

Facilitating Women Entrepreneurs in International Trade

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Women in business and trade

- **29.6%** of the business establishments led by women; **98.3%** are **micro enterprises**; **less than 17%** women-led businesses **export**
- Women-led businesses **tend to be smaller, less profitable, operating in less profitable sectors, necessity-based, more informal, limited to domestic market and risk-averse**
- In Nepal, women entrepreneurs are involved in export of **processed food, textiles & clothing, handicrafts, among others**; major markets are Europe, US

Economy as gendered structure

- **Socially ascribed gender roles** structure the social, economic and political power relations
- More care work expected → **time poverty, higher reservation wages, financially dependent, trapped in low value activities**
- Domains of gender equality
 - **Capabilities:** access to education, health, nutrition
 - **Access to resources and opportunities:** access to economic resources, information network, decision making
 - **Security:** threat of physical, sexual and psychological violence

Barriers to trade

- **Limited knowledge about foreign trade procedures and schemes:** difficulty accessing information, such as trade fairs, subsidies, changes in regulations
- **Challenges in scaling business:** difficulty in establishing new business contacts in foreign markets; issues with productivity and quality
- **Limited access to finance:** limited access to credit; collateral still an issue; appear risk-averse
- **High trade and transaction costs:** transport charges too high; less bargaining power as each consignment is likely to be small

Barriers to trade

- **Inadequate Infrastructure and logistics: no accredited laboratories; cold storage or warehouses; lack of digital payment network; limited e-commerce footprint**
- **Lack of female presence: less female presence in trading spaces and policy making (Trade Facilitation Committee, for example)**
- **Gendered societal conditionings: more care burden; limited network; fear of sexual and physical violence, among others**

Gender-aware trade facilitation

- **Gender-aware policymaking: conscious efforts** towards increasing **women's participation and representation** (ex. National Trade Facilitation Committee, Customs Modernization Plans, etc)
- **Address information gap:** integration in trade network; **mobilize govt. orgs, business chambers, civil society**
- **Leverage digital opportunities: ecommerce, paperless trade** etc along with other complementary institutional arrangements
- **Build infrastructure: accredited testing laboratories, storage etc;** digital infrastructure too; make infrastructure gender sensitive
- **Undertake ex-ante gender assessment** of trade policy changes and reforms (ex. LDC graduation)

Way forward?



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