts and the realization of the limited capacity of many countries, especially the smaller countries, to negotiate effectively during trade negotiations and to formulate appropriate trade policies has led various multi-lateral and bilateral agencies to consciously work towards improvement and enhancement of this capacity. These efforts have mostly been located within the context of the need to evolve an inclusive form of globalisation and trading system where the gains are shared by rich and poor countries. The argument is well known - growth and market access will reduce poverty, and while trade liberalisation does create winners and losers, growth will reduce poverty and in overall terms there will be benefits for all. losers.

However, in a context where there have been a broadening of understanding of development (human development) and of poverty (beyond income poverty) to look at overall poverty defined in terms of capabilities and opportunities, it is also clear that gains from globalisation need to cover not only the gaps between countries but also different groups within a country, (Cagatay. Sen), including men and women, and to interrogate the assumptions made by those negotiating and formulating trade policy regarding the “gender neutral” character of the processes of globalisation and trade liberalization. While many non-trade concerns have entered the negotiating arena – public health, food security, environment –

gender has not entered either these areas or the substantive areas of trade policy and trade agreements. There is undervaluation and invisibility of the expanding informal economy and the unpaid care economy and its costs. Today, while still inadequate, there is much more substantive material that is available to make a case for gender and trade – the real challenge is to bring this understanding into the discourse in trade policy formulation, negotiation and implementation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's programme on gender and multilateral trade issues originated in 2000, at the Sixth Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs where the Ministers expressed 'serious concern over some of the negative impacts of globalisation and trade liberalisation, particularly on weak and vulnerable economies and especially on women and children' and 'recommended that government should use gender analysis in the negotiation and implementation of liberalisation processes'. This has led to the inception of several activities which have complemented each other and are also dovetailed into a much wider programme Commonwealth Secretariat programme.

While the Gender Section leads on the Gender and Trade related issues, this only constitutes a small portion of a much wider programme which involves several other Divisions of the Secretariat (Economic Affairs, Special Advisory Services Division, and Office of the DSG) which systematically work on policy, implementation and capacity building issues. They work with member countries at the WTO and in country to effectively represent their national interests during negotiations, to enhance competitiveness and market access of goods and services of the countries, and more recently to build capacities through the EU funded 'Hub and Spokes' project which covers over 70 ACP countries.

### **Developing an approach**

The work of the Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat towards fulfilling the mandate of integrating gender analysis in trade policy negotiation and implementation has been characterized by two distinct phases. In the first phases, 2001-2004 efforts have been directed towards developing and building the case for mainstreaming gender in the multilateral trading system, and also trying to develop an understanding of how to build an enabling environment to link women workers and producers with global markets. This has been followed by a more recent phase (2005-continuing) where the focus has been to move from analysis to action and efforts have been initiated to develop capacities to integrate gender

analysis in trade policy formulation at country level and to disseminate and develop a systematic approach so that this can be done. Throughout, the approach has been to work to understand policy level issues, but also gender issues related to access to global markets. – a top down, bottom-up approach, and concurrently to accompany this with advocacy and dissemination on these issues.

There are two broad areas in which capacity needs to be developed. Firstly, an understanding needs to be built within the relevant negotiating government ministries as well as private institutions of the gender implications of the substantive issues that are on the table. Import/export policies and market access create specific opportunities and present challenges in terms of the nature and location of jobs, appropriate skills, and competitiveness. Tariff structures and export promotion can impact on domestic agriculture, food security and the nature of government services that are provided. A clearer picture of the gender implications of measures taken can be gained by examining specific sectors - agriculture, services, investment or intellectual property. There are many areas which need to mainstream gender perspective – they include impact assessments of trade agreements, the development debate, trade policy review processes, and the special and differential framework.

The second important aspect regarding trade relates to the contribution and participation of women and organizations that represent their interests in setting the agenda, formulating priorities and negotiating. Consultative processes need to be widened to include their perspectives in determining national priorities, and formulating advocacy positions. In addition, there should be significant participation of relevant ministries such as health, education and agriculture and the national gender machineries in the trade negotiation framework. Lastly, there have to be conscious efforts to increase the number of women around the negotiating table. In order for this to happen capacity needs to be built and enhanced in these constituencies.

### **Building the case**

The relationship between gender and trade has been explored for a number of years (Elson, Standing Joekes, and Cagatay etc). and there is a growing body of work which highlights the gender differentiated impacts of trade policy, and how these are dependent on the terms on which men and women enter the labour market, the differing roles and responsibilities of men and women within the household, as well as their differential access to resources – material, financial, technological and social, but also

institutionalized biases of the state and market. In developing economies, while it is recognized that women's enhanced share of paid employment in the export sector has led to growth and competitiveness in the economies, there is less emphasis on the manner in which this translates into improved well-being for women, reduction in gender inequalities in wages, or improved conditions of work. . There was work also on gender and growth in the agricultural economy services, reduction of leisure time and the imposition of user fees.

The Commonwealth Secretariat built on some of the fundamental work done and developed a handbook for policy makers in a pioneering work by Mariama Williams in 2003 on **Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System** . The main focus of this work was to **present** the linkages between trade and investment policy and gender equality objectives. While scattered articles had previously focused on the relationship between gender and trade, this work brought together a comprehensive picture of the main features and agreements of the WTO- viz the Agreement on Agriculture, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, TRIMS and TRIPS and thoroughly focused on their gender dimensions. It used a sectoral analysis to understand the costs benefits, challenges and constraints of trade liberalisation for men and women. It focussed on the role of existing gender biases and took into account inequalities related to men and women's roles in the household and in the labour markets, issues related to food security and livelihoods, impact of the existing role of public services. It also focussed on a set of strategies and recommendations

While this publication focused on trade policy and trade negotiations , it was considered important at the same time to focus on some positive stories of the manner in which export competitiveness has created opportunities for women so as to enhance understanding of factors which enable women producers and workers to access global markets. Immediately after the Ministerial meeting in 2001 the Commonwealth brought out a publication **Commonwealth businesswomen; trade matters, best practices and success stories**, which focussed on entrepreneurial activity throughout the Commonwealth. This really gave a 'taste' of innovative and successful practices throughout the Commonwealth. This was followed by a publication **Chains of Fortune: linking women producers and workers with global markets** (ed. Marilyn Carr) which developed six case studies from different regions of the world showcasing how globalisation and trade liberalisation can open new economic opportunities for low-income women if they are enabled to do so. It is clear that trade liberalisation will not automatically result in poverty reduction, and that countries

need to adopt specific policies and programmes for this to happen. The case studies which have been chosen in the volume cover different regions of the Commonwealth, different types of local producers and workers and different types of actors. They cover women garment workers in Bangladesh, call centre workers in India, horticulture producers in South Africa, cocoa farmers in Ghana, cashew producers in Mozambique and oil producers in Samoa. From these studies it was possible to extrapolate a set of common factors, lessons learned, that created an enabling environment for poorer women. These case studies have been used in multiple ways- the depth and rigour of analysis have provided excellent case study/training material. And more recently one of the case studies provided the background material and inspiration for a playlet sponsored by the UK Gender and Trade network to create awareness on Gender and Trade at the Commission for the Status of Women in New York where it formed the core around which the playlet was constructed. This has also highlighted the need for many more case studies as recently working in the Caribbean it was difficult to really find case studies which were sufficiently deep to share the impacts of changing trade regimes on women. And in fact is leading to the production of a second volume to cover these gaps,

Complementing these publications is the effort to raise awareness around the need for an enabling environment for poor women and producers. The first step in this process has been the production of a book on **Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender for Poverty Reduction** and this is being followed by another work on **Mainstreaming gender in social protection**, especially in the context of the Informal economy, which will be out later this year

## **Phase 2 – From analysis to action**

While the production and dissemination of materials on issues related to gender and trade constituted the first step towards building capacities, meetings/interaction with different Ministries and players in different countries and contexts pointed to the need to more proactively develop a systematic approach to mainstream gender and trade in relevant institutions/organizations at regional and national level in the Commonwealth countries., and to embed and build capacities in various regions to address trade policy related issues,

As a first step to establish the nature of need and to design a relevant training module a design workshop was held in February 2005 in Kampala, Uganda with various stakeholders from multilaterals, regional

organisations, bilaterals government ministries and other public and private institutions to ascertain training needs. (There is a Report of this workshop).

What became very clear at this meeting was that there was little basis for dialogue between those interested in 'gender' and in trade, and that one of the challenges was to bring various stakeholders to some common understanding about what the meaning of those terms are and to also establish dialogue between the various stakeholders. Designing participation to the training modules itself constituted a challenge as it was thought essential to seek to enhance understanding of the links between gender and trade policy negotiations, but also to understand implications for implementation, market access and export competitiveness. While there was a definite need at the national level for introducing training the lack of a clearly identified 'lead' agency or institution and the limited resources available led to a consensus decision that a regional approach should be adopted. This would enable the process of capacity building to be kicked off, create a platform for cross sharing and networking in the region, maintain the specificity of regional issues, and simultaneously during this phase materials would be developed for broader dissemination at national level and as a precursor to the second phase of 'Training of Trainers'. This served as an essential building block in developing a five day training module by a team of people that included Mariama Williams, Marilyn Carr, Hilda Tadria of UNECA and Sarojini Ganju Thakur of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The training module has from inception taken on board the significant contributions of UNCTAD and IGTN on Gender and Trade, and also built partnerships with ITC, IFC and DFID who have participated since the start of the project and contributed to its development and implementation with resources, case studies etc

After designing the skeletal framework for a five day training, it was decided to field test it in order to see how it worked and what changes would need to be introduced to make it more meaningful.

The first field test took place in East Africa which covered Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in July 2005. This is being followed by systematic coverage of various regions through a series of regional workshops. We had a second regional training workshop in January 2006 in the Caribbean to cover three countries of the Caribbean – Jamaica, Barbados and St Lucia. Other regions which are planned to be covered in 2006 – 2007 are South Asia, Pacific and the South African regions.

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat the inputs of this project feed into part of the capacity building of the Hub and Spokes project, and there have been efforts to build capacity of the Regional Trade Policy Advisers on the issue.

## **Content**

The purpose of the training module is:

- i) To build capacity to integrate gender analysis in trade policy formulation and implementation
- ii) To analyse impacts of trade policy on women's employment and entrepreneurship
- iii) To focus on region specific issues and trends and impacts on women
- iv) To build capacity of public and private institutions to enable women to respond to changes in trade policy
- v) To establish networks at national/regional level to carry forward the work on gender and trade

The Module has two aspects – an essential core element which structurally remains the same across the various regions and a focus on more regionally/ nationally relevant aspects. A strong guiding principle was that the participants should be able to apply their learning in their situation within their organisations or countries.

Broadly speaking the training module has the following elements

The present module comprises a core which includes

- an understanding of the relationship between 'gender', trade and development,
- introduction to 'gender' and 'trade',
- trade policy environment including to WTO, the multilateral trading system and the major agreements, regional and bilateral trade agreements, economic partnership agreements with a focus on the gender implications and impacts of policies
- trade facilitation
- market access and export competitiveness, including 'fair' trade and 'ethical' trade



- Analytical frameworks and tools – gender frameworks , social and gender impact analysis, market access tools
- Region specific issues – policy and practice – each country chooses a sector for discussion and focus
- Action planning on a nationally relevant area- it is envisaged that this will create the basis and beginning for some continued in country work after the training is over. This also constitutes the basis for monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of capacity building after some time has lapsed after the training.

We have just sent out questionnaires to the first lot of people trained. Some personal communications have informed that after the workshop the team has continued to meet regularly in Uganda, that they have introduced awards from women in the Uganda Export Promotion Board, put together and successfully got funding for some follow up work / funding for women weavers. We do plan when more resources are available to start an e-newsletter and list serve.

## **Participants**

A key aspect of the training is the mix of participants from each country. . Considerable discussion and thought went into defining which institutions and organisations should be represented. It was felt each country should be represented not by one/two individual representatives but by a team of 5-7 participants from relevant institutions/organisations. This would result not only in enhancing capacity within organisations, but also start a process of networking and sharing views across stakeholder and also obviate the risk of losing all capacity when individuals were transferred. In addition there would be 4-5 people from regional organisations .With the optimal number for training being fixed at 30 it did mean that in each regional training not more than 3-4 countries could be represented.

At national level the participants represent the following:

### **Government**

- Ministry of Trade
- Ministry of Women's Affairs
- Sectoral Ministry ( Agriculture , Information Technology, Tourism etc)

- Export Promotion Bureau
- Planning/ Finance – if involved in trade

### **Non- government**

- Business organisation
- Civil society organisation

### **Regional organisations**

- Regional trade organisations – COMESA, CRNM, CARICOM
- Women's networks – FEMNET, CAFRA
- Regional training institutions – ESAMI

### **Training team**

The training team has consisted of a core which has included the subject matter specialists – Mariama Williams on gender and trade), Marilyn Carr and Jacqui McDonald (market access, value chain analysis, globalisation, export competitiveness), regional gender training experts, and Sarojini Ganju Thakur as the overall coordinator for the project and in this capacity is responsible for the designs and organisation of the workshops, the material and resources and also as a link between sessions and as a resource person/facilitator in some workshops. As acknowledged earlier ITC has also contributed as resource person. For many of the sessions as there is a wealth of practical experience at various levels amongst the participants they are requested to give small presentations on some aspects of their work, which is related to their work. For the training itself we have been trying to resource the participants with comprehensive reading materials on the subject, globally but also for the region. While we have been using available case studies our experience has demonstrated the dearth of specific and rigorous research materials on gender related impacts of different trade policies, although there are snapshot views.

### **Next steps**

Currently, we are in the process of systematically trying to translate this module into a versatile training kit that can be used in a flexible manner by trainers to assist them in developing inputs of differing lengths on gender and trade it should be available for wider dissemination by the end of this year.

The experience so far has been very positive and the immediate evaluations of the training programmes have been very encouraging. We have just trying to assess systematically what impact, if any this has had

on the first set of participants. Personal communications from Uganda have indicated that the group has been meeting regularly, formed the equivalent of a small Gender Expert Group in Trade (GEGT) meeting, that the training has led to the establishment of Gender Awards in the Export Promotion Bureau, and some other activities.

It is clear however, that this training is not likely to be enough. This needs to be complemented by more 'awareness raising' of key people involved in trade policy formulation and negotiations – Permanent Secretaries at national level and WTO country missions in Geneva. The Commonwealth Secretariat is simultaneously working on these aspects. Advocacy work has included organising panels at the WTO and the NGO Forum of the Commission for the Status of Women on the subject, and participating in panels at the WTO ministerial and other fora. There is clear need for more combined action on this front. The Commonwealth Secretariat is also a member of the UN Inter-agency Gender and Trade Network, and also the Gender Expert Group in Trade in the UK.

### **Other initiatives**

At the same time the Commonwealth Secretariat has also worked towards trying to establish and promote entrepreneurial activity for women in the Commonwealth. With a view to putting this on an institutional footing it set up the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN) in 2002. Its objectives include linking women entrepreneurs, setting up 'knowledge networks' to support and advice on funding, sustainability and growth, promoting good practice, and to develop policy recommendation in areas critical to the growth of SMEs. Since this was felt to be more a private sector activity this was transferred and now functions as a division of the Commonwealth Business Council. However, it continues to draw support from the Commonwealth Secretariat. A recent initiative has been to support CBWN in the establishment of an information gateway called [www.cbwn.net](http://www.cbwn.net), to further carry its mandate forward. The purpose is to develop the information gateway as a powerful tool for dissemination and information on line, provide a platform for online discussion, enhance capacities of women entrepreneurs for on line training etc. etc

Separately through another programme in the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Services Abroad programme, the CBWN has been funded for a Link IT scheme whose purpose is to enhance capacity of apex and secondary level institutions that deal with Women's entrepreneurship in three countries – Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. This is by locating an intern to work with these institutions to develop systems to enhance outreach through enhanced use of ICTs and also to use ICTs to develop

market access and export competitiveness. In Uganda where the programme is just over there has been a significant increase of awareness and use by women entrepreneurs of ICTs and the training is now being systematically offered on a regular basis at UWEAL. In the other two countries the programme is at an initial phase.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is also at a preliminary stage in trying to develop export competitiveness of certain products in East Africa and south Asia, by enhancing capacities of women producers through skills training, understanding value chain and costing, tariffs etc. It also works on building institutional capacity in mainstream organisations to deal with women entrepreneurs e.g. Tanzania in Small Industries Development Organisation

### **Conclusion**

As most of this work is part of an ongoing process there are no conclusions at this stage although there will be substantially more to share once we receive back some of the monitoring and evaluation feedback. We look forward to suggestions about what needs to be included in the training pack and how we should disseminate it. We would be requesting some of you to help us review this. We are planning advocacy events and look forward to your participation. We need to get the message out and look forward to your views on how to make this happen. And lastly, is it a good strategy to talk about 'gender' and 'trade', or do we need to package differently?