

G20 COMPENDIUM OF GOOD PRACTICES TO INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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Introduction

The G20 Compendium of Good Practices to Increase the Participation of Women in International Trade reflects the contributions of G20 members and invited countries, during the discussions within the Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG), under the Brazilian Presidency. The document was crafted based on a template proposed by the Brazilian G20 Presidency.

The practices listed have been selected by each country to illustrate how they aim at addressing specific obstacles faced by women in international trade. Many of these obstacles were identified in a survey commissioned by the B20.¹

Distributed among members of various chambers of commerce and other representatives of the private sector across G20 member and invited countries, the survey collected insights from over 1900 respondents, including both women and men. Its results align with the findings from studies conducted by international organizations on the challenges hindering women's participation in global commerce, forming the basis for the recommended practices in this compendium.²

The survey was structured into different macro categories of challenges faced by businesses when accessing international trade.

- **Nature of business:** inherent characteristics of the business, such as the industry it operates in, its size, and its business model.
- **Access to Information and business opportunities:** availability and accessibility of relevant information and opportunities for skill development.³
- **Access to Financing:** ability to obtain financial resources necessary for business operations in foreign trade.
- **Compliance with customs procedures and regulations:** ability to adhere to the rules and regulations governing international trade.

The table below presents the barriers in each macro category that were identified as affecting women more significantly, based on the survey results.

Macro category	Barriers faced by women respondents
Nature of Business	• Predominance of women-owned businesses in the services sector. • High prevalence of women-owned businesses among Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs).
Access to Information and Business Opportunities	• Time constraints due to care commitments. • Time constraints due to work commitments.

¹ <https://b20brasil.org/documents/85520/0/B20+Women+in+Trade+Report.pdf/da897d8f-c98a-c9bf-e1da-83476d41d3fd?version=1.0&t=1728394822515&download=true>

² This compendium does not provide exhaustive documentation of all women in trade related activities by G20 members.

³ For simplification purposes, the macro categories “Access to Information” and “Access to Business Opportunities” found in the B20 Survey are presented as one single macro category in this compendium.

	• Inadequate suitability of trainings for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs). • High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs. • Lack of follow-up support in training programs. • Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities. • Lack of information on training providers and courses. • Lack of information on opportunities and events. • Lack of information on business promotion methods. • Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach • Lack of negotiation skills. • Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias.
Access to Financing	• Lack of collateral to support the credit application. • Harassment during the credit application process. • Discomfort when pitching for financing. • Lack of access to digital services (e.g. broadband internet).

	• Lack of information on how to access financing. • Gender bias during the application process (e.g. intrusive personal questions).
Compliance with Customs Procedures and Regulations	• Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations. • Delays due to unclear and inefficient customs processes. • Harassment during customs procedures. • Difficulty in complying with regulatory requirements. • High tariffs and fees.

African Union



The African Women in Processing (AWIP)

Challenges Addressed

- Addresses structural issues and norms faced by African women in Processing.
- Expand economic and business opportunities for women in Processing, especially under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- To support the creation of an enabling environment for African Women in Processing as part of the new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion (2020-2030), as a strategy for the implementation of the Plan of Action for Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (Directorate of Industry, Minerals, Entrepreneurship and Tourism)

Description

The African Women in Processing (AWIP) initiative aims to support the African Union's industrialization agenda and achieve the goals of Agenda 2063 by catalysing and accelerating the transformation of industrial processing led by women. AWIP's vision is anchored on delivering inclusive and sustainable social-economic development with gender equity at the center. AWIP is designed to address the "missing middle" in women's industrialization, supporting and accelerating their role in Africa's economic development. As part of the Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion (2020-2030), as a strategy for the implementation of the Plan of Action for Accelerated Industrial Development of Africa.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- AWIP was influenced by the results of the 1st AWIP Summit held in Niamey, Niger in November 2022, attended by over 400 delegates from 22 countries, African nationalities and showcasing products by African women in processing.
- The 2nd African Women in Processing (AWIP) Summit, held alongside the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF 2023) and Africa Industrialization Week (AIW 2023), brought together 70 women entrepreneurs from 55 AU Member States, enhancing their skills in Marketing, IP management, financial literacy, and E-commerce, while expanding the AWIP network.
- The 2nd AWIP Summit reinforced the inaugural edition's outcomes (Niamey, November 2022) and celebrated a milestone achievement: the AWIP Pavilion won "Best Feature Stand" at AITF 2023, recognizing the women's dedication to driving Africa's industrial growth.
- AWIP Steering Committee which includes 5 women from all regions of the continent engaged African policy makers and discussed key issues affecting Women in processing such as access to finance for women in the processing value chain, developing the AWIP business plan, mapping resource mobilization and partnership strategies for the implementation of AWIPs activities.

- Whilst the AfCFTA provides opportunities for AWIP to engage with the integrated African market, to mobilize urgent and sustained action to achieve empowerment but there is a need to develop systems and platforms to improve understanding of these opportunities and provide support for women to respond to them.
- By mainstreaming AWIP across all levels of business development, African women will benefit greatly from mechanisms for knowledge documentation, sharing, and experience capitalization to facilitate learning and exchange. It will also be an opportunity to develop systems for business intelligence, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the implementation of policies is effective in Africa.
- Upcoming Events: The third AWIP Summit will be held on the Side-lines of the AIW24 from 4-7 December 2024 in Kampala, Uganda.

References

- <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20230331/empowering-women-processing-african-women-processing-initiative>
- <https://allafrica.com/stories/202304110135.html>

Australia



Investing in Women

Challenges Addressed

- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias
- High prevalence of women-owned businesses among MSMEs
- Lack of information on how to access financing

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Description

Investing in Women is a multi-country Australian Government initiative in Southeast Asia that seeks to accelerate women's economic empowerment through increased and equitable opportunities in the private sector, contributing to inclusive, sustainable economic recovery and growth in targeted countries.

The program partners with a diverse ecosystem of business leaders, capital providers, entrepreneurs and gender equality advocates in Southeast Asia to reduce or remove structural barriers to women's economic participation.

Building on the results, partnerships and lessons established under the first seven years of the program (2016-2023), Investing in Women works to extend and deepen Australia's contribution to advancing gender equality in Southeast Asia by influencing and growing an ecosystem of policymakers, business leaders, capital providers and women's economic empowerment actors. Target countries include the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and (limited activities) in Myanmar.

A new phase of Investing in Women (2023-2027; up to AUD 80 million) will further our investment in women's economic empowerment in Southeast Asia. Building on work to date, this phase of the program will continue to work with businesses to advance workplace gender equality, increase investment in businesses that disproportionately benefit women, and work with partners to positively influence gender norms. It will also explore new areas, including policy reforms that support women's equal economic participation, particularly related to the care economy.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Achievements of the first phase of Investing in Women (2016-2023; AUD 101 million) included:

- AUD 15.4 million invested into 82 women led or owned SMEs through ten investment partners. This investment helped prompt an additional AUD 525 million of additional capital and follow-on investment to bridge the finance gap for women entrepreneurs.
- Working with market building partners to normalise considerations of a gender lens when investing, contributing to a 3.4x increase in the number, and a 7x increase in the value of deals made with a gender lens.

References

<https://investinginwomen.asia/>

Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement

Challenges Addressed

- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias
- Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations
- Delays due to unclear and inefficient customs processes
- Difficulty in complying with regulatory requirements
- High tariffs and fees

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- United Kingdom Department for Business and Trade

Description

The Australia-United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement (A-UKFTA) was signed on 17 December 2021 and entered into force on 31 May 2023. It is the first of Australia's FTAs to include a standalone chapter on trade and gender equality. The A-UKFTA reflects the Australian Government's policy to pursue the inclusion of commitments on gender equality and women's economic empowerment in new and upgrades of our FTAs.

Advancing women's economic empowerment, including through our trade and investment relationship with the UK, is essential to a resilient economy and shared prosperity.

The Agreement includes commitments aimed at supporting women's access to the full benefits that flow from international trade and investment. The Agreement will support cooperation to promote businesses owned and led by women accessing markets, technology, financial services, and business and leadership networks.

A dialogue mechanism will support implementation of the commitments on gender equality and women's economic empowerment. In addition, Australia and the UK will exchange information and good practices on approaches to

data collection, analysis and monitoring of trade and gender equality in their respective jurisdictions.

The A-UKFTA is an example of how the Australian Government is delivering on its commitments to boost women's economic security, in line with Australia's first national Strategy for Gender Equality, *Working for Women*.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Dialogue on Trade and Gender Equality - dedicated channel for developing actions for advancing gender equality and addressing systemic barriers preventing equitable participation and leadership by women in all aspects of trade.
- Reduced tariffs - due to the agreement, over 99 per cent of Australian goods exports by value to the UK will enter without tariffs.
- Simplified customs procedures – the agreement has smoothed out customs procedures to boost efficiency, reduce costs and cut red tape. It has made it simpler for traders and customs authorities to prove the originating status of goods. This includes reducing the amount of paperwork traders need to prepare at the border.
- Support for SMEs - the A-UKFTA contains a range of provisions that support SME engagement in bilateral trade. Both countries have committed to providing easy access to information that will assist SMEs interested in trading, investing, or doing business with the other country.

References

- <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/aukfta>
- <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/aukfta/official-text/australia-uk-fta-chapter-24-trade-and-gender-equality>
- <https://genderequality.gov.au/>

APEC Women's Business Activator Program

Challenges Addressed

- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias

- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Lack of negotiation skills
- Lack of information on how to access financing
- Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Australian APEC Study Centre
- RMIT Activator

Description

In 2023-24, the Australian Government funded the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Activator Pilot for Women-led Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) to Access Global Markets. The program, currently in the pilot phase, aims to help women-led businesses grow globally by strengthening their capacity to build business competencies and navigate barriers to expanding local and international trade.

The pilot engaged women entrepreneurs in the APEC region and involved ten online workshops, ongoing group mentoring and a three-day intensive program in Melbourne, Australia. Pilot participants were provided business development services, including training to identify international clients, craft compelling offers, determine market entry strategies, secure funding, and develop financial game plans and robust business models.

The APEC Women's Business Activator Program is funded by the Australian Government and implemented by the Australian APEC Study Centre and RMIT Activator. It is planned to expand and continue in 2024-25.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The pilot supported 19 entrepreneurs from Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Thailand, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei and Vietnam.

- The program equipped women-led SMEs with the knowledge, skills, and networks to help navigate global markets. Participants reported improvements in business confidence, understanding market entry pathways, developing business models for scalability, and accessing resources for growth.

- Participants reported highly valuing the opportunity to work collaboratively with other women business leaders, enabling sharing of best practice, finding solutions to barriers faced, and fostering a supportive community of business practice.

- Since completing the pilot, participants have reported outcomes as increased business networks, and success in pursuing new international expansions and increased market presence.

- Key lessons from the pilot included participant interest in additional opportunities to connect with potential investors, clients and business associations; and incorporating pitch sessions with stakeholders to further support participants to find new business opportunities.

References

<https://www.apec.org/au/apec-womens-business-activator-program-2024>

Brazil



Elas Exportam Program

Challenges Addressed

- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Remote training locations
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services
- Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil)

Description

The *Elas Exportam* Program, established in 2023, is designed to enhance the

participation of Brazilian women-led businesses in international trade. It aims to develop both the technical and socio-emotional skills needed to succeed in exporting. The program connects emerging women entrepreneurs with experienced mentors who have extensive experience in global commerce. Alongside personalized mentorship, the participants benefit from workshops and seminars on various topics, such as pitch training, self-image, intellectual property, and export planning.

Conducted through virtual meetings and workshops, the program ensures accessibility and flexibility for all participants. Additionally, networking is a key pillar of the program, fostering the creation of a lasting network through which participants can continue to share experiences and opportunities.

The program, supported by several partner institutions, is offered free of charge and runs in six-month cycles. Its inaugural pilot edition, featuring 20 mentor-mentee pairs, was conducted across all sectors. The second edition featured 30 pairs and focused on industries such as personal hygiene, perfumery, cosmetics, apparel, and textiles. The goal is to serve 100 participants per year, starting from 2024. Surveys are conducted at the end of each edition to evaluate participant satisfaction and seek ways to improve future editions.

Aiming to deepen the participants' experience and create concrete business opportunities, *Elas Exportam* participants can benefit from special conditions to take part in future trade missions to foreign markets.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- **Personalized training:** individual mentoring is crucial to meet the specific needs of female entrepreneurs, helping them overcome unique challenges they face in international trade.
- **Socio-emotional skills:** developing socio-emotional skills, in addition to technical skills, is vital for business success, especially in competitive environments, such as foreign trade.
- **Support network:** creating a support network and sharing experiences among participants can strengthen the confidence and resilience of women entrepreneurs.
- **Follow-up activities:** providing continuous assistance through additional

activities and connections with other programs better prepares the entrepreneur for exporting.

References

<https://www.gov.br/mdic/pt-br/assuntos/comercio-exterior/dpfac/promocao-das-exportacoes-e-cultura-exportadora/elas-exportam>

Programa Mulheres e Negócios Internacionais (MNI)

Women and International Business Program

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on opportunities and events.
- Lack of information on business promotion methods.
- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil)

Description

The Women and International Business Program (MNI) was launched by ApexBrasil in 2023, via its Commitment to Gender Equity in both business contexts and the Agency itself. Its goal is to increase the participation of Brazilian women-led companies in global value chains, within Brazil's export base, and in ApexBrasil's client base. This contributes to the achievement of SDG 5, to strengthen Brazilian public policies on diversity and inclusion, and to the development of ApexBrasil's strategic plan. The MNI's methodology consists of applying a gender-based lens to ApexBrasil's key areas: market intelligence, business qualification, commercial promotion and international expansion, investment attraction, and country image promotion. The program primarily targets micro and small enterprises, startups, associations,

cooperatives led by women, and rural women entrepreneurs from the North and Northeast of Brazil. According to an internal resolution from its board, all ApexBrasil actions, including courses, training, mentoring and business rounds, must comprise inclusive mechanisms to promote gender equity, such as additional scoring, tiebreaking criteria, discounts and reserved slots for female leaders. These actions can be carried out directly by ApexBrasil or in partnership with 75 institutions. Thirty-three actions were carried out in 2023, directly impacting 1,189 companies. One of these actions was the "Elas Exportam" initiative. In 2024, the MNI received the *Elas Lideram 2030* award from the UN Global Compact Brazil Network. ApexBrasil envisions the MNI broadening its intersectional perspective, incorporating race/ethnicity, while simultaneously building and strengthening networks of communities, professionals, and inclusive and impact-oriented buyers and investors, both in Brazil and abroad.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Growth in women-led companies: by the end of 2023, the number of women-led companies supported by ApexBrasil increased by 33.4%, rising from 2,161 to 2,883, in comparison to 2022.
- Institutionalization of gender equity: the effective implementation of a gender equity program requires institutionalizing the agenda.
- Strategic partnerships: partnerships strengthen and escalate the results of the Program.
- Inclusive leadership mechanisms: inclusive mechanisms for female leadership are essential to increase women's participation and representation in access to information and to knowledge, as well as in international business activities.
- Diversified training formats: diversifying training formats, with courses, mentoring and seminars addressing gender-specific issues, as well as networking, is essential for developing both technical capabilities and soft skills for international business.

References

- <https://apexbrasil.com.br/mulheresenegociosinternacionais>

- <https://www.g20.org/pt-br/noticias/mulheres-e-negocios-internacionais-programa-brasileiro-impulsiona-empresarias-a-conquistarem-o-mundo>
- <https://estudio.folha.uol.com.br/apexbrasil/2024/03/acao-da-apexbrasil-faz-crescer-numero-de-empresas-lideradas-por-mulheres-nas-exportacoes.shtml>

Women in Foreign Trade: An Analysis for Brazil

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of gender disaggregated data

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services

Description

The participation of women in trade was measured for the first time in Brazil through a study conducted by the Foreign Trade Secretariat in 2023. The participation of women was measured in terms of workforce and the corporate structure of companies that participate in international trade.

The numbers found in the study stem from the available data in three sets of national databases: the official foreign trade database, the Annual Social Information Report (RAIS), and the National Register of Legal Entities (CNPJ). The official foreign trade database provides records of exports and imports by company. It contains information such as the partner countries, the products, and the values of the transactions for each company, categorized by month and year.

Through RAIS it is possible to obtain information regarding the number of workers in all legal entities, including with respect to race and gender.

In its turn, the CNPJ database, used by the study to analyze the corporate structure, allows access to the nominal list of members of a company's corporate structure, with no data relating to gender. The names of the individual partners were then correlated with data from the classification of Brazilian gender names, based on data from the 2010 census of IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics). This classification indicates the

likelihood of gender for each name, according to the frequency observed in the census.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Gender participation in trade workforce and corporate structure: in Brazil, women, in average, make up for 29.2 % of the work force of companies that recorded exports and 32.5% of companies that engaged in imports in 2020. Women were the majority in the corporate structure in only 14% and 13% of the businesses that respectively exported and imported in 2022.
- Enhanced corporate structure analysis: the inclusion of gender-specific data and equity participation in corporate structure databases would improve the accuracy of analyses related to women-owned companies in Brazil.

References

https://www.gov.br/mdic/pt-br/assuntos/comercio-exterior/estatisticas/outras-estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior-1/women_in_foreign_trade.pdf

Canada



Business Women in International Trade Initiative

Challenges Addressed

- High prevalence of women-owned businesses among MSMEs
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Lack of information on business promotion methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Trade Commissioner Service, Global Affairs Canada

Description

Canada's Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) provides free services to help Canadian companies of all sizes grow and succeed in international markets. In alignment with Canada's Export Diversification Strategy and Inclusive Approach to Trade, the TCS offers tailored programming to help women-owned and -led businesses access international export opportunities in the form of the Business Women in International Trade initiative (BWIT). This

initiative leverages the TCS network across Canada and abroad to organize in-person and virtual programming for women entrepreneurs, including business delegations, webinars, and export accelerator programs. Examples of past initiatives have included a two-month long training, mentorship, and business-to-business program showcasing 8 women tech founders to venture capital firms in the U.S. (2023), a women's Team Canada Trade Mission to the United Kingdom (2023), and a delegation of more than 80 Canadian women-owned companies attending the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference, one of North America's largest conference for women entrepreneurs (2024).

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The BWIT initiative has been supporting women-owned and women-led businesses since 1997. Last year, the TCS provided support to more than 800 women-owned companies to explore opportunities and expand their business in international markets.
- Benefits of Business Delegations and Trade Missions: These can be excellent options for women-owned and -led businesses to learn more about new markets, share best practices, and find partnership opportunities.
- Value of Wrap-Around Supports: Support both prior to and following business delegations such as pre-departure briefings, webinars to improve pitches and develop capability statements, as well as strategies for effective follow up can increase women entrepreneurs' confidence and preparedness for in-market missions.
- Building a Supportive Network: It is often effective to develop programming elements that are dedicated to cohort development (e.g. cohort pitch session, asking founders to lead their own session in their area of expertise), which allows women founders to get to know one another, leverage each other's knowledge, and create a supportive ecosystem of female entrepreneurs.
- Importance of Coordinated Support: Collaboration among ecosystem partners is important to ensure that seamless support is provided to women entrepreneurs throughout their entrepreneurship journeys. As part of an interconnected group of government organizations within Canada, the TCS employs a "no wrong door" approach. This means that women-owned and -

led businesses are connected with different partners and organizations in the Canadian support ecosystem depending on their needs. By doing so, entrepreneurs receive timely and targeted assistance, ensuring they get the right help at every stage.

References

- [Trade Commissioner Service - Splash page | Service des délégués commerciaux - Page de garde](#)

Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)

Challenges Addressed

- Limited participation of groups traditionally underrepresented in international trade
- Perpetuation of existing inequalities
- Lack of trade policies tailored to the specific needs of underrepresented groups

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Trade Agreements Secretariat, Global Affairs Canada

Description

Canada's inclusive approach to trade for FTAs is supported by Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), an analytical tool that integrates gender and inclusive perspectives into trade policy formulation, FTA negotiations, and implementation. In the trade policy context, GBA Plus assessments aim to discover the potential effects and opportunities of a trade agreement on women, men and non-binary persons in Canada given their roles in the economy as workers, business owners and consumers. GBA Plus uses gender disaggregated data, modelling, research and analysis to help inform Canadian negotiators and policymakers of the varying effects of an FTA Chapter on diverse groups of people, taking into account gender and other intersectional factors such as Indigenous heritage, age, sexual orientation, education,

language, religion, ethnicity, and geographic location. This helps to avoid perpetuating inequalities and ensures the benefits and opportunities that flow from trade are more widely shared with all Canadians.

In practice, a GBA Plus analysis in the trade negotiation process involves Canada's lead negotiators conducting a qualitative analysis of the chapters they are negotiating. They assess the effects (positive and negative, direct and indirect, intended and unintended) of provisions on men, women and non-binary persons in Canada. Canada's lead negotiators also consider how these provisions may affect different identity factors, where relevant data and evidence exist. This process takes place before negotiations begin, after each round of negotiations and at the conclusion of negotiations. Throughout this process Canada also seeks stakeholders' and rights holders' feedback on its GBA Plus assessments and aims to integrate their views during negotiations.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Since 2018, conducting comprehensive *ex ante* and *ex post* GBA Plus of FTAs has been Canada's standard approach.
- Canada has published summaries of the initial GBA Plus of the following FTAs: [Canada-Mercosur](#) (2019), [Canada-United Kingdom](#) (2022), [Canada-Indonesia](#) (2022) and [Canada-Ukraine](#) (2023). Canada has published GBA Plus Summaries analyzing the final agreed text of both the [Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement](#) (2020) and the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (2023).
- Reported the outcomes and engagement of consultations: Where substantive feedback is provided by Canadians and stakeholders, Canada publishes a "[What We Heard](#)" report, as done in 2020 following consultations on the summary of the first GBA Plus conducted on the Canada-Mercosur FTA negotiations. The feedback highlighted the value of Canada's ongoing impact assessment during negotiations and identified gaps, risks, and provisions to enhance gender-related outcomes in a Canada-Mercosur FTA.

References

- [WTO | Trade Policy Review: Canada](#)

- [Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA Plus\) webpage](#)
- [Trade and gender in free trade agreements: The Canadian approach](#)

Trade and Gender Chapters and Related Provisions

Challenges Addressed

- Gender inequality and discrimination
- Lack of gender-responsive trade policies
- Disproportionate barriers to women's participation in international trade

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Trade Agreements Secretariat, Global Affairs Canada

Description

Since 2017, Canada has sought to advance the interests of women in trade throughout its FTAs by negotiating dedicated Trade and Gender chapters and by mainstreaming gender responsive provisions across its other FTA chapters such as labour, cross-border trade in services, investment, and government procurement. Canada's Trade and Gender chapters acknowledge that trade is not gender-neutral and that more can be done to advance women's economic empowerment and participation in international trade and investment. The chapters provide a framework for Canada and its partners to collaborate on women's entrepreneurship and gender-focused indicators and analysis. Additionally, they also aim to promote gender equality and nondiscrimination, remove barriers to trade for women in all their diversity, and facilitate their access to the benefits and opportunities of the FTAs upon their entry into force. For example, in April 2023, Canada and Ukraine concluded the negotiation of a standalone Trade and Gender chapter under the [modernized Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement](#) (2023). This chapter represented a new generation Trade and Gender chapter by including new provisions on women's economic rights and on non-derogation which commit Parties to enforce and not weaken their domestic laws and protections afforded to women to attract

trade and investment. It complements Canada's existing Trade and Gender chapters in the [modernized Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement](#) (2017), [modernized Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement](#) (2018), as well as its recommendation on Trade and Gender under the [Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement](#) (2018) with the European Union.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Reaffirmed the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into economic and trade issues.
- Established a community of like-minded countries among FTA partners to advance Trade and Gender issues and inclusive trade more broadly.
- Provided a framework for gender and trade cooperation: Canada's Trade and Gender chapters facilitate bilateral collaboration by sharing best practices to enhance women's access to trade and investment. These activities involve diverse stakeholders, including government, businesses, and civil society. Since 2017, Canada has participated in various initiatives, such as the Third Trade and Gender Committee meeting with Chile on May 14, 2021, under the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement, focusing on pandemic recovery, gender initiatives, and future plans in areas like digital trade and clean technology.
- Modernized Canada's stakeholder engagement approach to developing and negotiating Trade and Gender chapters and policies through the establishment of a more effective and inclusive consultative mechanism: Canada established the Gender and Trade Advisory Group (GTAG) in 2020 to support its Trade and Gender approach and streamline consultations on Trade and Gender. The GTAG facilitates stakeholder engagement and expert consultation and provides a forum for government officials to hear from experts on women's business issues. It also includes the GBA+ Subcommittee, which reviews confidential GBA Plus assessments of FTAs and offers key advice to government officials.

References

- [WTO | Trade Policy Review: Canada](#)
- [Trade and gender in free trade agreements: The Canadian approach](#)

China



BRICS Women Innovation Contest

Challenges Addressed

- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events.
- Lack of information on business promotion methods.
- Lack of negotiation skills.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- China council for the Promotion of International Trade
- China Chamber of International Commerce, Secretariat of BRICS Women Business Alliance, China Chapter

Description

At the BRICS Summit on November 17, 2020, the Chinese State Leader proposed the initiative of BRICS Women Innovation Contest (hereinafter referred to as the Contest) under the BRICS cooperation framework, which received wide support from all BRICS Leaders. CCPIT and CCOIC held the BRICS Women's Innovation Competition in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Upholding the people-oriented concept, the Contest was open to all business women in BRICS countries, and recognized outstanding business women devoted to promoting social welfare and economic development in different fields across BRICS nations, and promoted the exchange of best practices and innovative initiatives led by women, and thus to advance to the cooperation among business women across BRICS nations. The Contest has received high recognition from female entrepreneurs of five BRICS countries.

Representatives from South Africa, Brazil, and other countries who had won awards express their gratitude and recognition for the important initiative. They believed that this initiative provides an important communication platform and valuable opportunity for better empowering women, fully recognizing their value, and promoting innovative development for women.

In 2021, A total of 207 women entrepreneurs in the Contest, of which 40 from Brazil, 35 from Russia, 28 from India, 79 are from China and 25 from South Africa. Technology, service and consumer industries give birth to the largest number of women entrepreneurs. By industry, most of the candidates are from technology (26%), service (26%), and consumer sectors (20%). In the technology industry, many candidates are engaged in the R&D of software and hardware, In the service industry, many candidates are involved in education and design. In the consumer industry, most candidates are engaged in the clothing and catering business.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- For a start, BRICS countries' business environment indexes are rising. Regarding the rising tendency over recent years. The rise in the index indicates that BRICS countries will be more favorable to entrepreneurs in the next five years. Such environments will also provide a solid foundation for women to start businesses.

•Second, women play an increasingly important role in innovation, entrepreneurship, and business management. Public data shows that 33% of senior managers, 30% of executive managers, 30% of prominent decision-makers, and 17% of CEOs or persons in charge of enterprises worldwide are women due to economic development and the rising status of women, BRICS countries are buzzing with women's entrepreneurial activities as all encourage entrepreneurship.

•Last, women's growing intention to start businesses and increasing entrepreneurial activities are closely related to support from national policies and financial institutions. BRICS governments and financial institutions have launched support programs to facilitate women entrepreneurship. For instance, in China, the State Council provides development opportunities and incentives for women entrepreneurs, including startup guidance, funds, and talent. Over the past decade, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), in conjunction with the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CPC and other nine departments, has carried out "the program for growth analysis and policy promotion of female talent". ACWF's Legal Department and Women's Studies Institute of China actively promote and uphold women's rights and interests, as well as talent cultivation. Over the recent years, the government has also proactively improved the entrepreneurial environment in the context of economic transformation to step up tax benefits, improve relevant laws, and underline intellectual property rights, which laid the groundwork for women to start businesses.

Reference

[BRICS Women Innovation White Paper, 2021](#)

Provide favorable network conditions for women to participate in international trade cooperation

Challenges Addressed

- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities.
- Lack of access to digital services (e.g. broadband internet).

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China

Description

China continues to promote universal telecommunications services and provide favorable network conditions for women to participate in international trade cooperation. Since 2015, the organization has implemented 10 batches of universal telecommunications services, supporting the construction of 130,000 administrative villages with fiber optic networks and 89,000 rural 4G and 5G base stations, achieving 100% broadband access, over 99% 4G access, and over 90% 5G access in all administrative villages nationwide. The average download speed of rural fiber optic broadband networks exceeds 100Mbps. Efficient, convenient, and reliable communication network services provide a solid network foundation for women and other users to carry out e-commerce, cross-border trade, and other economic and trade activities. And it also plays a positive role in eliminating the digital gender gap.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Promote networking opportunities: the improvement of telecommunications infrastructure provides guarantees for women's participation in e-commerce and trade.

References

Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China

Provide financing support for women's employment and entrepreneurship

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Lack of information on how to access financing.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- All China Women's Federation

Description

Under the leadership of the All China Women's Federation, the China Women's Development Foundation began implementing the Mother Entrepreneurship Circular Fund project in 1996, using the method of "small loans, household poverty alleviation, circular use" to help women in poverty find employment and start businesses. Over the years, the project has continuously increased its connotation and upgraded to the "@ She Entrepreneurship Plan", carrying out various empowerment training and comprehensive projects such as e-commerce live streaming, beauty and makeup, peony planting and processing, housekeeping, cooking, entrepreneurial development, flexible employment at home, and etc. As of the end of 2023, the "@ She Entrepreneurship Plan" project has implemented a cumulative revolving fund of 418 million RMB, covering 28 provinces (regions, cities), helping 572,900 women start businesses and find employment, and driving more than 3.74 million people to increase income. Among them, from 2019 to 2023, a total of 78.46 million RMB of revolving funds were implemented, 48.6 million RMB of women's empowerment training projects were implemented, benefiting more than 175,000 women.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Provide financial support and training courses for women's employment and entrepreneurship: With the improvement of economic conditions, lots of women's family and social status have also significantly improved.

References

<http://mqcy.cwdf.org.cn/>

European Union



Access2Markets web platform

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of general trade information online
- Lack of information on tariff, taxes procedures and formalities when doing business abroad
- Access of key information about EU Trade agreements

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- European Commission, DG TRADE

Description

In the EU, as compared to men-led business, women-led companies are considerably more likely to be small-sized in terms of turnover and number of employees. The size creates specific challenges, including with regards to access to trade information.

The Commission's web portal for imports and exports Access2Markets was launched in October 2020 and while being available to any user, it is particularly helpful for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, and therefore a large number of women-led business. It offers a wealth of free, searchable, multi-lingual, and up-to date trade information. It covers 135 export markets outside the EU and more than 200 source markets. Companies can consult information on tariffs, taxes, quotas, import formalities and procedures for their imports and exports, and they can compare rules of origin across all EU trade agreements. The platform includes a self-assessment tool to help businesses find their way through the rules of origin in different EU agreements, a search engine (My Trade Assistant tool) by product on information about goods, procurement, and services.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The platform has had more than 8 million visitors since 2020, with My Trade Assessment tool for goods having 16 million search results and rules of origin self-assessment tool used in 433,000 assessments.
- More than 10,000 participants (SMEs included) reached through trainings about Access2Markets tools and features.

References

<https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/welcome-access2markets-market-access-database-users>

InvestEU Programme

Challenges Addressed

- Difficult access to finance, especially early stage and growth finance for female-led and gender-diverse companies
- Limited number of women amongst investors

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- European Commission in cooperation with the InvestEU implementing partner, the European Investment Bank Group

Description

Access to finance is a challenge for women-led business in the EU. According to Atomico 2023 report, in 2023, all-women founding teams raised just 3% of all money invested in Europe, with mixed gender founding teams raising 15%. 82% of all funding went to men-only teams. There is also a limited number of women among investors: only between 10 and 14% of senior management and decision makers in venture capital are women

The InvestEU programme 2021-2027 aims to give an additional boost to sustainable investment, innovation, social inclusion and job creation in Europe. The programme consists of three building blocks: the InvestEU Fund, the InvestEU Advisory Hub and the InvestEU Portal. It aims to trigger EUR 372 billion in investments using an EU budget guarantee, through debt and equity financing.

To bridge the gender investment gap in equity financing, the European Commission decided to support investment funds that are women-led and gender diverse. This has been done through the introduction of a target for equity intermediaries supported by the InvestEU Fund through the European Investment Fund (part of the EIB Group). The objective is that at least 25% of the supported funds should be gender diverse and therefore include women in senior management or investment decision-making. This is contributing to more funding flowing to women-led and diverse companies as studies show that diverse funds are 2-3 times more likely to invest into diverse companies. Under the InvestEU Advisory Hub, technical support and capacity building is provided to women gender-diverse investors and financial institutions aiming at supporting their capacity in terms of establishing financial services and products tailored to women.

The InvestEU Portal brings together investors and project promoters on a single EU-wide platform, by providing an easily accessible and user-friendly database of investment opportunities. In this framework, dedicated match-

making events are organized between female-led and gender-diverse companies and investors.

Additionally, a network of gender-conscious investors is being established to provide learning, networking and match-making opportunities, to exchange good practice and to raise awareness of women about career opportunities in investment.

All these actions will widen the scope for the financial inclusion of women and nurture the growth of women owned/led companies.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

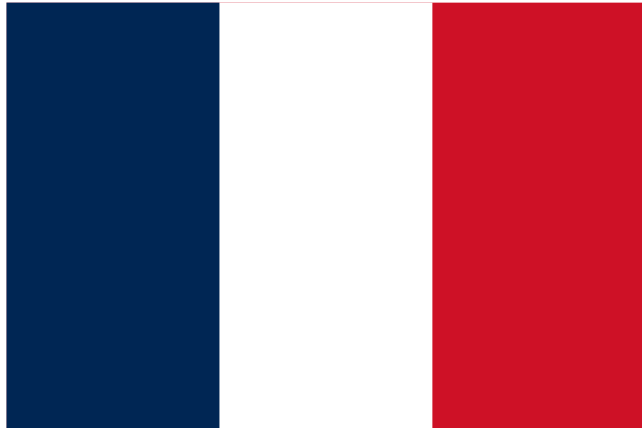
- InvestEU implementation is currently ongoing. First results indicate that the target of 25% of funds supported by InvestEU being gender-diverse has already been exceeded.

References

https://investeu.europa.eu/investeu-programme_en

<https://engage.eif.org/diversity-inclusion/female-representation>

France



Facilitating access to entrepreneurship for women in France

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of follow-up support in training programs;
- Lack of collateral to support the credit application;
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- BPI France (French public investment bank)
- French regional councils

Description

Given that French women account for only 37% of business start-ups in 2022, the French government has strengthened and developed new tools in

partnership with BPI France to facilitate women's access to entrepreneurship, including:

- The organization of events dedicated to female entrepreneurship, such as Women Entrepreneurs' Day or Digital Women's Day;
- Supporting mentoring and coaching networks for business start-ups and takeovers: for example, the Wom'energy program, which aims to support all women entrepreneurs at every stage of their project's development and growth;
- Increase financing for women entrepreneurs via honor loans or “Women's Equality Guarantee”, which aims to facilitate women's access to bank credit to finance the creation, takeover or development of their businesses;
- Raise awareness among young people by organizing testimonials by female entrepreneurs in schools.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- In 2023, more than 78,000 women entrepreneurs were supported by the networks supported by BPI France;
- 40% of new businesses are started by women and according to an OpinionWay study in March 2024, the desire to be an entrepreneur is now stronger among women than men in France: 48% in 2024 versus 40% for men.

Reference

<https://www.economie.gouv.fr/entreprises/femmes-entrepreneuses-entrepreneures-aides>

Women's Leadership School in Côte d'Ivoire

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of follow-up support in training programs;
- Lack of negotiation skills;
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias;
- Lack of information on how to access financing.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Max Haavelaar France
- Fairtrade Africa
- AFD - Agence française du développement (French Development Agency)

[leadership-des-femmes/](#)

Description

The Women's Leadership School is a French-funded program designed to support future female leaders in Côte d'Ivoire, with the aim of empowering rural women who are often marginalized.

Economic improvement in cooperatives is the primary lever for empowerment and rebalancing the relations of domination between men and women in the agricultural sector. The Fairtrade Development bonus is used to finance healthcare, infrastructure, better access to education and training, and childcare. Secondly, the Fairtrade/Max Havelaar label includes specific criteria to defend women's rights, such as gender non-discrimination, the fight against sexual intimidation, and access to social rights that are all too often not compulsory under national laws (sick leave or maternity leave).

Finally, more and more cooperatives are introducing quotas to encourage women's participation in their governance.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- 93 producer organizations were trained, with a total of 260 participants, including 77 women. And 43 of these producer organizations were helped to prepare financing applications: IMF, social investors and commercial banks;
- The “Foresight and Cooperation” assessment of the project in 2024, showed that the school had a positive impact on self-confidence and knowledge of women's rights as well as leadership capacity, negotiation skills, financial management and savings capacity;
- At the institutional level, women have been able to join the board of directors, which was previously the preserve of men. And at political level, the school has led some women to claim their right to land.

References

<https://programme-equite.org/les-activites-du-programme/ecole-du->

Germany



Sensitization for Women in Cross Border Trade Ghana

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations.
- Delays due to unclear and inefficient customs processes.
- Harassment during customs procedures.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and its programme 'Alliances for Trade Facilitation' (A4TF)
- Ghanian Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI)

Description

MoTI through its Trade and Gender Subcommittee under Ghana's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) ran an activity "Sensitization for Women in Cross-border Trade" under the 'Alliance for Trade Facilitation' program. A4TF developed Gender Guidelines ensuring that all its activities are gender sensitive and follow the "do no harm" principle. This activity is to be conducted in 3 phases with the NTFC Trade and Gender Subcommittee.

1. Sensitization of Women in Cross-Border Trade on their rights, processes at the border posts and trade opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Women traders were mobilized through the Ghana Union Trader's Association (GUTA) in 3 regional capitals. A dialogue platform on women at borders, where over 300 women were engaged, was also established.

2. Sensitization of Border Officials and Identification of Gender Champions. Six border points were earmarked for the sensitization. Attention was given to borders with increased foot traffic compared to other less busy border points. About 70 border officials were sensitized on gender. During the sessions, the officers could nominate Gender Champions to advocate for women at the border posts.

3. Planned: Cross-Border Traders and Border Officials Dialogue to find common solutions concerning women's safety at the border.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Over 300 women cross-border traders were trained to handle border declarations on the AfCFTA and the Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) eliminating the need for middlemen, thus lowering transaction costs.
- A total of 70 border officials were sensitised on gender. A total of 20 officers (10 men and 10 women) are now Gender Champions advocating for women.

References

<https://tradefacilitation.de/en/news/ghana-enabling-women-in-cross-border-trade/>

<https://tradefacilitation.de/en/news/tackling-gender-issues-through-the-trade-lens/>

Action Plan "More women entrepreneurs for our SMEs"

Challenges Addressed

- Financial services for women entrepreneurs and improved access to venture capital for women
- More startups by and with women
- Making self-employed women and their achievements more visible
- New career prospects for girls and women entrepreneurs in the skilled craft sector and STEM occupations

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Joint Action Plan consisting of Federal ministries (5 in total), state and European financing institutions, trade associations and networks (40 stakeholders in total)
- Lead: Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)

Description

Women entrepreneurs are indispensable for a vibrant and successful German SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) sector. More self-employed women in Germany's "Mittelstand" – SMEs, the skilled craft sector, and traditional and innovative new startups – could generate additional growth and make a significant contribution towards the green and digital transitions. The participating stakeholders jointly aim

- to highlight the achievements of women in SMEs, skilled crafts and startups,
- to motivate more women to go into business,
- to establish a joint platform for a large number of existing and new measures and activities in various fields, and

- to enhance the visibility and impact of the individual measures, in order to bring about positive changes for the career and personal prospects of women and to boost the performance, competitiveness and future viability of our SME sector.

The Action Plan is an incentive and appeal to the relevant federal ministries, companies, associations, networks, scientists and the self-employed women themselves to breathe life into the over 40 measures provided under the 4 main goals (see "challenges addressed"), to use and develop them, and to add their own activities.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

The Action Plan forms the starting point of an ongoing work process. E.g. there are points where the flow of information has been improved, but there is still a lack of studies and data to back up demands and interests. To this end, we want to maintain a constructive dialogue with federal ministries and associations. Also, new connections need to be built up, e.g. to the organisations of self-employed female migrants, and issues need to be discussed outside their usual context, e.g. having the Economic Affairs Ministry reflect on the protection afforded to working mothers. The traditional communication patterns are to be changed, e.g. via input from the Federal Association of Liberal Professions (BFB) to promote the visibility of women in the media. And coalitions are to be built, e.g. by having companies headed by women certified by the German Association of Women Entrepreneurs (VdU), which can open up access for companies managed by women to supply chains of multinational enterprises. The organizations of the skilled craft sector are to be given systematic access to the STEM clusters, in order to promote occupations in the skilled craft sector across Germany.

References

<https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Wirtschaft/action-plan-more-women-entrepreneurs-for-our-smes.pdf>

India



Pradhan Mantri (MUDRA) Micro-Units Development & Refinance Agency: Funding the Unfunded

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Harassment during the credit application process.
- Discomfort when pitching for financing
- Lack of information on how to access financing.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance

Description

The Prime Minister's (MUDRA) Micro-Units Development & Refinance Agency, launched in 2015, is a financial institution set up by the Government of India under PMMY for development and refinancing micro unit enterprises, which may otherwise find access to credit services challenging due to lack of collaterals to support the credit application.

Through this intervention, income-generating small business enterprises in manufacturing, trading and service sectors, including activities allied to agriculture such as poultry, dairy, beekeeping, etc. are financed through Term loan and Working Capital to sustain and scale their business.

Collateral free loans of up to Rs. 10 Lakh (USD 12,000 approx) extended by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) viz Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Small Finance Banks (SFBs), Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) etc. are offered. There are three categories, to support businesses from establishment to growth to scaling.⁴

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

•Awareness generation on access to finance: As a government initiative, launched by the Prime Minister, the scale of public outreach is unparalleled, thus giving wings to the dreams and aspirations of millions of women entrepreneurs, along with a feeling of self-worth and independence.

•Establishment of women-led businesses: 69% of the loans sized up to one million rupees have been sanctioned to women-owned and operated enterprises. Till 2024, approximately 480 million loans amounting to USD 3.47 billion under MUDRA scheme were sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.

•Eliminated barriers in access to credit: Provision of collateral-free loans has ensured that gendered barriers in access to credit, such as limited capital, or lack of property ownership in the name of women do not hinder women's aspirations in setting up and scaling businesses. Moreover, it helps create credit history for women, which works to their advantage as their businesses

⁴<https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2023/apr/doc2023410179101.pdf>

grow.

Stand Up India

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Harassment during the credit application process.
- Discomfort when pitching for financing
- Lack of information on how to access financing.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance

Description

Stand up India Scheme was launched in 2016 and it promotes entrepreneurship at grassroots, recognizing the intersectional challenges faced by entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of the society such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women in setting up enterprises, obtaining loans and other support needed for succeeding in business such as advice/ mentorship. Women-owned business enterprises are playing a prominent role in society by generating employment opportunities in the country, bringing in demographic shifts and inspiring the next generation of women founders. Stand Up India Scheme has encouraged “women empowerment through entrepreneurship”.

It creates an ecosystem that facilitates a supportive environment for doing business. The scheme facilitates bank loans of value between Rs.10 lakh (INR 1 million) and Rs.1 crore (INR 10 million) to at least one SC/ ST borrower and one-woman borrower per bank branch of Scheduled Commercial Banks for setting up Greenfield enterprises in trading, manufacturing, services sectors & Activities allied to agriculture. To facilitate ease of access, benefits can be availed either directly at the branch or through the Lead District Manager (LDM) and even directly online through Stand-Up India Portal (www.standupmitra.in).

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Ease of access to finance: 84% of loans worth USD 5.2 billion to approximately 200,000 women have been made available to women by the Government of India.

Start Up India

Challenges Addressed

- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs.
- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities.
- Lack of information on training providers and courses.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events.
- Lack of information on business promotion methods.
- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Lack of negotiation skills.
- Gender bias during the application process

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Promotion of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Commerce

Description

With a vision to promote the sustainable development of women entrepreneurs for balanced growth in the country, Startup India is committed towards strengthening women entrepreneurship in India through initiatives, schemes, creation of enabling networks and communities and activating partnerships among diverse stakeholders in the startup ecosystem.

With special attention towards entrepreneurship, the Government of India has played a key role in the facilitation and disbursement of a large number of loans to small women-led enterprises ensuring that women become a vital force in the country's burgeoning start-up ecosystem supported under the Start-up India Initiative.

To promote flow of both equity and debt to women led startups, 10% of the fund (INR 1000 crore or 1.2 billion USD) in the Fund of Funds for Startups

Scheme operated by Small Industries Development Bank of India or SIDBI is reserved for women led startups.

The 'Women for Startups' initiative conducts capacity-building workshops in different regions of India to promote the start-up culture among women and equip them with capacities on investing. Women Capacity Development Programme 'WING' is a unique Capacity Development Program for women-led startups, to identify and support both aspiring and established women entrepreneurs in their startup journeys.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

•Capacity Development of women-led businesses: 'Women for Startups' initiative has impacted over 1,300 women entrepreneurs across 22 states and 24 districts, with 200 startups pitching to investors and incubators.

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises

Challenges Addressed

•Access to Financing: Lack of collateral to support the credit application.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

•Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) jointly set up by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt. of India and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

Description

The Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGMSE) was launched by the Government of India to make available collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprises (including MSEs owned by women) for loans up to a limit of Rs. 500 lakh (w.e.f. 01.04.2023). Guarantee coverage of up to 85% of loans is provided to women entrepreneurs, as against the normal rate of 75%. Both the existing and the new enterprises are eligible to be covered under the scheme.

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) provides guarantee for the credit extended by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) to Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs), without collateral and third party guarantee. To ensure maximum utilization of the scheme, CGTMSE organizes workshops/ interactive sessions for MSEs and Industry Associations, in association with MSME-Development and Facilitation Offices (MSME-DFOs), Member Lending Institutions, etc. CGTMSE is also creating awareness on the scheme by disseminating information of the scheme during the events in National Mission for Capacity Building of Bankers (NAMCABs) organized by Reserve Bank of India.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

CGTMSE has partnered with 20+ Banks. More than 7 lakh (i.e. 07. Million) MSMEs have been supported under the scheme and more than Rs 74000 crore (i.e. Rs 740 Billion) have been disbursed till date.

References

<https://www.cgtmse.in/>

Mahila Coir Yojana (MCY) and other Capacity Building Programs

Challenges Addressed

•Access to Information and Business Opportunities: Inadequate suitability of trainings for MSMEs and High Cost associated with Training

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

•Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt. of India and its organisations including Coir Board, Khadi & Village Industry Commission (KVIC)

Description

MahilaCoir Yojana is a sub-component of the Coir Vikas Yojana. MCY is a 100% women oriented and intensive two-month training programme which

aims to provide training to rural women engaged in the coir sector, on sophisticated machinery/advanced technology in order to upscale their living standards and thereby attain self-sustainable employment. Under this programme, the women beneficiaries are given skill training in coir spinning. They are provided stipend during the training. The trainees are encouraged to apply for a loan under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) thereafter, for starting their own micro coir enterprises. During the last five years, more than 11,000 women artisans engaged in the coir industry were trained.

Further, Capacity building through training programmes in the areas of entrepreneurship development, management development, market development, skill development, etc. are provided through various Entrepreneurship and Skill Development programmes. During the last three years, around 3 lakh women were provided trainings through KVIC training centres, Tool Rooms, Technology/Extension centres situated across the country.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- During the last five years, more than 11,000 women artisans engaged in the coir industry were trained under Mahila Coir Yojana.
- During the last three years, around 3 lakh women were provided trainings through KVIC training centres, Tool Rooms, Technology/Extension centres situated across the country.

References

<http://coirboard.gov.in/>
<https://msme.gov.in/entrepreneurship-and-skill-development-programs>

SAMARTH Initiative

Challenges Addressed

- Access to Information and Business Opportunities: Lack of information on opportunities and events; and Lack of information on business promotion

methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt. of India and its organisations including national Small Industries Corporation Ltd.(NSIC)

Description

Samarth Initiative has been launched by the Ministry in March, 2022. Under this, 20% of MSME business delegations sent to domestic fairs/exhibitions held in India and international exhibitions abroad under the Marketing Assistance schemes (namely International Cooperation-IC Scheme and Procurement & Marketing Support Scheme) implemented by the Ministry of MSME are dedicated to women-owned MSMEs. The IC scheme provides financial assistance to eligible MSMEs (including women led MSMEs) taking part in international exhibitions held abroad, by way of reimbursement of air-fare, stall charges etc. This scheme aims to capacity build MSMEs to enter export market and to continuously update themselves with new technology upgradation, change in demand and emergence in new market. Samarth initiative has also reserved 20% seats for women entrepreneurs in its skill development programs; and provides concession to women entrepreneurs on annual processing fee on NSIC's commercial schemes; and special drive for udyam registration of women-owned MSMEs.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- In FY 2023-24, around 85 Women entrepreneurs have benefitted under International Cooperation scheme by way of financial assistance for their participation in international exhibitions held abroad. `.

References

<https://ic.msme.gov.in/>
<https://msme.gov.in/>

Indonesia



PNM MEKAAR

(PNM Membina Ekonomi Keluarga Sejahtera)

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Lack of information on how to access financing
- Lack of information on training providers and courses
- Lack of information on business promotion methods.
- Lack of negotiation skills

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- PT Permodalan Nasional Madani (PNM)
- Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises

Description

PNM Membina Ekonomi Keluarga Sejahtera (PNM Mekaar) is a capital loan service launched in 2015, specifically aimed at underprivileged women entrepreneurs engaged in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM). Essentially, PNM Mekaar customers possess knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship; however, limited access to working capital financing hinders them from fully utilizing their business skills. Some reasons for this limited access include formalities, scale of operations, and lack of collateral. To bridge this financing gap, the company implements a joint liability group system, which is expected to facilitate access to financing, enabling customers to expand their businesses to achieve their aspirations and improve family welfare.

The PNM Mekaar service is focused on women engaged in micro-enterprises, belonging to families with a maximum per capita income index of USD 1.99 per day or Rp800,000 per month, and meeting the Cashpoor Index House criteria. PNM Mekaar financing does not require physical collateral; instead, it is based on a joint liability group, with the condition of disciplined adherence to the preparation process and Weekly Group Meetings (PKM). PNM Mekaar Syariah is an empowerment service based on group principles in accordance with Islamic law, guided by fatwas and/or Shariah compliance statements from the National Shariah Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council.

In response to the market demands, since late 2018, PNM Mekaar Regular financing has been developed and established in several branches, starting from Aceh, Padang, and West Nusa Tenggara regions. By the end of 2022, PNM Mekaar Syariah has acquired 9,928,948 customers, accounting for 74.7% of the total 13,824,173 Number of Accounts (NoA) for PNM Mekaar customers.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Enhanced financial management skills
- Collateral-free capital financing
- Encouragement of savings culture
- Entrepreneurial competence and business development

References

<https://www.pnm.co.id/bisnis/pnm-mekaar>

BUILD

(Bangun Wirausaha Perempuan Berdaya)

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate suitability of trainings for MSMEs
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias
- Lack of information on how to access financing.
- Lack of negotiation skills

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- ANGIN Foundation Ecosystem
- The Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of Indonesia

Description

BUILD is a program that empowers women entrepreneurs by providing access to financial capital, knowledge through 1:1 tailor coaching with industry expert, and supporting regional and national market access.

Women Micro Entrepreneurs (WME) often face limited market access but are capable of producing raw materials or services. Meanwhile, Women Small Growing Business (WSGB) have market access but are unable to produce raw materials or services independently. This program is designed to bridge the existing gap between WME and WSGB in Indonesia, creating a collaborative ecosystem and unlocking the potential of women-led businesses in Indonesia. Specifically, BUILD Program will target WME, where they will collaborate with WSGB, for example, through co-creation schemes. This will enable grant funding to tackle down micro businesses, and supported by mentoring, coaching, and other assistance tailored to business needs. Hence, this program is seeking WME with capacity to manage the grant funding provided and a vision for business development and collaboration. This program

focuses on three sectors: Fashion & Craft, Culinary, and Beauty & Wellness. It is highly recommended for participants from outside Java or remote areas in Indonesia. The program is designed for one year long and is still ongoing. It will be completed in November 2024.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Each year, every Women Small Growing Business (WSGB) will be matched with 10 Women Micro Entrepreneurs (WME) individuals through a co-creation process, with focus on incorporating gender mainstreaming and inclusivity interventions. The connection between WSGB and 10 WME is through group vendorship/buyer-supplier relationships, ensuring inclusivity and equal participation in collaborative work.
- Personalized training: individual mentoring is crucial to meet the specific needs of female entrepreneurs, helping them overcome unique challenges they face in international trade.
- Support network: creating a support network and sharing experiences among participants can strengthen the confidence and resilience of women entrepreneurs.
- Sectorial approach: selecting specific sectors for each edition enhances the program by tailoring support to the unique needs of each industry and increases the likelihood of a successful match between mentor and mentee.

References

<https://anginfofoundation.org/id/build/>

Capacity Building for Startup through Incubation (Startup Go Global)

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate suitability of trainings for MSMEs.
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities.

- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Lack of negotiation skills.
- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Discomfort when pitching for financing.
- Lack of information on how to access financing

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of The Republic of Indonesia

Description

This program aims to enhance the business capacity of Indonesian startups through an incubation program. In 5 to 6 months, startups will get workshops, training, assistance, mentoring, access to a wider business network, and the opportunity to partner with national and international businesses or organizations (Startup Go Global). The Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (MCSME) of the Republic of Indonesia has developed this program since 2021 (and still going) in collaboration with 23 business incubators and facilitated 575 startups from various regions in Indonesia. In this program, MCSME support startups to develop better business foundation and also accelerate their business capacity. MCSME train and prepare startups for pitching to investors, companies, or organizations from the national level, and also from country partners (Republic of Korea, Japan, Australia, and Netherlands). MCSME promote startups to get new networks and gain partnerships through investment, market expansion, and/or technology/knowledge support. In this program, MCSME facilitate all startups with various backgrounds, including startups led by women or women as startup team members.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- This program has identified many startups from around the region that have good business prospects and will benefit society.
- Startups develop their business in many aspects such as in production, management, and market.
- Some startups, including startups led by women and/or women as startup

team members, get support and collaboration from international partners including funding, market expansion, and technology/knowledge support.

- This program promotes startups that have potency and allows them to improve and build sustainable businesses.

References

- <https://umkm.kompas.com/read/2024/07/03/115700483/kemenkop-ukm-ajak-startup-dan-petinggi-inkubator-jajaki-peluang-bisnis-di>
- <https://www.ipb.ac.id/news/index/2024/07/tingkatkan-jejaring-startup-lkst-ipb-university-cocovine-ikuti-short-course-startup-go-global-ke-australia/>
- <https://btp.telkomuniversity.ac.id/seleksi-tenant-dalam-rangka-peningkatan-kapasitas-startup-tahun-2024-bersama-kemenkop/>
- <https://www.rri.co.id/ipitek/852640/kemenkop-ukm-unsoed-gelar-bootcamp-tenant>
- <https://iti.ac.id/institut-teknologi-indonesia-bersama-kemenkop-ukm-gelar-demo-day-startup-festival-collaboration-2023/>

Italy



Women in Export

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate knowledge of export and international procedures.
- Lack of technical and managerial skills.
- Lack of information and capacities on opportunities and business promotion methods.
- Inadequate sustainable and inclusive growth of SMEs in the digital and ecological transition.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- SACE (Italian Export Credit Agency)

Description

Women in Export is a business network promoted by SACE Education to strengthen the skills and competences of Italian women managers and entrepreneurs on leadership and internationalisation. Women in export aims to increase the networking and support abilities of women professionals who work in export, business internationalisation and sustainability. It is a digital environment where women can share good practices and opportunities of peer-to-peer education, transfer knowledge as well as career and governance models. The digital environment supports online interactive and immersive online training sessions, live talks, networking sessions, one-on-one talks. The network covers all Italy's strategic business sectors and has spun a more specific project that offers training to women professionals from the South of Italy in collaboration with Microsoft, UPS and the University of Naples.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The programme is ongoing and has over 1000 women participants.
- The programme aims at empowering women business and export capacity.
- The programme aims at creating value in the company in a sustainable and circular way and developing leadership and creative skills for innovation with an international perspective.

References

<https://www.sace.it/media/eventi/dettaglio-ciclo/women-in-export>

<https://www.sace.it/media/eventi/dettaglio/women-in-export-obiettivo-sud>

Women's Enterprise Fund

Challenges Addressed

- Difficult market entry and expansion.
- Difficult access to capital and finance.
- Lack of access to mentorship, training, and other resources vital for starting and growing a business.
- Poor innovation capacity and technology integration.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Economic Development
- INVITALIA (National Agency for Inward Investment and Economic Development)

Description

The Women's Enterprise Fund is the national incentive that supports the creation and consolidation of businesses led by women, promoted by the Ministry of Economic Development.

Investment programs are financed in the sectors of industry, crafts, processing of agricultural products, services, commerce and tourism.

The Fund makes 290 million euros (250.000 EU funds, 40.000 Italy's funds) available to women's businesses, new or already established.

The Fund finances: i) interventions for business start-up, investment and strengthening of the financial and capital structure of women's enterprises, with specific attention to high-technology sectors; ii) programs and initiatives for the dissemination of entrepreneurial culture among the female population; iii) training and orientation programs towards subjects and professions in which the presence of women must be adjusted to the European Union and national level indications.

Invitalia is the managing body of the measure.

The Fund is accompanied by the Women's Entrepreneurship Program, with three macro-activities: i) promotion, communication and orientation; ii) training and diffusion of entrepreneurial culture; iii) diffusion of STEM values (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and professions.

The program supports entrepreneurs, including in trade, or potential entrepreneurs, students, researchers, and more generally the entire female population.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

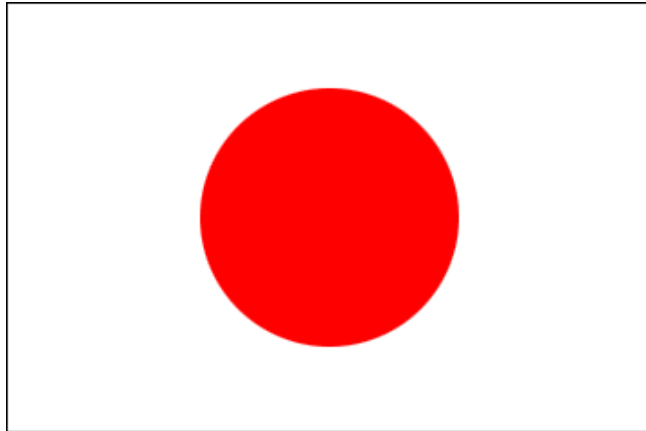
- The funds were made available by the Ministry of Economic Development at the end on 2021 and were already exhausted in June 2022.

- The fund provided financial support and facilitated access to loans, it offered business support services to women.
- The fund promoted more inclusive practices in the business environment and encouraged women-led enterprises to innovate and adopt new technologies, addressing the challenge of staying competitive in a rapidly changing market.
- 743 enterprises have received financial support through the Women's Enterprise Fund (cf. Government Report on the Status of Implementation of the NRRP submitted on June 7, 2023).

References

- <https://www.mimit.gov.it/it/incentivi/fondo-impresa-femminile>
- <https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/fondo-impresa-femminile>

Japan



Female Entrepreneurs Support Package

Challenges Addressed

- Limited access to networks of entrepreneurs
- Limited knowledge of fund raising, business expansion, finance/ taxation/ legal matters

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The ministry of economy, trade and Industry (METI)
- Japan Finance Corporation (JFC)

Description

METI has developed a policy package to support female entrepreneurs in May 2023. It includes the creation of role models, the establishment of a support

network for female entrepreneurs, the supply of matchmaking opportunities and financial support. The details are as follows.

1) Promote role models

- Launched an overseas dispatch programme for the promotion of women entrepreneurs in 2023, continuously implemented in 2024.
- Expand information dissemination through female alumni of the project to increase the number of female applicants for “MITOU Project.”
- Maintain the objective of “increase the participation of women entrepreneurs” in ministerial missions.
- The project aims to increase the proportion of women entrepreneurs in J-Startup to at least 20% by 2033 (currently 8.7%).

2) Build supporting networks for female entrepreneurs

- Expand regional support programs for female entrepreneurs nationwide in collaboration with other support agencies.
- Train personnel to assist in the development of women entrepreneurs in the government platform for Start-up Support “Plus”.

3) Provide matchmaking opportunities

- Hold women entrepreneurs' pitches by Japan Open Innovation Council.
- Hold regular events for women entrepreneurs and employees by J-Startup.

4) Financial support

- JFC provides seed fund support for women and youth/senior entrepreneurs.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- We will keep an eye on the state of progress in the future as we have started this project from 2023.

References

<https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/content/siryo8-1.pdf>

(*We don't have an English version.)

Mexico



Partnering in Business with Germany – Women Entrepreneurs

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on client and distributor mapping and outreach
- Many women entrepreneurs face difficulties accessing funding and investment capital.
- Lack of mentors and support networks is another significant challenge.
- Provide training and resources to develop key skills in areas such as leadership, business management, and technology.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of proficiency in the English language is a significant barrier for women-owned MSMEs to access these programs.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Economy
- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action

Description

Partnering in Business with Germany is a bilateral cooperation program established between the Mexican Ministry of Economy and the German Federal Ministry of Economic affairs and Climate Action whose objective is to prepare leaders of Mexican micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with the potential to be part of foreign trade, to explore new markets through direct business contacts in sectors such as in manufacturing, automotive, food, health, industry 4.0, energy, waste management, software, handicrafts, construction, logistics and services among others.

Since the first edition in 2013 until November 2023, 506 businesspeople have participated, receiving training in Germany to enter the market and establish business contacts in the country.

In 2023, three calls for the program were issued, receiving a total of 93 applicants, of which 34% were women and 66% were men. Additionally, during the month of December, the Tenth Anniversary of the program was celebrated in Mexico with a Networking event at the facilities of the Secretariat of Economy, attended by 114 alumni.

In early 2024, the program launched the “Woman in Business” edition to highlight the role of women in the economy and the contribution of women-led MSMEs to employment. This edition is the first call exclusively for women and recognizes the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and executives. Its objective is to enable Mexican SMEs led by women to establish long-term business relationships or alliances with German SMEs.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Registration for the call closed on February 20, 2024, with an historic number, the call received 373 applications from businesswomen, of which 100 were selected for an interview, and 74 of them were accepted into the program, whose range of businesses covers the manufacturing, digital services, and agribusiness sectors.

References

https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/892347/Primera_Convocatoria_Women_in_Business_Febrero_2024.pdf

Mujer Exporta MX

Challenges Addressed

- Predominance of women-owned businesses in the services sector
- High prevalence of women-owned businesses among MSMEs
- Lack of negotiation skills.
- Lack of information on how to access financing.
- Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations.
- Difficulty in complying with regulatory requirements.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

Organizing Committee

- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Welfare
- Ministry of Finance and Public Credit
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- National Institute of Women (INMUJERES)
- Tax Administration Service

Allied Institutions

- Inter-American Development Bank and Connect Americas

Description

Mujer Exporta MX, spearheaded by the Mexican Ministry of Economy, is an initiative dedicated to empowering women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to penetrate international markets.

The programme is structured around two primary components. Firstly, it offers comprehensive training in export practices, equipping participants with essential skills such as market analysis, compliance with international trade

regulations, and effective marketing strategies. Secondly, it actively fosters connections between these enterprises and international buyers. This is achieved through leveraging Mexico's extensive network of Free Trade Agreements, which opens up unique opportunities by facilitating access to diverse markets. Together, these components work synergistically to empower women-led businesses to thrive in the global marketplace. The programme uses hybrid training models, combining both face-to-face and virtual interactions, to deliver comprehensive export education.

Mujer Exporta MX has substantially elevated Mexican women's participation in international trade by:

1. **Targeted Training:** Providing comprehensive, tailored training sessions designed to demystify the complexities of exporting. These sessions cover a broad spectrum of crucial topics, including understanding international market trends, compliance with trade regulations, effective negotiation skills, and strategies for competitive pricing. This training empowers women entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills necessary to confidently navigate the global marketplace, enabling them to make informed decisions and effectively manage their international operations.
2. **Virtual Business-to-Business Meetings (only for women-owned enterprises):** Facilitating direct connections between women entrepreneurs and potential buyers through virtual business-to-business (B2B) meetings. These meetings are planned to capitalize on Mexico's extensive network of Free Trade Agreements, which provide preferential access to numerous global markets. By arranging these interactions, the programme has managed to bridge the gap between local businesses and international markets, offering women entrepreneurs unique opportunities to expand their customer base and explore new revenue streams. The Program employs a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure widespread awareness and engagement among potential participants and partners.

Together, these initiatives not only broaden market access for these businesses but also enhance their operational capabilities. Women

entrepreneurs emerge from the programme not just as potential traders but as savvy business owners equipped with the tools to thrive in competitive international markets. The result is a notable boost in their business prospects and later, an increase in their contribution to the economy, marking significant strides towards gender equality in trade.

Mujer Exporta MX is a transformative initiative by the Mexican government designed to foster inclusive economic growth by integrating women-led MSMEs into the global economy. With over 1.6 million MSMEs in Mexico led by women, the programme addresses a crucial need for targeted support to enhance their access to international markets. This integration is vital not only for fostering sustainable economic development but also for reducing poverty and advancing gender equality.

Mujer Exporta MX has demonstrated its scalability and sustainability through the execution of four annual editions from 2020 to 2023. On 2024, Mujer Exporta MX has already launched its 5th edition.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Since its inception in 2020, Mujer Export MX has conducted five annual editions, significantly impacting the trade landscape for women:

- **Training Impact:** Over 11,800 individuals have received specialized training in financial and digital inclusion, targeted market access, and export logistics.
- **Business Rounds:** Facilitated 289 business meetings, connecting 317 MSMEs with 137 international buyers, culminating in a projected \$7.48 million in business prospects.
- The buyers were companies from selected markets in North America (Canada and United States), Asia (Japan), Latin America (Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic), Oceania (Australia, New Zealand) and the European Union (Denmark, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden).

Inclusive Participation: In 2022, the programme proudly included 88 indigenous and LGBTQI+ women-led companies, enriching the diversity of its participants.

Over the course of four editions of Mujer Exporta MX, significant insights have been garnered regarding the pivotal role of inter-institutional support in bolstering Mexican women entrepreneurs' engagement in global value chains. This support is essential not only for facilitating their initial entry into these markets but also for ensuring their sustained success and growth within them. The foundational motivation behind Mujer Exporta MX is to create a level playing field where women-led MSMEs can compete fairly and thrive in the global marketplace. By offering tailored training modules, the programme addresses specific knowledge gaps that hinder women entrepreneurs. These modules cover a range of crucial topics, from understanding international trade regulations and standards to leveraging digital tools for marketing and sales.

References

- <https://www.gob.mx/se/prensa/inaugura-gobierno-de-mexico-cuarta-edicion-de-mujer-exporta-mx>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kAkwm6wXmc&list=PLEISXjUufikBL1Z2xICz32AMRve82akMv>
- <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/quinta-edicion-de-mujer-exporta-mx-impulsa-democratizacion-del-comercio-exterior-e-inclusion-de-empresarias-mexicanas-en-la-exportacion?idiom=es>
- https://www.facebook.com/story.php/?story_fbid=782205510749440&id=100068799956684
- https://mipymes.economia.gob.mx/mujer_exportamx/

Hecho en México por Mujeres

Description

In 2022, Inmujeres and Mercado Libre signed a Specific Collaboration Agreement to **provide Mexican women entrepreneurs access to the online store "Made in Mexico by Women."**

The goal is to boost their participation in e-commerce, expand their sales, and utilize the digital resources and training available on Mercado Libre's sales

platform.

Responsible Agencies/Institution

- National Institute of Women (INMUJERES)
- Mercado Libre

Challenges Addressed

- High prevalence of women-owned businesses among MSMEs
- Lack of opportunities to access digital trade
- Difficulty in complying with regulatory requirements.
- Digitalization of micro-entrepreneurs' and businesswomen's businesses and ventures

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Increase in sales for micro-entrepreneurs and businesswomen by leveraging the store's showcase
- 2024: 1,353 products for sale from over 110 women sellers. 17 of them generate \$600k in monthly sales

References

<https://tienda.mercadolibre.com.mx/hecho-en-mexico-por-mujeres>

Republic of Korea



Global Accelerator Program

Challenges Addressed

- Insufficient information on training courses
- Insufficient information on business promotion methods
- Lack of follow-up support for training programs
- Lack of access to adequate financing
- High costs associated with education, networking events and fairs

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of SMEs and Startups
- Women Enterprise Supporting Center

Description

The *Global Accelerator Program* exclusively designed for women-led businesses is a pioneering initiative launched in 2024. This comprehensive program aims to empower women entrepreneurs aspiring to enter overseas markets by facilitating the development of international sales channels. The primary beneficiaries are women-led businesses established within the past seven years. The initiative aims to foster the expansion of nascent women-led businesses in international trade.

The support program is divided into four stages that are conducted sequentially: practical education, consulting, promotional support, and market development. Practical education focuses on enhancing the global expansion capabilities of women-led enterprises seeking to enter overseas markets, and covers export strategies, trade practices, and successful case studies. The consulting stage delivers customized consultations with industry experts to enhance export capabilities. Promotional support involves assisting women-led businesses in creating promotional materials essential for global expansion, such as websites, product videos, and social media content. Finally, market development supports entries into overseas markets through participation in international product exhibitions, investment attraction initiatives, and integration into global online platforms.

Each stage of the support program is highly competitive, which necessitates the active engagement of the beneficiaries. Of the 1,000 teams undertaking global expansion education, only 70 teams are offered the opportunity to receive global capacity building consultations. Thereafter, based on the results of the consultations, the program selects those women-led enterprises with the highest potential for global expansion. The selected enterprises receive extensive support: 20 teams benefit from global promotional assistance, while support is provided to 10 teams participating in international exhibitions and other market development activities.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

As of July 2024, 1,000 teams have completed practical education, with consulting currently underway for the 70 selected teams. Given the outstanding capabilities demonstrated by many women-led enterprises

during the education and consulting phases, significant global expansion is anticipated going forward.

References

<https://www.wbiz.or.kr/www/foundationssupport/foundationssupportwglobal.jsp>

Russia



National Action Strategy for Women for 2023-2030

Challenges Addressed

- Stereotypes regarding women's role in society and economy
- Time constraints due to care commitments
- Gender wage disparity

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation
- Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation

Description

Russia has an experience of applying the holistic approach towards the women empowerment. Implementation of the previous National Action

Strategy for Women for 2017-2022 resulted in the growth of women's opportunities in the area of international cooperation and improved their well-being.

Ensuring the principle of equal rights for men and women in various areas, increasing the economic independence and political activity of Russian women, have become the key goals of the new National Action Strategy for Women for 2023-2030.

Russian women are focused on full-time employment and career growth combined with family responsibilities and child rearing. At the same time, the share of women in industries, where wages remain below the economy average, ranges from 60 to 80%.

The Strategy provides for these and other problems to be solved, among other things, by fostering women's interest in technical and technological professions, involving women in the digital economy, creating a system of continuing education and professional development, developing remote forms of employment, and increasing women's participation in entrepreneurship.

A key priority of the Strategy is to develop international cooperation among women, increase the participation of women entrepreneurs in export activities and ensure their access to international markets. This work should help to overcome the stated issues and benefit the achievement of SDGs.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Expanding the practice of including provisions in collective bargaining agreements aimed at supporting employees with family responsibilities and disseminating best practices in the application of corporate programs by companies; identification of the best corporate programs (projects) for the development of women's leadership.
- Organization of training for women and providing them with new expertise and qualifications in the field of entrepreneurial activity in export-oriented sectors of the economy and implementation of measures aimed at increasing women's participation in international entrepreneurial activity, including through participation in international exhibitions, contests, forums, conferences, etc.

- Increasing the participation of women entrepreneurs in export activities and ensuring their access to international markets.
- The launch of “What a Woman Can Do” and “10 Steps towards Investment” educational programs, which are aimed at empowering women in financial services.
- Holding international competitions for the best women's entrepreneurial projects at international organizations and associations (BRICS, APEC, and others). Offering the “Women’s Business” award within the all-Russia competition “Young Businessmen of Russia”.

References

<https://mintrud.gov.ru/ministry/programms/8/8>

“Mama Entrepreneur”

Challenges Addressed

- The lack of business-related knowledge among women, particularly young mothers (such as on business promotion methods, client mapping and outreach, negotiation skills, financial opportunities).
- Balancing full-time employment, career growth and caretaking
- Time constraints due to care commitments
- Lack of networking opportunities

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation
- SME Corporation

Description

The "Mama Entrepreneur" program is an educational program designed specifically for women on maternity leave and those with underage children to help them start their own business and effectively combine caretaking for the family and professional self-realization. The program helps mothers to come up with a business idea, understand the potential client base, learn about

different business strategies, marketing and the legal requirements, gain needed digital skills and form a professional community with other participants. Program includes a series of trainings, lectures and on-site practice that allow women to thoroughly design and implement their business. The participant with the best business pitch receives a grant to support her business.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The program has been implemented for more than 10 years with 74% of participants successfully starting a business; this way, more than 8100 businesses were opened. The program allowed many women on maternity leave to bring to life their business ideas, expand their professional network, and find an additional income source for their families.

References

The website is available only in Russian - <https://мамапредприниматель.рф>

“Women's Business”

Challenges Addressed

- Insufficient business knowledge (especially financial business planning, the nuances of taxation, communication with governmental agencies)
- Lack of networking opportunities for women in business

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Russian Export Center
- Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation
- Central Bank of the Russian Federation
- Federal Tax Service of Russia
- SME Corporation

Description

“Women's Business” is a comprehensive educational program. The program

helps businesswomen to see the export potential of their business and master the competencies needed to compete in foreign markets. Businesswomen receive knowledge about efficient financial management with due regard to a company's lifecycle. The trainings allow working with issues related to accounting, taxation, and state support opportunities. This program is designed not only for business professionals, but also for beginners. Experts from the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the Federal Tax Service of Russia, and the SME Corporation participated in the creation of the course. This course is a part of a large project of the Eurasian Women's Forum Council "Women's Cooperation in International Trade" aimed at improving the entrepreneurial, financial, and investment literacy of businesswomen.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The program empowers women entrepreneurs who have innovative ideas and want to expand their business knowledge. The on-site educational seminars are supported by the online study materials.

References

The website is available only in Russian - <https://exportedu.ru/fin-for-girls>

Saudi Arabia



Female Entrepreneurship Motivation Program

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate suitability of trainings for MSMEs.
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs.
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs.
- Lack of information on training providers and courses.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events.
- Lack of information on business promotion methods.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monshaat).
- Private Sector
- Ministry of Human Resources and Social Affairs

Description

The Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monshaat) aims to enhance awareness and encourage women in entrepreneurship through its "Female Entrepreneurship Motivation Program". This initiative is designed to boost their involvement in the services and programs offered, track available development opportunities, and address challenges. The program consists of various initiatives that support female entrepreneurs and women who own businesses among MSMEs. *These initiatives include:*

(1) The "Nawafth App" provided by Monshaat offers a range of services, guidance programs, and consultancy for enterprises in the establishment phase or throughout the stages of growth and success. These services aim to increase SMEs' chances of success, stability, and enable them to overcome challenges by providing competent consultants and advisors.

(2) *Monshaat Academy* plays a key role in fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among women and enhancing the development of female entrepreneurs. It focuses on turning ideas and innovations into leadership opportunities, understanding the essential studies and procedures for starting and establishing businesses, and navigating investment offers. The academy aims to elevate performance and business experience by teaching marketing strategies and applying best practices and techniques for business success.

(3) The *Tomoh platform* helps identify opportunities in sectors specifically aimed at women and facilitates their access to both local and international markets.

(4) Monshaat also offers the "*Business Facilitation Offices*" service in collaboration with existing chambers of commerce and industry across various regions of the Kingdom. It also partners with the public sector to identify the main challenges and obstacles faced by SMEs and entrepreneurs. The aim is to address the challenges facing female entrepreneurs by developing regulations and systems which led to improve the business environment and develop appropriate solutions.

(5) *She's Next* is an international award supported by Visa, aimed at supporting and empowering women by funding their small businesses and providing training and mentorship to propel their ventures to new heights. In

collaboration with Monshaat, the program offers support to female entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

(6) The Entrepreneurial Camp is one of the initiatives of the awareness program aimed at promoting the culture of entrepreneurship at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University and Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University for women. The camp includes five intensive workshops with practical application, attended by a group of specialists and mentors. These workshops help to crystallize ideas and develop them into prototypes, benefiting 269 participants.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

These initiatives have significantly advanced women's participation in international trade, with the proportion of women-owned establishments rising from 21% in 2016, when Monshaat was established, to 40% in 2023. This growth reflects the government's efforts and the achievements of the National Transformation Program, which seeks to increase women's labor market participation and demonstrates the effectiveness of the support, and resources provided. These initiatives have also played a significant role in delivering services, training programs, and advisory support to women in the entrepreneurship sector, with the number of female beneficiaries now exceeding 30,000.

References

<https://www.monshaat.gov.sa/en/all-services-page>

"FASAH" a unified digital platform for the import and export system

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on customs procedures and regulations.
- Delays due to unclear and inefficient customs processes.
- Difficulty in complying with regulatory requirements.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority
- Saudi Ports Authority (Mawani)
- Saudi Standards Metrology and Quality Org.
- Ministry of Commerce

Description

"FASAH" is a comprehensive platform designed to streamline international trade services by automating import and export procedures. It enables importers and exporters to access 149 electronic import and export services, thereby enhancing trade facilitation and offering greater flexibility in clearance at land, sea, and air customs ports. Additionally, the platform supports women by providing access to information on customs procedures and regulations through the FASAH App which prevents delays due to unclear and inefficient customs processes. Women can easily access Importers and Exporters Services through the FASAH app, which offers a range of features including registering an importer at a new port, searching for clearance letter details, paying insurance fees, inquiring about HS Codes for importers and exporters, and printing customs declarations.

Women have also benefited from the *24-hour clearance program*, an initiative of the FASAH platform that has enhanced customs procedures through coordination with relevant government and private authorities involved in import activities.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

The FASAH platform has significantly eased customs procedures for women. By integrating with various government agencies, including the Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization, the General Authority for Food and Drug, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, as well as private laboratories and car dealers, the platform allowed women to manage customs procedures and transactions electronically and track them directly. This has streamlined and expedited their commercial operations.

References

<https://www.fasah.sa/trade/home/en/>

The Small and Medium Enterprises Loan Guarantee Program “Kafalah”

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of collateral to support the credit application.
- Harassment during the credit application process.
- Discomfort when pitching for financing.
- Lack of access to digital services (e.g. broadband internet).
- Lack of information on how to access financing.
- Gender bias during the application process (e.g. intrusive personal questions).
- Predominance of women-owned businesses in the services sector.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The Small and Medium Enterprise Bank (SME Bank)
- The Small and Medium Enterprises Loan Guarantee Program “Kafalah”
- Saudi venture capital company

Description

Kafalah aims at helping SMEs in obtaining the necessary financing to develop and expand their activities, and encouraging the financial institutions to deal with the SMEs sector, in addition to attracting new group of SMEs owner especially women, that have not previously dealt with financiers, with a view to developing the SMEs sector to realize its important role in the national economy through its contribution to providing new job opportunities, developing provinces that are least active economically.

Through *SME Bank*, *Kafalah program* aims to support the Saudi Vision goals to raise the SME sector’s contribution to the GDP to 35% by 2030 and to increase the volume of financing provided to SMEs to 20% of the total loan portfolio. The bank is an umbrella for all financing solutions, including debt financing, equity

financing, and providing loan guarantees on behalf of SMEs. In line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to build a digital economy and a digital nation, the bank will provide all services and products in cooperation with its partners through digital channels to facilitate the access of all areas in the Kingdom to these products and services.

The bank also provides male and female entrepreneurs with a “*credit advisor*” service to assist them in choosing the most suitable product and clarify the application process for obtaining products from the (SME) bank

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Enhancing the presence of women in non-service sectors by providing “export product” financing, which is a financial guarantee for establishments operating in the local and international export and import sector, which contributed to enhancing women’s participation in international trade.
- The program’s fully electronic services have contributed to bridging the gender funding gap, as the criteria and conditions are unified for both women and men, which has contributed to eliminating gender bias in the procedures for obtaining funding.

References

- <https://www.kafalah.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://smebank.gov.sa/en>

South Africa



Background

South Africa upholds the objective that gender equity is not only a fundamental right but also an economic imperative.

Across the globe, many Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are significant drivers of job creation, competitiveness, and innovation. They are an essential part of a wider ecosystem of firms and have a higher employment intensity compared to large firms. However, many MSMEs remain informal, and a large proportion of workers employed by MSMEs come from the vulnerable segments of the labour force, especially woman owned enterprises.

Gender gaps in trade continues to be a critical issue globally, hence, the agenda item in women's participation in international trade still remains an important aspect of the G20 programs. SA has made great strides in women's economic empowerment in trade, with various initiatives promoting gender inclusivity. However, challenges still exist, such as gender wage gaps and limited access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

South Africa also recognizes that women and international trade goals are impacted by the climate change and response measures must reaffirm the goal of limiting global temperatures increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase of 1.5 degrees, further upholding the principles of equity, Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC)

SA has implemented various policy initiatives to promote the inclusion of women in trade. Below we will discuss some of our best practices in a form of strategies, incentives programmes and policy initiatives introduced to contribute towards promoting and increasing participation of women in international trade;

Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Framework & Gender Mainstream Programme

Challenges Addressed

- Gender wage-gap.
- Limited access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Women, Youth & People with Disabilities)
- Department of Small Business Development

Description

The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Framework, is a policy framework, broadly focuses on creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs. It specifically, outlining key performance indicators relating to women Participation. addresses issues such as economic empowerment, gender mainstreaming, access to education, health services, and socio-economic participation. It aims to create an inclusive environment, reduce gender-based violence, and promote equal opportunities for women across different sectors to ensure that the process of achieving Gender equality is at the very center of the transformation process in South Africa within all the

structures, institutions, policies, procedures, practices and programs of government, its agencies and parastatals, civil society and the private sector. While on Gender mainstream Programme, form part of various programmes mainstreams Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and mainstreaming has the potential to expand women's role in the economy, decrease inequality, create jobs, and increase economic growth. The interventions prioritise women, youth and PWDs to ensure a minimum 40% target for women, 30% for youth and 7% for PWDs.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Increased number of women entrepreneurs participated in outside trade mission.
- Increase number of women businesses trained to be export-ready.

References

<https://www.gov.za/documents/other/womens-empowerment-and-gender-equality-south-africas-national-policy-framework-01>

The National Exporter Development Program (EDP) & Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA)

Challenges Addressed

- Limited capacity-building.
- Lack of mentorship.
- Limited Access to international Trade.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events.
- Lack of information on business promotion methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Trade, Industry & Competition (Export Promotion Branch)

Description

The EDP, is the program that reflects a commitment to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. It includes focused efforts to enhance the competitiveness of women-owned businesses in Export readiness for the global market. This is achieved through capacity-building, mentorship, and providing access to international trade opportunities, thereby supporting women entrepreneurs in expanding their international trade activities and fostering a more inclusive export environment.

While the Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) aims to develop and generate export-ready small enterprises that are globally competitive and able to grow markets both locally and internationally. The programme is designed to help small enterprises in South Africa to acquire and apply practical skills in developing their export capabilities. The EMIA program supports women-owned businesses by providing funding for activities such as participation in trade missions, international exhibitions, and market research. This helps women entrepreneurs access international markets, increase their competitiveness, and expand their businesses globally.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- DSBD established platform for women entrepreneurs to access mentorship programs.
- Created opportunities for Women business to access international platforms for trade promotion e.g. exhibitions.
- Coordinated capacity-building workshops to disseminate information on opportunities for trade, including events and shows, such as national pavillions, etc.

References:

- <https://www.thedtic.gov.za/sectors-and-services-2/1-4-2-trade-and-export/export-development-and-promotion/national-exporter-development-programme-nedp/>
- <https://www.thedtic.gov.za/financial-and-non-financial-support/incentives/export-marketing-and-investment-assistance/>

She Trades-ZA Hub

Challenges Addressed

- Limited access to international market
- Limited access to business networks.
- Wide gender gaps in international trade.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department of Small Business Development in partnership with International Trade Centre (ITC)

Description

SA enters into partnerships *with organizations such as* **International Trade Centre** aimed at furthering support to women entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of international trade. The programme is known as; **She Trades-ZA platform**,

The SheTrade-ZA hub is aimed to increase economic growth and create jobs by enabling increased participation of Women-Owned Businesses (WOB) in trade. This program supports women-owned businesses by facilitating access to market and networks, including enhancing women's economic participation and bridge gender gaps in international trade. The programme is implemented in partnership with the International Trade Centre.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Increased in quantities of Women business accessing international markets to business networks platforms, such as business association, business Chambers, etc.
- Women entrepreneurs increased access to business networks.

References

<https://www.dsbdd.gov.za/programme/shetradesza>

Türkiye



Export Akademi W2W-National Women Exporter Network Platform

Challenges Addressed

- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Remote training locations
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade

Description

Multiple barriers still exist that limit competitive capabilities of women entrepreneurs. Within this context, Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye (MoT) developed several projects in order to integrate women entrepreneurs into exports processes, to support these entrepreneurs on their way of becoming suppliers in the global value chains and promote exporting through e-commerce as well as through conventional trade. One of these projects is Export Akademi which we have carried out successfully since late 2019. As stated in the ITC's report **Export Akademi** is called 'Unlocking Markets for Women to Trade', women-owned export-oriented Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) tend to earn more, pay their employees more, employ more people and are more productive than firms that only operate domestically.

While developing the project, we undertook a survey of women entrepreneurs to determine the needs and challenges they faced moving to international markets. Seventy-one percent of entrepreneurs, mostly in manufacturing sectors, did not export although they deemed their products suitable for export. The challenges they expressed in moving into international trade were much the same as women entrepreneurs elsewhere: access to finance, accessing and engaging in B2B networks, difficulty engaging in e-commerce and accepting payments online, and a need for mentorship. Therefore, our aim was to develop a program that both conveys knowledge and experience to participants and closes the gap of professional networks at face-to-face events.

In an attempt to address these shortcomings, MoT partnered with the logistics firm UPS to create Export Akademi offering practical information on e-commerce, digital marketing, export procedures and advice on accessing government export incentives. The Academy has held 33 one-day events that were attended by over 6000 entrepreneurs since late 2019. The target group has been women entrepreneurs that are unfamiliar with export procedures but willing to learn how to export their products. In other words, target groups are chosen among women entrepreneurs who has at least some interest in exporting their products.

This program is an example of capacity building and creating networks for women entrepreneurs. It offers necessary practical information like how to

export a product by using online platforms, how to market their products with quality audio-visual material in online marketplaces, how to do right packaging or how to manage the return procedures. The ultimate goal of the program is to prepare women owned SMEs to become exporters.

W2W-National Women Exporter Network Platform is an online platform created for integrating more women owned business into exports process by developing corporate capacity and building network. The platform includes a mentorship module through which women entrepreneurs who have never exported or have just started exporting, and experienced women entrepreneurs can connect and become mentors and mentees. Thus, experienced women can transfer their knowledge and experience to women entrepreneurs. On this platform, there is also a communication and information sharing module that will allow women entrepreneurs to create a B2B network, a sectors module where women owned business can be filtered on sector and city basis, a training module containing detailed information on export processes and government supports of MoT and online education programs on various subjects.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Personalized training: individual mentoring is crucial to meet the specific needs of female entrepreneurs, helping them overcome unique challenges they face in international trade.
- Socio-emotional skills: developing socio-emotional skills, in addition to technical skills, is vital for business success, especially in competitive environments, such as foreign trade.

References

<https://www.trade.gov.tr/>

United Kingdom



Women's International Networking (WIN) Programme

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of access to networks of successful women business entrepreneurs
- Skills development for growing successful export businesses
- Lack of information on routes to funding and wider opportunities

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department for Business and Trade

Description

The Women's International Networking (WIN) Programme is designed to support women entrepreneurs to accelerate their business growth. The government led programme aims to increase the participation of women-

owned and women-led businesses in international trade.

Working in partnership with other government initiatives such as Help to Grow, UK Export Academy, UK Export Finance, Investment Taskforce, Export Champions and International Trade Advisors, plus external commercial partners. The programme includes workshops on:

•**Entrepreneurship & Self Belief:** *resilience strategies rooted in self-belief and determination are critical for women facing barriers such as limited access to funding and industry biases.*

•**Exporting:** *only 15% women-led SMEs exported in 2020⁵.*

•**Funding & Investment:** *women-led businesses in the UK receive significantly less venture capital funding compared to male-led businesses. In the UK, only around 3% of total investment went to all-women founder teams in 2023⁶.*

The programme of activity, which is free to access, consists of the outlined development and capability building workshops, the opportunity to join a trade mission and a largescale graduation/networking event. Currently, the programme is delivered across England, with expansion to the other UK nations soon. Each WIN cohort of 150 women joins previous cohorts on graduation, thereby continually building a powerful network of women – all connected through their pursuit of exporting excellence.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Metrics include measuring and recording export wins, capital investment, business growth and Free Trade Agreement engagement, as well as qualitative evidence including digital case studies and customer journey development.

As a result of the programme, 76% of participants are taking at least one exporting action, and 67% have increased their knowledge of and confidence in exporting. However, all women report the power of the programme is the network itself. We have found face to face delivery in addition to online seminars is crucial for women to build the relationships which are key to their success.

⁵ DBT analysis of the Longitudinal Small Business Survey (2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/small-business-survey-2021-businesses-with-employees>

⁶ British Business Bank (2024): <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/about-research-and-publications/small-business-equity-tracker-2024>

References

<https://www.events.great.gov.uk/website/12594/>

Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP)

Challenges Addressed

- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Remote training locations
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias
- Discomfort when pitching for financing
- Lack of information on how to access financing

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department for Business and Trade

Description

The GEP identifies and supports international entrepreneurs with innovative science and technology enabled businesses to scale and internationalise from a Strategic or UK Global HQ.

GEP's mission is to harness the power of entrepreneurship and our networks to ensure the UK continues to attract the best internationally mobile science and technology entrepreneurs and remains a leading technology hub where innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish.

The GEP is committed to diversity and inclusion, and as part of our 'Women in Entrepreneurship' strategy, we bring together like-minded individuals with the aim of identifying key challenges women and gender marginalised entrepreneurs face, and to explore how we can begin to address these.

Our ambition is to create a long-lasting initiative to encourage and empower founders in our community by sharing best practices, connecting them to the right networks, and highlighting issues to find workable solutions.

The group was launched in June 2019 as part of London Tech Week, with a

roundtable of GEP alumnae, GEP Dealmakers, and successful UK women founders. Since the launch, the team have continued to deliver activities and focused sessions and workshops to support and empower GEP women founders.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Each year the number of GEP women founders is growing, and we have more than doubled their number from 59 in 2020 to 135 in 2024.
- Connections to Angel and Venture Capital (VC) networks to address the funding barriers, including office hours events with VC's.
- Championing the success of women entrepreneurs and raising their profile within the private sector and government.
- Creating a support network and sharing experiences among participants can strengthen the confidence and resilience of women entrepreneurs.
- Providing continuous assistance through additional activities and connections with other programs better prepares the entrepreneur for exporting.

References

<https://www.great.gov.uk/campaign-site/gep/>

Digital Exporting Programme – Female Founders Edit

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Discomfort when pitching for financing
- Lack of information on how to access financing
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Department for Business and Trade (DBT)

Description

The Digital Exporting Programme Female Founders Edit forms part of a wider service provided to help British exporters scale internationally through digital trade. The women-focused strand of the programme aims to support women entrepreneurs (primarily SMEs) across the UK in growing their businesses internationally through digital channels, particularly via e-commerce.

The programme has been designed to address various challenges that women-led and owned businesses often encounter when attempting to export through digital channels for both goods and services. It provides an extensive range of tailored support services to help women entrepreneurs overcome these challenges and successfully navigate the world of digital exports. Some of the key support provided includes:

- Training and capacity-building in the form of workshops and masterclasses on cross-border e-commerce strategies, digital marketing, international trade regulations, and cross-border logistics.
- Consultation services with international trade experts in digital and e-commerce to provide tailored advice and guidance.
- Mentorship activities connecting women entrepreneurs with experienced mentors in the field of international trade and ecommerce and other digital technologies.
- Access to networking events in the UK & internationally, international trade missions and trade fairs, and online marketplace partnerships to export and showcase products/services and opportunities to connect with potential overseas buyers.
- Access to executive coaching designed for women executives.
- Access to a network of partner women-led associations and key industry organisations in tech and digital (including industry partnerships) to raise awareness of relevant targeted women business support available from the private sector, such as 'Invest in Women Code' signatories.⁷
- Education around securing finance (e.g. venture capital funding) and signposting financial assistance available in the form of grants to help

⁷ British Business Bank (2024): <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/about/our-values/investing-in-women-code>

businesses invest in ecommerce infrastructure and international digital marketing efforts.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

The programme has delivered:

- The creation of a peer-to-peer network of women business-leader champions for sharing of knowledge in a supportive environment.
- Series of tailored training delivered to participant needs exploring a wide range of specific themes and topics.
- Financial masterclasses on types of funding available and available network of providers to improve understanding, sourcing and application.
- Connections for programme participants to specific opportunities that have led to exporting deals and new business generation.
- Elevated visibility of participants and partner experience, helping to grow programme offering.

Lessons learned:

- Agile approach: adapting to audience needs and partner strengths in programme delivery.
- Peer-to-peer connections: creating opportunities for women-owned and/or led businesses to network and learn from each other.
- Encouraging diverse settings: men need to support women's economic empowerment as much as women for real economic growth to be achieved. Having more women in executive teams generates more business profit for example, companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile – up from 21% in 2017 and 15% in 2014.⁸

References

<https://www.great.gov.uk/campaign-site/digital-exporting-programme/#:~:text=The%20programme%20can%20help%20you,Trade%20Advisers%20and%20International%20Markets.>

⁸ McKinsey (2023): <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

United States



Women's Business Centers

Challenges Addressed

- Need for mentorship and networking with experts who understand needs of women-owned businesses in trade
- Access to financing
- Skills development, including business planning, management, and use of technology

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- U.S. Small Business Administration

Description

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has an extensive network of programs and support for small businesses, with some programs particularly tailored to women-owned small businesses. Within SBA, the Office of Women's Business Ownership and an Office of International Trade each look at unique barriers to women-owned businesses growing globally. SBA has

Small Business Development Centers throughout the United States. They provide individualized business advising and technical assistance to existing small businesses and pre-venture entrepreneurs, helping small businesses access capital, develop and exchange new technologies, and improve business skills in areas required for growth and expansion, management improvement, increased productivity, and innovation. Further, SBDC connect small businesses with financing opportunities, government-related opportunities for procurement, and mentorship and networking opportunities.

Through the Office of Women's Businesses Ownership (OWBO), SBA operates programs particular to the needs of women-owned businesses, including through Women's Business Centers. These centers help connect women-owned businesses to resources and opportunities specific to women, as well as the broader set of support and resources that might apply to businesses, including both those available to all business and those for groups such as minority-owned businesses. The Office of International Trade works with OWBO and the Association of Women's Business Centers to organize virtual trainings targeting the WBC clients and incorporate WBC counselors into programs.

Through SBA's Office of Entrepreneurial Development, all programs mentioned above collaborated on an on-demand training platform for women looking to scale their businesses, Ascent. This platform includes an international trade journey that covers importing, exporting and social entrepreneurship.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Connect women-owned business with technical assistance regarding accessing financing resources, including creative capital, financial repair, and matching with lenders from microlending to export finance.
- Provide services through public private partnerships with women's empowerment organizations that expand resources available to SBA clients.

- Partner with ethnic and diaspora organizations to reach women with cultural competencies and language expertise that would be positioned to grow globally.
- Share information about government opportunities through Women-Owned Small Businesses Federal Contract Program
- Counseling and training through Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) to support start-ups and expansion of existing businesses
- Connection with mentors through SCORE, the United States' largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors.

References

<https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/resource-partners/womens-business-centers>

Women in the Digital Economy Initiative

Challenges Addressed

- Significant digital divide - lack of internet access and internet-enabled devices for women, and relevant digital products and tools to participate in the digital economy.
- Need for increased digital skills and literacy.
- Online safety and security, including technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and digital user protection (data protection, cybersecurity, fraud)
- Lack of sex disaggregated data to support policy development and track and benchmark change.
- Better understand and address harmful gender norms that limit women's ability to connect with technology in meaningful, safe, and sustainable ways, which, if addressed correctly, can systemically change the global digital ecosystem

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Announced by Vice President Kamala Harris in 2023

- Funding level (\$50 million over 4 years) strongly supported by the White House Gender Policy Council as a flagship effort to help achieve the US Global Women's Economic Security Strategy (WESS)
- Included in report out during biweekly Sub-IPC organized by White House Gender Policy Council on advancement of WESS
- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Description

The Women in the Digital Economy Initiative brings together governments, private sector companies, foundations, civil society, and multilateral organizations to accelerate progress towards the closure of the gender digital divide and meeting the goal of the 2023 G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration to halve the digital gender gap by 2030.

The initiative builds on the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF), which was launched by Vice President Harris in March 2023 with initial funding from USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The initiative focuses on five pillars: 1) access and affordability; 2) relevant products and tools; 3) literacy and skills; 4) safety and security; and 5) data and insights.

In addition to specific USAID-led work, the initiative is aligned with other government and private sector initiatives working to close the gender divide. Governments with aligned work include Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Increase access to the internet and internet enabled devices in a manner that is affordable, reliable, secure, and accessible.
- Design, develop, and provide access to relevant products and tools that meet women's needs for participation in the digital economy, including marginalized women, such as those with disabilities and indigenous peoples.
- Strengthen women's digital tools and literacy, to fully and safely access digital services and participate in the digital economy.
- Address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including online

harassment and abuse, and strengthen safeguards for digital user protection.

- Expand collection and responsible use of sex-disaggregated data, research, and gender analysis.
- Expand Community of Practice to partners in the Digital Economy Initiative, to foster greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.

References

<https://www.usaid.gov/women-digital-economy-initiative>

Inclusivity and Trade Negotiations

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on barriers to participation in international trade by women and other underserved groups
- Need for consideration of distribution of benefits related to trade agreements
- Coordination of policies to empower and connect women and other groups to identify and address barriers and increase participation in international trade

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

Description

The United States believes that the success of trade agreements depends on the benefits of trade being broadly shared, including by women and other historically underrepresented groups. In negotiations under the Biden-Harris Administration, the United States has advanced this principle more explicitly through negotiations on trade and inclusivity. This includes policy statements such as the San Francisco Declaration in APEC as well as trade agreement chapters on Inclusivity (e.g., with IPEF and Kenya). In these negotiations, the United States and its trade partners are creating mechanisms to identify and share information about barriers to participation in international trade including through consultations, solutions and strengthening cooperation to

address those barriers, and data disaggregation and analysis to assess and track success of these efforts to achieve these inclusivity goals. Negotiations include specific goals related to gender and women-owned businesses, and also to other historically disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous peoples and local communities, minorities, Diaspora, youth, persons with disabilities, and rural and remote populations.

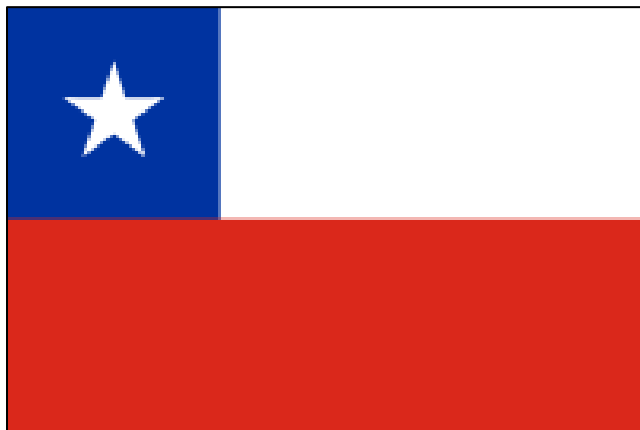
Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Conclusion of precedent-setting trade negotiations with inclusivity-related trade provisions integrated into trade agreement discussions.
- Establishment of strong interagency coordination to support negotiation and implementation of trade provisions related to gender and other historically underrepresented groups
- Cooperation and coordination/consultation mechanisms to share disaggregated data and other relevant information to meet objectives of inclusive trade.

References

[https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/IPEF%20Pillar%201%20Ministerial%20Text%20\(Trade%20Pillar\)_FOR%20PUBLIC%20RELEASE%20\(1\).pdf](https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/IPEF%20Pillar%201%20Ministerial%20Text%20(Trade%20Pillar)_FOR%20PUBLIC%20RELEASE%20(1).pdf)

Chile



Aduana Conecta Program (Customs Connect)

Challenges Addressed

- Integration of women into foreign trade.
- Overcoming barriers that limit women's participation in international trade.
- Empowerment of women in business, particularly in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.
- Enhancing the competitiveness and internationalization potential of women-led businesses.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- National Customs Service (Servicio Nacional de Aduanas)

Description

This program aims to integrate women into the economy through trade, offering a cycle of 5 workshops on key topics, in addition to mentoring participants, to highlight Chile's commitment to leading the adoption of inclusive and safe trade practices at the regional level. In the current context of globalization and economic openness, the role of Customs in facilitating international trade and ensuring supply chain security is fundamental. Within this context, the National Customs Service emerges as a key player in promoting inclusive, safe, and sustainable trade by launching a program focused on the economic empowerment of women in the country. This program not only underscores the importance of integrating women into the economy through foreign trade but also highlights Chile's commitment to leading the adoption of inclusive and safe trade practices at the regional level. The program will be implemented in two phases:

- Phase One (2nd half of 2024): Includes 5 workshops on imports, exports, the Single Window for Foreign Trade, the AEO program, ATA Carnets, and e-commerce, with a focus on supply chain security. This phase provides essential knowledge for women entrepreneurs to navigate international trade and ensure security.
- Phase Two (1st half of 2025): Features a mentorship program for select women from Phase One, guiding them in their initial foreign trade operations with an emphasis on security and customs compliance. This phase supports women, especially those in micro, small, and medium enterprises, to overcome barriers in international trade and enhance Chile's economic resilience and diversity.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Selection and participation of 50 Companies: These companies participated in a comprehensive training program designed to enhance their understanding and capabilities in foreign trade.
- Development of Customized Mentorship: The most promising businesses were offered exclusive guidance to help them execute import or export operations successfully.

References

<https://www.aduana.cl/programa-aduana-conecta-incentiva-internacionalizacion-de-empresas/aduana/2024-07-30/164418.html>

In-Depth Analysis Women-Led Businesses in Chilean Exports

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information related to the nature of businesses led by women, including the industries they operate in and their export destinations.
- Identification of gender gaps in foreign trade.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Undersecretariat of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Description

The radiography provides evidence through disaggregated data on female participation in foreign trade. Under the umbrella of the Undersecretariat of International Economic Relations, Chile has collected gender-disaggregated data on women's participation in trade since 2016. This data was analyzed for exporting companies by gender leadership, economic sector, gender gaps by destination, geographical region, and products traded.

As part of this interinstitutional effort, the data provided by ProChile, Customs, and the Internal Revenue Service were cross-referenced and analyzed, allowing for gender disaggregation of data for 100% of exporting companies. These data facilitated the identification of female leadership in exporting companies, their participation by sector, products, geographic region, and destination continent, helping to focus efforts on reducing gaps and identifying potential opportunities.

These studies have also demonstrated that international trade has increased women's wages and reaffirmed the fundamental role of trade policy in including women in foreign trade. They highlight its contribution to women's

economic independence, empowerment, and the country's economic development.

Chile's data collection process started after the adoption of the FTA with Uruguay in 2016, which contained a gender chapter, followed a year later by the 1st women-led companies forum of the Pacific Alliance.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Results show that only 27.9% of exporting companies are led by women, with a gender gap of 44.17%. However, 37.5% of the country's export value is generated by companies led by women. Women participate in exports within the same sectors as companies led by men, but to a much lesser extent. Out of 195 export destination economies, the value of shipments from companies led by women is higher than those from companies led by men in only 40 of them.
- Disaggregated data for monitoring and new negotiations: The numbers and figures obtained allow us to establish a baseline for new trade negotiations and strategically monitor the Gender Chapters in the Agreements.
- Generating specific initiatives: We will be able to focus our work at the regional and sectoral levels, creating specific initiatives for women exporters.
- International comparison: It will enable an international comparison with other countries that are developing their own statistics in this area.

References

<https://www.subrei.gob.cl/estudios-y-documentos/documentos/detalle-otras-fichas-y-reportes/sixth-in-depth-analysis-women-led-businesses-in-chilean-exports>

Trade and Gender Chapters in FTA

Challenges Addressed

- Gender Disparities: Women often face gender discrimination, leading to insecure jobs, limited access to economic assets, and underrepresentation in managerial positions and STEM fields.

- **Barriers to Women's Participation in Trade:** Women-led businesses face challenges in trading, exporting, and accessing financing compared to male-led businesses.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Undersecretariat of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Description

Chile has been a pioneer in incorporating Gender and Trade Chapters in its trade agreements. These chapters demonstrate a commitment to increasing the visibility and relevance of women's inclusion in international trade.

These chapters, each with its variables and particularities, recognize the importance of promoting gender equality and incorporating women's participation in international trade. They reaffirm international commitments and propose cooperation activities involving efforts in capacity development, financial inclusion, female leadership, women's network development, promotion of female entrepreneurship, and the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated statistical data, among others.

Additionally, they often include a Trade and Gender Committee or Subcommittee responsible for implementing the respective chapters and reporting to the Administrative Commission of the respective agreement.

Currently, there are chapters in force with Uruguay (2018), Canada (2019), Argentina (2019), Brazil (2022), Ecuador (2022), and Paraguay (2024).

Each chapter includes a bilaterally agreed Work Plan for at least two years, which outlines various cooperation activities and implementation mechanisms.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

The first impact study will be released in the second half of 2024, focusing on the FTA between Chile and Uruguay, which entered into force in 2018. Preliminary results include:

- The number of women-led exporting companies to Uruguay grew at an annual rate of 8.3% from 2019 to 2023, outpacing the growth of male-led companies.

- Women-led exporters to Uruguay increased from 155 in 2019 to 213 in 2023.

- The variety of products and services exported by women-led companies increased from 359 items in 2019 to 450 in 2023.

- Regular meetings and bilateral work plans have facilitated the successful implementation of the chapters.

Among the lessons learned:

- **Non-binding Nature of Chapters:** The Gender and Trade Chapters are not subject to dispute resolution mechanisms, which may lead to parties not considering them binding, resulting in disinterest or shortcomings in implementation. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the parties' interest in implementation.

- **Structured Approach:** The structured approach of regular bilateral meetings, capacity-building activities, and a detailed implementation plan has proven effective.

References

<https://www.subrei.gob.cl/ejes-de-trabajo/home-comercio-inclusivo/g%C3%A9nero>

The Netherlands



Growth Beyond Borders Campaign

Challenges Addressed:

- Access to Information and business opportunities
- Compliance with customs procedures and regulations

Responsible Agencies/Institutions:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO)

Description:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands has identified the internationalization of women's entrepreneurship as one of utmost importance. One of the main reasons is because there is much untapped economic potential among women entrepreneurs who want to export. The focus of the campaign is on providing access to finance, information and

networking opportunities for this group of women.

Through networking events and campaigns, the entrepreneurs are informed about the services that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides in cooperation with the Dutch Enterprise Agency (RVO). In doing so, they encourage entrepreneurs to take action: call the embassy, become familiar with RVO, discover financing instruments, go on a trade mission and join relevant networks.

The campaign provides women entrepreneurs a platform to share their experience in international business. Helpful advice is given and experiences are shared about the support that embassies and RVO can give in their international journey. The campaign is also a call to society: recognize the problem, be aware of prejudice against women and contribute to this cultural change

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Established network of women entrepreneurs
- Two trade missions directly targeting women entrepreneurs (Paris and San Francisco)
- Building 'local' networks of women entrepreneurs is essential. Through these networks, Dutch women entrepreneurs can easily navigate their way into new markets.
- In trade missions, participation of women is depends on many factors, of which the choice of sector is the main one.

References:

[Ondernemende vrouwen \(rvo.nl\)](http://ondernemende.vrouwen(rvo.nl))

Start-Up Night Africa

Challenges Addressed:

- Access to Financing
- Access to Information and business opportunities

Responsible Agencies/Institutions:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Lionesses of Africa
- African Guarantee Fund
- ABSA bank

Description:

Accessing crucial global markets poses a significant challenge for many women entrepreneurs. There is a pressing need to create effective platforms where both established and emerging women entrepreneurs from Africa and the Netherlands can exhibit their innovative solutions, compelling brands, and products to global buyers, influencers, investors, and collaborators. Start-up Night! Africa events are held in major cities worldwide with the aim of connecting Africa's dynamic new generation of women entrepreneurs to international market opportunities.

The 2nd Start-Up Night Africa event on June 11, 2024, in The Hague, The Netherlands, underscored the importance of investment and partnerships in addressing the gender finance gap for high-growth women entrepreneurs in Africa and the Netherlands. Hosted by Lionesses of Africa in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Netherlands, African Guarantee Fund, AFAWA, and Absa, the event built on the success of its 2023 predecessor in The Hague.

This event featured five inspirational women entrepreneurs from the Lionesses of Africa network across Africa who are actively seeking growth funding, market expansions, and strategic alliances. Additionally, it showcased five women entrepreneurs from The Netherlands keen on tapping into high-growth African markets and forging partnerships. The program provided a robust platform for these entrepreneurs to present their businesses and pitch decks to an audience comprising approximately 175 potential investors, buyers, banks, VIP guests, and key government officials in The Netherlands.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Promising business deals with Dutch investors
- Export opportunities (last years' edition resulted in direct export for the Dutch

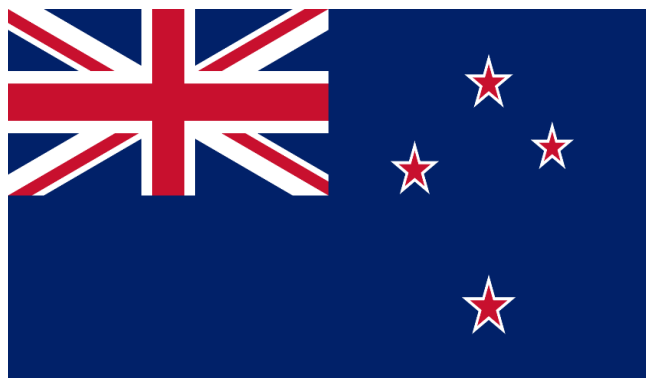
market)

- Established network of women entrepreneurs
- Partnership between Dutch entrepreneurs and African entrepreneurs

References

[Start-Up Night Africa Series — Lionesses of Africa](#)

New Zealand



Women in Export Programme

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate suitability of trainings and lack of follow-up support
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Access to financing
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE)

Description

The Women in Export Programme was established in 2021 by New Zealand's export promotion agency, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE), to inspire and support more women on their global export journeys. Led by a dedicated Women in Export Lead staff member, the programme has developed and

tailored a range of NZTE activities to support women-led exporters and address common challenges and opportunities. This includes at both an individual firm level and a systemic level.

As part of the Women in Export programme, NZTE established a target of doubling the number of women-led firms it supports by 2026. The specific activities provided through the programme have been informed by evidence-based analysis and engagement with female exporters. This includes insights gained from NZTE's own exporter partnerships as well as cross-government research on gender-based trade outcomes, such as the *OECD Trade and Gender Review of New Zealand* published in 2022. Key areas of focus include building female business networks, improving access to investment, increasing peer-learning opportunities, showcasing successful female exporters, and increasing understanding of gendered cultural expectations in some markets.

Now in its fourth year, the Women in Export Programme has significantly enhanced NZTE's support for women-led exporters and has been successful in growing the number of firms led by women that NZTE supports. The share of firms led by women has increased from 16% in 2022 to 22% in 2024, and international revenue of these firms has grown from \$1.6 billion in 2021 to more than \$2 billion in 2023.

Examples of activities delivered through the programme include:

- *'Women in Export Leadership' events* – Since 2021, NZTE have delivered more than 60 Women in Export Leadership Events attended by over 2,000 female exporters. Each event brings together women from across New Zealand to share and learn from each other's experiences and provide real insights into their exporting journeys in an informal environment.
- *Exporter networking events* – These events help to build business networks among women-led exporters to ensure they have the connections needed to scale their businesses globally. Events have included "speed networking" dinners and an annual 'Going Global Bus Tour' providing site visits to renowned women-led exporting firms.
- *'InvestHER' investment showcases* – InvestHer is an annual investment showcase organized by NZTE for up to eight women-led exporting businesses to help facilitate and prepare them for capital raising. Since the first event in

2020, several companies involved in the showcases have gone on to complete successful capital raises, including internationally.

- *Female participation on trade missions* – NZTE has worked with other government agencies to increase the number of women-led businesses participating in official trade missions. This included New Zealand’s first all-women trade mission to Australia in 2023, which comprised 26 female business leaders from a variety of sectors and industries.

- *‘What to Expect’ market events* – These online webinars feature experienced female exporters sharing information on what women can expect when doing business in specific markets. Recent webinars have focused on Saudi Arabia and Latin America.

- *‘Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit’* – NZTE developed a toolkit that provides practical guidance and resources for exporting businesses interested in bringing greater diversity to the leadership teams and organisations.

- *Profiling successful female exporters* – NZTE has collaborated with producers of local podcasts, including the Female Career and the Spinoff’s Business is Boring podcast, to create mini-series’ highlighting the careers of New Zealand women who have started exporting businesses.

In addition to these activities, the Women in Export Programme has focussed on lifting NZTE’s own gendered data collection and analysis to enable better insights on the experiences of women-led exporting firms it works with. This has also allowed a greater understanding of the impacts of the programme, which remains a priority as NZTE continues to look to maximise its benefits.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Benefits of establishing a dedicated programme: Embedding NZTE’s earlier efforts to support women-led exporters into a formal programme of work with a dedicated Women in Export Lead significantly enhanced its reach, cohesion, and impact.

- Importance of activating allies: Achieving a meaningful shift in women’s export engagement requires thinking laterally about how government support is delivered and building a wide range of partnerships across industry and business to champion change.

- Gender-disaggregated data: Capturing gender data for firms supported by NZTE has enabled deeper insights on the performance and experiences of women-led exporting firms, the contributions of these firms to the export sector, and the impacts of the programme.

- Establishing strong exporter networks: Supporting the development of strong and self-sustaining networks of female exporters has been hugely valuable for knowledge sharing, celebrating achievements, and best practice conversations among exporters.

References

<https://my.nzte.govt.nz/article/women-in-export>

Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG) Three-Year Review of Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

Challenges Addressed

- Access to information and business opportunities
- Compliance with customs procedures and regulations

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Description

Released in 2023, New Zealand’s *‘Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG) Three-Year Review of CPTPP’* provides an evidence-based review of the early effects of CPTPP for women business leaders and workers in New Zealand. As an important part of New Zealand’s trade architecture, CPTPP offers substantial commercial opportunities for female exporters and the Review provides an early picture of how women are experiencing these benefits. It utilizes

administrative microdata on firms and their employees to track women's engagement and outcomes over the Agreement's first three years.

The Review provided valuable insights for informing ongoing policy efforts to support the participation of New Zealand women in exporting. While data limitations and the short timeframe since CPTPP's entry into force were a challenge, the Review was an important early stock-take of progress.

The Review found that women-led firms experienced a similar level of trade-weighted tariff reductions under CPTPP as male-led firms on average. There were also signs that some women-led firms had begun to export to CPTPP markets that previously had not, leading to a small increase in the number of women-led exporting firms since entry into force. Regarding women's employment, it found that female employment in firms that exported to CPTPP markets had grown and earnings for these women were higher on average than in firms that exported to other markets.

However, the Review also highlighted that gender disparities present in New Zealand's wider export sector exist among CPTPP exporters too, particularly regarding the rate of female firm leadership and gender wage gaps. This reinforced the importance of ongoing implementation efforts by officials to promote and support women-led firms to make the most of the commercial opportunities available. The Review's findings informed New Zealand's advice and input to the General Review of CPTPP, currently underway by CPTPP Members, on opportunities to enhance the Agreement's inclusive outcomes and identify ways to improve uptake.

The Review, which also covered the impacts of CPTPP for other inclusive and sustainable outcomes, fulfilled a commitment made by New Zealand when establishing the Inclusive Trade Action Group with Canada and Chile in 2018. New Zealand is committed to undertaking another Review by 2028 to monitor progress over time and build on lessons learnt.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Evidence-based evaluation: Developing gender-disaggregated data on trade is essential for governments to understand and monitor outcomes for women from trade agreements. Datasets can take time to build and may have limitations, but provide valuable insights for policymakers.

- Realising opportunities from trade agreements: Translating opportunities from trade agreements into economic outcomes for women can take time and requires an iterative and ongoing focus for governments to build on lessons learnt.

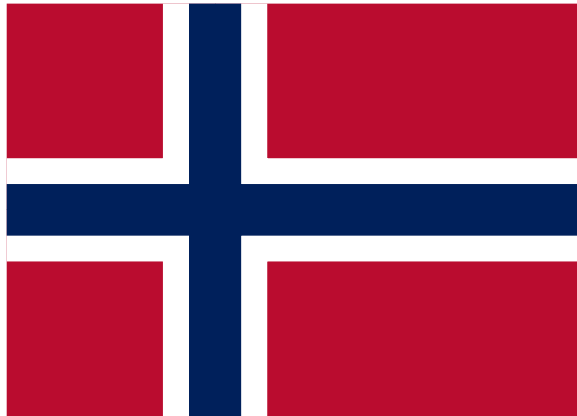
- Understanding female exporter experiences: Quantitative analysis is essential for evaluating the impacts of trade, but it is important to supplement this with exporter and industry perspectives to understand issues faced by firms that may be behind trends in the data.

References

<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/inclusive-trade-action-group-three-year-review-of-the-implementation-of-cptpp>

**Spanish and Portuguese translations of the Review are also available on the website.*

Norway



Parental-leave scheme and access to affordable, quality kindergartens and out-of-school-hours care (SFO).

Challenges Addressed

- Time constraints due to care commitments

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Children and Families
- Ministry of Education and Research
- NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration)

Description

The Norwegian parental leave scheme, the right to access affordable, quality kindergartens and access to out-of-school-hours care are cornerstone policies that facilitate women's engagement in paid work. The [Norwegian parental leave scheme](#)⁹ entitles parents to paid leave of absence from work to give parents time to care for their newborn child. It also ensures the parent a right to return to their workplace.

The size of the parental allowance is based on the recipient's level of earned income. This creates an incentive to employment while at the same time providing adequate coverage. The maximum payment of parental leave is six times the National insurance scheme basic amount (folketrygdlovens grunnbeløp). The parental benefit is financed from the National Insurance Scheme, which is financed by contributions from employees, self-employed persons, employers' contributions, and contributions from the state.

The scheme period has gradually been extended, from 18 weeks in 1977 to 49 weeks with full pay today. However, parents can choose between two options:

- 49 weeks with 100 % pay or
- 61,2 weeks with 80 % pay.

The parental leave scheme is divided into three parts: one part for the mother, one for the father (or co-parent) and one part to share as they wish. The fathers' quota was implemented in 1993 and has been altered many times. Statistics shows that 90 % of fathers who are entitled to it make full or partial use of their quota.

Depending on whether the parents choose 100 % or 80 % pay, the quotas are 15 weeks for the mother, 15 weeks for the father and 16 weeks to share as they wish or 19 weeks for the mother and father and 20,2 weeks to share.¹⁰ Three weeks is reserved for the mother before birth. The option with 80 % pay was extended from 59 weeks to 61,2 weeks as of July this year. The shared period is extended by eleven parental benefit days, so that the total payout is approximately the same whether you choose 80 or 100 percent parental benefits.

Children have a right to a fulltime place in [kindergarten](#) (from one year of age).¹¹

⁹ [Parental benefit - regjeringen.no](#)

¹⁰ The National Insurance Act, Chapter 2.

¹¹ [Kindergarten - regjeringen.no](#)

From 1st August 2024, a maximum price for kindergarten was reduced from 3000 NOK to 2000 NOK. In addition, no parents should pay more than 6 % of their income for a place in kindergarten and children aged 2-5 in low-income-families have the right to 20 hours free kindergarten per week. In Norway, 88,6 % of children aged 1-2 and 97,2 % of children aged 3-5 participate in kindergarten.

Furthermore, local authorities are obliged to provide out-of-school-hours care (known as SFO) before and after ordinary school hours for pupils in Years 1–4 and for pupils with special needs in Years 1–7.

The proportion of children with SFO places has increased in all counties from 2020-2021 to 2021-2022.¹² The main reason for this is the introduction of several discount schemes, amongst other the introduction of a 12-hour free after-school program. The program was introduced in 2022 for all children in year 1 from autumn 2022 and year 2 from autumn 2023, and was expanded to year 3 from autumn 2024. The program will save a family up to 20 000 NOK per child. With the introduction of 12-hour free SFO for year 1 in 2022 participation increased from 83 to 92 % and is now at 94 %. Similarly, participation for year 2 children increased from 79 % in 2022 to 92 % in 2023.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

Investments into universal welfare schemes designed to make it possible for both parents to combine family life and work, have resulted in a high participation of women in the Norwegian labour force. There is hardly a difference between women's and men's employment and participation rates.¹³ Fathers' use of parental leave can serve to increase equality both at home and in the labour market, freeing up women's time and making it easier to pursue their careers. Aligning the duration of the parental leave scheme with the right to a kindergarten place is important to minimize the need for one parent (typically the mother) to take unpaid and extended leave from work.

A recent national survey shows that eight out of ten mothers with children aged 1-2 years are employed and the numbers increase with the children's age.¹⁴

¹² <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utdanning/grunnopplaring/artikler/skofritidsordningen-sfo/id434946/>

¹³ OECD Economic Survey: Norway 2024, s. 16.

The survey shows that labour force participation remains at the same level for 3-5-year-olds, but it still increases somewhat with the child's age. 85% of mothers with 6-7-year-olds are employed. In OECD's Economic Surveys on Norway from 2024, the high availability and affordability of early childhood education and care are highlighted as policies that support mothers' participation in the labour market.¹⁵

Gender Equality Strategy for the Maritime Sector

Challenges Addressed

- Low share of women in the maritime sector, with 21 % overall and 11% at sea
- Low share of women in maritime educational programmes
- Worrying levels of harassment and sexual harassment, and thresholds for whistleblowing
- Challenges associated with being a minority in the workplace
- Work conditions and terms of employment which are difficult to combine with certain phases of life
- Industry challenge: expected undersupply of skilled workers in the maritime sector, necessitating increased workforce participation from both sexes

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries
- Norwegian Maritime Authority

Description

The Gender Equality Strategy for the Maritime Sector was launched in June 2023 on both English and Norwegian. The strategy covers the entire maritime sector, which includes shipping companies, shipyards, equipment suppliers and specialized service providers.

¹⁴ Childcare Survey 2023, Statistics Norway

¹⁵ OECD Economic Survey: Norway 2024, s. 16.

Lack of awareness about the opportunities in the industry, culture and working environment, harassment and sexual harassment and work conditions are identified as barriers for women in the maritime sector.

Four focus areas with measures are identified in the strategy:

- Recruitment and role models
- A working environment that benefits everyone
- A working life free from harassment
- An adapted workplace

As an overarching measure, the Norwegian Government has taken the initiative to draft a declaration of cooperation with the industry to work towards gender equality in the maritime sector, and to document future development.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Established a shared perception across government, industry and society, of the current situation, challenges and possible remedies for gender equality in the maritime sector.
- A declaration of cooperation between government and industry is being prepared.
- The government together with the employer- and employee organizations representing maritime sector is developing a set of indicators of gender equality, to be able to measure progress over time.
- The maritime industry itself has launched a large number of initiatives, including promoting recruitment of women and implementing measures to address harassment.)

References

<https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/gender-equality-strategy-for-the-maritime-sector/id2983205/>

Gender balance in the board rooms

Challenges Addressed

- Underrepresentation of women on boards.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries

Description

The Norwegian Government believes that more diversity will improve the quality of work and in the long term be a positive factor for the businesses. More diversity in the boardroom will strengthen the companies' ability to make good strategic choices; it will encourage more innovation, rapid adjustments, and generally improve performance of the companies.

Women constitute only 20 per cent of the members on Norwegian company boards. In 2008 gender balance requirements were introduced for the member of the board of public limited companies. Norway was the first country in the world to introduce legislation on female quotas for public limited company boards. In 2024 these legally binding rules were extended to include members of the board of private limited companies. Maximum 60 per cent of the board members may be of the same gender. By 2028 the requirement will apply to companies with more than 30 employees or annual revenues that exceed NOK 50 million.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

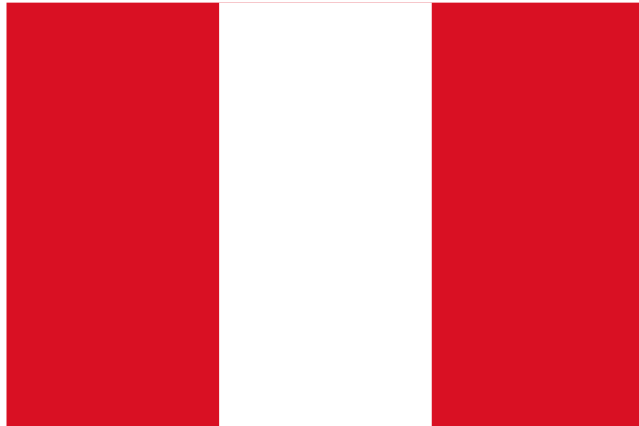
The legal regulations from 2008 have led to a positive development regarding the gender balance on Norwegian boards. At present all public limited companies fulfil the rules, and more than 40 per cent of the board members are women. However, the regulations have not led to gender balance in the companies' senior management groups. They still consist of a majority of men. This is also true for the companies subject to gender quota legislation.

The extended gender balance requirement will be introduced gradually until 2028. 12 700 new board members will have to be recruited by 2028 to comply with the requirement.

References

<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop.-131-ls-20222023/id2984956/>

Peru



“Ella Exporta” Program

Challenges Addressed

- Limited access to capital and financing
- Insufficient access to productive inputs, including technology
- Barriers to reliable telecommunications networks
- Challenges in business formalization processes
- Setbacks in women's economic empowerment
- Limited access to mental health support
- Gaps in training programs tailored to varying levels of business management

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The Commission for the Promotion of Peruvian Exports and Tourism (PROMPERU)

Description

The "Ella Exporta" Program, launched by PROMPERU in 2017, is designed to empower and strengthen Peruvian companies, associations, and cooperatives in the export sector by enhancing their capabilities. After a successful pilot, the program has been expanded with various editions from 2018 to 2024, incorporating new modalities such as virtual training.

Through specialized training modules focused on business management, export strategies, and sustainability models, the program aims to enhance the competitiveness of women-led organizations while addressing gender disparities in international trade.

The target participants of the “Ella Exporta” Program include businesses and organizations (associations or cooperatives) led by women, meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- At least 50% of the company or organization is owned by a woman.
- The legal representation is held by a woman.
- At least 50% of the board of directors are women.
- General management or administration is led by a woman.

To date, more than 165 businesswomen from across Peru, spanning sectors such as agribusiness, textiles, manufacturing, and services, have benefited from the program.

Program Benefits

- Improved export and business management practices.
- Enhanced business models, aligned with global trends and market demands, boosting competitiveness.
- Access to a Peruvian network of female entrepreneurs.
- Inclusion in the "Sustainable Commerce" mini site, promoting their business stories and expanding market reach.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- **Digitalization:** The integration of digital platforms has positively impacted business models.
- **Sustainable Management:** There is growing interest among businesswomen in adopting sustainable business practices.

- Flexible Learning:** The shift to virtual classes has improved accessibility and participation.

- Customized Training:** In 2022, the program introduced tiered training based on the export experience of participants, offering more personalized support.

References

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8AaMdgwYV4>

Gender Evaluation Study in the Export Sector

Challenges Addressed

- Access to Information and Resources:** Many women entrepreneurs face barriers in accessing critical export-related information, including market trends and funding opportunities.

- Representation and Leadership:** Women's participation in decision-making processes in trade associations and export councils remains limited, often due to structural and cultural barriers.

- Business Development and Networking:** Women tend to have smaller networks and fewer opportunities for mentorship and professional development, which hinders their ability to grow and scale their export businesses.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The Commission for the Promotion of Peruvian Exports and Tourism (PROMPERU)

Description

This evaluation focused on understanding the specific obstacles that women entrepreneurs face in the Peruvian export sector. It provided insights into the current status of women-led businesses in international markets and analyzed their contributions, challenges, and areas requiring support. The study aimed to enhance women's participation in trade by promoting policies that support gender equality and removing barriers to market access and business growth.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Increased Awareness:** The study helped raise awareness about the importance of gender inclusivity in trade, fostering initiatives to reduce disparities in information and resources.

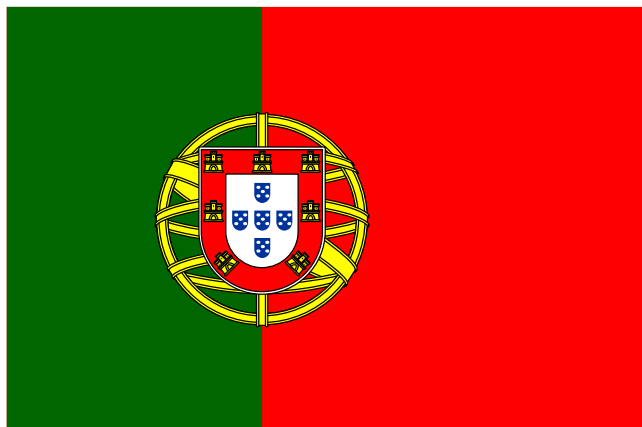
- Policy Recommendations:** Based on the findings, several policy changes were suggested to support women in overcoming barriers related to financing, networking, and market access.

- Ongoing Support:** PROMPERÚ is now focusing on providing continuous support and training programs for women exporters, contributing to more gender-equitable outcomes in the sector.

References

<https://repositorio.promperu.gob.pe/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe670bc4-2817-46d4-a6b0-a324fa1acf33/content>

Portugal



Gender Equality in Work and Employment

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Lack of information on training providers and courses
- Time constraints due to work commitments
- High costs associated with training and fairs
- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Institute of Employment and Professional Training, I.P. (IEFP)

Description

The Institute of Employment and Professional Training, I.P. (IEFP) and the Commission for Equality in Work and Employment (CITE) provide a free

training program fully online on the “NAU Platform” on “Gender Equality in Work and Employment”.

This initiative is based on the notion that organizations and citizens are the agents of changing values and behaviors that lead to gender equality, therefore, in order to build a more conscious and fair society, knowledge and developing skills on the matter is key.

The online course “Gender Equality in Work and Employment” aims to address citizens interested in deep dive into this topic, Workers, Managers and Representatives of Public, Central, Regional and Local Administration, Representatives of the private sector and the social economy, Representatives of social partners and Civil Society.

The course is fully remote, lasts 3 hours, is taught in Portuguese and is self-paced. Citizens who enroll in this course, will be able to learn to frame the current situation of women and men in various areas of society and develop personal and professional skills in the field of gender equality.

The course is designed in 4 modules: (i) Situation of Women and Men in the Labor Market; (ii) Conceptual Framework; (iii) Intervening for Change; and (iv) National Mechanisms for Gender Equality.

At the end of each module there is an assessment challenge where the knowledge acquired can be tested. After completing the modules, a positive mark on a questionnaire is required to complete the course assessment and meet the requirements necessary to obtain a certificate.

The goal is to provide the participants a full picture of the subject converting them in “agents of change”.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Training: citizens are the “agents of change” in Gender Equality, therefore being able to reach them is key. Until now, more than 12.000 people were already enrolled.

References

<https://www.nau.edu.pt/en/course/igualdade-de-genero-no-trabalho-e-no-emprego/>

Women's Leadership Network (WLN)

Challenges Addressed

- Inadequate suitability of trainings for MSMEs
- High costs associated with training and networking events and fairs
- Lack of follow-up support in training programs
- Distant locations of trainings, events and networking opportunities
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods
- Constraints in business opportunities due to gender bias

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- IAPMEI – Portuguese Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation

Description

Women's Leadership Network is a business network for women and a space of trust, reflection, knowledge sharing and business improvement, in group and in bilateral contacts.

In order to give visibility to gender diversity as a way to increase innovation, competitiveness and high performance in companies, IAPMEI launched the Women's Leadership Network in 2017. The project was co-created with a group of industrial and knowledge intensive business services SME's. It was designed and implemented with a group of 15 women entrepreneurs, belonging to 14 companies. Its members are women executive board members of high-performance companies, many of which are "PME Líder" or "PME Excelência" (SME Leader and SME Excellence, national awards for financial performance). Women's Leadership Network aims to connect to international networks of business facilitation between women.

Over the last few years, there were several studies about the correlation between organizational excellence and gender diversity in top management. A number of independent researchers and large consultancies have argued that companies in which gender diversity extends to the top of the hierarchy present:

- Better operational and financial performance;

- Increased innovation in business;
- Improved group performance and increased problem-solving ability;
- Relevant reputation gains.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Personalized training: individual mentoring is crucial to meet the specific needs of female entrepreneurs, helping them overcome unique challenges they face in international trade.
- Support network: creating a support network and sharing experiences among participants can strengthen the confidence and resilience of women entrepreneurs.
- Follow-up activities: providing continuous assistance through additional activities.

References

<https://www.redemulherlider.pt/the-network/>

Gender balance in the board rooms

Challenges Addressed

- Underrepresentation of women on boards.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Government

Description

In Portugal, gender balance in boardrooms is regulated by legislation aimed at promoting gender equality in corporate governance. The key law in this area is Law No. 62/2017, which introduced mandatory quotas for gender representation on boards of directors of publicly listed companies and state-owned enterprises.

The law reflects Portugal's efforts to reduce gender disparity in corporate governance and align with broader European Union initiatives promoting

gender diversity on boards. The goal is to create a more equitable representation in decision-making processes and leadership positions within the corporate sector. This law applies to large companies listed on the stock exchange (must have a minimum of 33.3% -one-third- of each gender on their boards of directors), as well as state-owned or publicly controlled companies (minimum 40% gender quota).

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

The legal regulations from 2017 have led to a positive development regarding the gender balance on boards. According to a Eurostat statistic, in 2023, 39,4% of the board members of Portugal's Stock Exchange-listed companies were women. A great increase since the law was firstly applied, considering that in 2017 women represented only 14,3% of the board positions. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain public sensibilization campaigns, especially among enterprises.

Recently the Portuguese Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality supported an innovative project from the biggest national employer's confederation (CIP), already on its 5^a edition, to foster the access of highly qualified women to executive positions in private organizations, and to strengthen the knowledge and skills of women who aim at achieving positions involving greater responsibility and impact, by supporting them to become inspiring leaders with the capacity to produce innovative changes to their own careers and organizations. The involvement of social partners in this process is key.

References

<https://files.diariodarepublica.pt/1s/2017/08/14700/0441404416.pdf>
<https://cip.org.pt/promova-project/>

Singapore



SG Women in Tech

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information and opportunities for women in the tech industry.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Infocomm Media Development Authority

Description

Launched in 2019, the SG Women in Tech (SGWIT), an initiative by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) in partnership with the tech industry and community, aims to attract, inspire, and develop Singaporean girls and women to pursue a career in the dynamic infocomm tech sector.

SGWIT aims to:

- Raise awareness that diversity and inclusion yield better business outcomes;
- Attract and develop more girls and women in tech industry; and
- Position Singapore as a global leader in fostering a supportive environment for women in tech.

Some of the key initiatives under SGWIT can be found below:

1. **SGWIT Corporate Pledge.** Companies pledge to create a conducive environment with strong support systems to attract, retain and develop more women tech professionals. The initiative also aims to encourage companies to address the key motivators for young women to take up a tech career, and for women tech professionals to continue to grow and thrive in the tech industry. Till date, 72 companies have come onboard to show their support, growing the collective strength and interest of companies in Singapore in bringing about positive change for women in tech.
2. **SG100WiT.** The Singapore 100 Women in Tech (SG100WiT) list amplifies the brilliant capabilities of women and students in technology. In its third edition, the initiative has grown significantly to include nominees of diverse profiles - including small business owners, teachers, and investors - in addition to business leaders, technologists, entrepreneurs, researchers and students, and it received a total of 800 nominations – an increase of almost one-third from the 2021 edition.
3. **SG Women In Tech Community Platform.** Corporate groups, communities and individuals who are keen to participate in Singapore's women in tech initiatives, and would like to contribute articles and mentorship opportunities are welcome to be part of the SG Women In Tech community platform.
4. **Girls in Tech.** SGWIT works closely with local polytechnics and various institutions to curate events where girls can confidently explore tech in a fun environment or to connect with mentors and to support them to join the sector. This initiative continues to inspire more girls to discover their interest in tech, and has reached over 700 students from various primary, secondary and tertiary schools.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Showcased diverse role models of Singaporean women in tech and their achievements through the SG100 Women in Tech initiative. A total of 300 women and 51 girls were recognised for their outstanding achievements and contributions to the growing tech sector.
- Organised and facilitated networking events and opportunities for women in tech to connect with industry experts, professionals, and peers through events such as Asia Tech x Singapore (ATxSG) and International Womens' Day 2024. These connections helped foster collaboration, mentorship, and career opportunities within the industry.

References

<https://www.sgwomenintech.sg>

Singapore Women Entrepreneurs Network

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Singapore Business Federation

Description

Launched on 21 September 2021, the Singapore Women Entrepreneurs Network (SG-WEN) is a grounds-up business network formed by the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) to coordinate the existing efforts of businesswomen within the community, and to serve as a platform to connect with other women-entrepreneurs associations in Asia-Pacific, particularly ASEAN. With around 650 members in SG-WEN today, the shared learning and networking within SG-WEN provide women with the support and help for them to succeed. SG-WEN is also Singapore's appointed representative to the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN). SG-WEN's mission is to provide a platform where Singapore women

entrepreneurs and existing women business networks can unite and collaborate to influence culture and policy, and drive industry change in Singapore and Asia-Pacific, particularly ASEAN. SG-WEN intends to do this by advocating and promoting women business perspectives, facilitating knowledge sharing, fostering business partnerships and growth.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Raise awareness and drive action-oriented discussions on policies, opportunities and actions regarding issues impacting women in business through fireside chats and roundtables with senior government officials and political office holders.
- Curated and organised quarterly workshops on topics including Environmental, Social and Governance, Fund Raising, Communications, Digital Media, Expanding Businesses Abroad benefitting more than 300 women entrepreneurs in 2022 and 2023.
- Started the "Entrepreneurs Circle" which is a peer-level support group for women entrepreneurs to share, grow and elevate to the next level, in a safe and conducive environment. A pilot group with 11 entrepreneurs from the food and beverages sector was set up in Jan 2022 and continues to meet regularly to share knowledge and exchange experiences with one another.
- Helped build a stronger regional community of women entrepreneurs through hosting of visits from women entrepreneur groups in the region and beyond, and being an active participant and representative for the ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network.

References

<https://www.sbf.org.sg/about-us/our-communities/business-networks/singapore-women-entrepreneurs-network>

Spain



Working Group “Mujer e Internacionalización”

Challenges Addressed

- The participation of women in leadership roles in export-oriented companies remains very limited in Spain (only 17% of goods-exporting firms are owned by women).
- Bring together private and public entities with a common interest in promoting a greater participation of women in international trade.
- Lack of granular and cross-country comparable data on women’s participation in international trade.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Secretary of State for Foreign Trade (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business)

Description

The Strategy for the Internationalisation of the Spanish Economy 2017-2027 and the Second Plan for the Internationalisation of the Spanish Economy (2019-2020) incorporated, among its actions, the design of policies that promote a more active role for women in the economy with a greater participation in international trade.

Within this framework, the Working Group “Mujer e Internacionalización” was created in 2019 to bring together private and public Institutions with the common goal to foster the role and participation of women in foreign trade.

The Working Group set out four technical Roundtables with Public and Private participation, including Academia, that meets yearly to work together and share best practices on:

1. Data analysis and statistics
2. Visibility and leadership
3. Training, financing and supporting instruments
4. Public and private procurement

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Advanced data analysis techniques: this has been essential to identify the type of export-oriented firms owned or led by women – these firms tend to be smaller and in the service sector. These data inform the design of better international trade policies.
- Visibility: the *Plataforma Mujer e Internacionalización* and a LinkedIn group have been created as essential tools to share women’s international experiences and good practices.
- Training and internationalization support services: courses and services were designed to encourage women’s participation and meet their needs.
- Follow-up activities: evaluating the impact of these and future programs in order to improve them.

References

https://comercio.gob.es/es-es/estrategia_internacionalizacion/paginas/mujer-e-internacionalizacion.aspx

Plataforma Mujer e Internacionalización

Challenges Addressed

- Single information point for actions and measures by the Secretary of State for Trade and ICEX
- Lack of a follow-up platform for the Grupo de Trabajo Mujer e Internacionalización of the Secretary of State for Trade
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on referents, women leaders and main women's associations
- Lack of information on business promotion activities for women-led companies

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- ICEX España Exportación e Inversiones

Description

The Plataforma Mujer e Internacionalización, established in 2021, is a platform for women-led companies and professionals, hosted in the ICEX website, and conceived as a meeting point for women who work and do businesses at an international level, or are active in foreign trade.

Launched as a tool and single information point for the Grupo de Trabajo Mujer e Internacionalización of the Secretary of State for Trade, it has evolved over time, acquiring more and more relevance. Under its framework, a deep statistical analysis of women-owned companies and their participation in international trade has been developed, barriers and lack of funding have been identified, measures to foster a bigger participation in international trade have been undertaken and published, and visibility, training and networking have been promoted.

The platform is structured around 6 sections: "Experiences", "Updated", "Can be of interest", "Get trained", "Documents" and "Internacionalizarse en femenino". The last is a program launched in 2024 that offers commercial intelligence under the gender lens on rules, usual practices and tips when doing business abroad, developed with the support of the network of

Economic and Commercial Offices of Spain abroad.

The Plataforma Mujer e Internacionalización is complemented by a LinkedIn group where relevant information is shared and commented quickly, since 2022.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Reference point: since its inception, the platform has received more than 40,000 visits from more than 30,000 visitors. All relevant actions and events have been posted there.
- Training skills: as a follow-up of the analyses, specific training actions have been developed and announced through the platform.
- Support network: The interviews to female entrepreneurs, businesswomen and professionals included in the "Experiences" section have been among the most interesting content for visitors. This, together with the LinkedIn group, has created a support network and a platform where experiences can be shared, fostering confidence among women entrepreneurs.
- Follow-up activities: new activities have been developed based on the feedback and interest showed by participants, adapting the set of tools to foster a greater participation of women in business to the real demands of women.

References

<https://www.icex.es/es/quienes-somos/mujer-e-internacionalizacion/inicio>

Desafía 100% Mujeres Programme

Challenges Addressed

- Introduce women entrepreneurs to the Silicon Valley ecosystem in order to acquire the experience and knowledge necessary to scale their business model internationally with greater guarantees.
- To facilitate the landing of the selected start-ups in the North American market.
- To promote the creation of synergies between companies in similar stages of

maturity, taking advantage of the experience of the founders/managers and fostering community spirit among the participants.

- To attract the attention of the main players in the ecosystem, who are interested in promoting and supporting technology entrepreneurship led by women.

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- ICEX España Exportación e Inversiones
- Red.es

Description

The “Programa Desafía”, established in 2011, aims to promote the scaling and international growth of technological and innovative start-ups through immersion programmes in international benchmark technological ecosystems. It has annual programmes in different destinations, highlighting the “Programa Desafía San Francisco (SF)”, a programme aimed exclusively at women entrepreneurs since 2023.

The “Programa Desafía SF 100% mujeres” seeks to accelerate the reduction of the gender gap in the technological and innovative entrepreneurship sector by promoting the internationalisation of innovative start-ups led by women, particularly in the most demanding ecosystems/markets that can best contribute to the growth of female talent, and which generate important support and collaboration networks. It is aimed exclusively at women entrepreneurs who have created or manage technological and innovative start-ups established in Spain, in order to promote their scaling up and international growth.

It is, therefore, an innovative program in terms of its orientation towards female empowerment and search for results, possible adaptation in its design and laboratory to generate lessons learned, focusing on the differential characteristics of female entrepreneurship, and counting on a wide and proven previous successful experience in terms of its structure and implementation.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

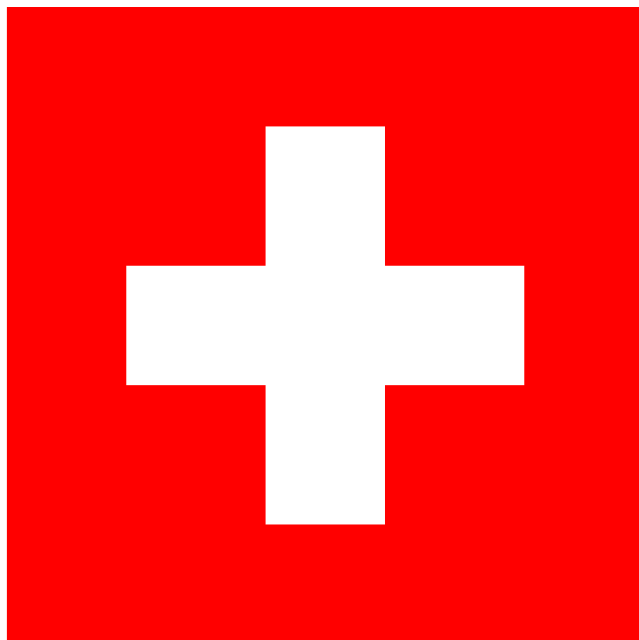
Only one edition of this programme has been held. However, some concrete results have been already identified:

- The call effect with respect to other Desafía programmes to increase women's participation is proving successful. Female participation in these programs has practically doubled: with only one completed edition of the SF Challenge, 27% of the 166 applications for participation in all DESAFIA programmes in the first half of 2024 were from female entrepreneurs (compared to 15% before the SF Challenge).
- With respect to those selected, 28% of the 50 participants in the Desafía programmes have been start-ups led by women (compared to 15% prior to the SF Challenge), so we are experiencing a significant growth in female participation.
- The call effect may also affect other ICEX programs, through communication efforts and networking, thus raising female participation.
- At the national level, the current participation of women entrepreneurs in the Spanish technological and innovative ecosystem stands at 15%. If the programme proves successful this ratio is expected to rise.

References

<https://www.icex.es/es/todos-nuestros-servicios/programas-y-servicios-de-apoyo/desafia>

Switzerland



Note

Switzerland's Federal Council adopted in April 2021 The **Gender Equality Strategy 2030** (<https://www.egalite2030.ch/fr/>). All departments and various cantons and communes are involved in implementing the strategy, which is set out in an action plan that is updated twice a year. The strategy contains a broad set of goals and measures divided into four areas of action: (1) Work and public life, (2) Balance between work and family life, (3) Gender-specific violence, (4) Discrimination.

While most objectives and measures are not trade-related, Switzerland wishes to share the following action:

Gender equality in Federal studies and statistics

Challenges addressed

The lack of gender disaggregated data in federal statistics and studies.

Responsible agencies or institutions

Federal Government

Description

On 31 January 2024, the Federal Council adopted new guidelines for the Federal government, which defined the procedure and requirements for the consideration of gender in Federal studies and statistics.

The aim is to improve knowledge and understanding of gender-specific effects and to improve the collection and processing of statistical data by gender. The Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) provides a tool and guiding questions to support administrative units in reviewing the relevance of including gender in their studies and statistics.

Is understood by:

- a. studies: federal administration research projects, evaluations and other reports that serve as a basis for the activities of central federal administration units;
- b. statistics: the activities of the Confederation's public statistics, as defined in the multi-year federal statistics program.

Results achieved & Lessons learned

It is too early to have results and lessons learned but a review of these guidelines and their impact will be undertaken in 2027 by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE)

References

- <https://www.ebg.admin.ch/en/gender-equality-in-federal-studies-and-statistics>
- [FF 2024 410 - Directives du Conseil fédéral conc... | Fedlex \(admin.ch\)](#)

Tools developed (only available in [French](#), [German](#) and [Italian](#)).

United Arab Emirates



The UAE Gender Balance Council & The National Policy for Empowerment of Emirati Women

Challenges Addressed

- Family Support, Knowledge and Awareness
- Economic Participation and Global Competitiveness
- Leadership Representation and Legislative Excellence

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The UAE Gender Balance Council

Description

The UAE's Gender Balance Council, established in 2015, plays a pivotal role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across the country. The Council's mandate includes reducing the gender gap in all sectors, improving the UAE's global competitiveness ranking in gender equality, achieving gender balance in decision-making positions, and promoting the

UAE as a model for gender balance legislation. To achieve these objectives, the Council undertakes various initiatives, such as Policy Review and Development, International Cooperation, Data Collection and Analysis, and Capacity Building. In addition, the Council is responsible for developing and implementing the UAE government's launched National Policy for Empowerment of Emirati Women (2023-2031). This comprehensive policy aims to achieve gender equality and improve the lives of Emirati women across all sectors of society.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- According to the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report by the WEF, the UAE's score for the Economic Participation and Opportunity indicator increased to 0.553 in 2024. This improvement has brought the UAE's rank in 2024 to 124th, and the first ranking among Arab countries.

- The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation revealed that women's participation in the private sector grew by 23.1 percent in 2023 compared to 2022.

The Council and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) hosted workshops to introduce the Guide and raise awareness to create conducive work environments for gender balance.

- The UAE ranks 49 in the Gender Inequality Index in the 2018 UNDP Human Development Report.

- The Council launched the Gender Balance Index in 2016. It is one of the UAE's national indicators and assesses the performance of government entities in enhancing gender balance. Individuals and organisations leading in this field are honored annually through the three categories.

- In November 2011, Her Highness Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum launched the "Women on Boards" initiative to increase female representation on the boards of directors in the UAE.

- The UAE Gender Balance Council launched the 'Global Gender Circle' initiative at the United Nations' CSW61 to reduce the gender gap in women's economic contribution. It provides a platform for thought leaders to develop new ideas and solutions.

- Upon the Council's recommendation after reviewing the UAE Maternity Law, the UAE government extended maternity leave for female federal government employees from two to three months.

References

- <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/policies/social-affairs/national-policy-for-empowerment-of-emirati-women>
- <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/policies/social-affairs/national-policy-for-empowerment-of-emirati-women>
- <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/gender-equality/gender-balance>
- <https://www.gbc.gov.ae/initiatives.html>

Emirati Women's Day

Challenges Addressed

- Knowledge and Awareness
- Economic empowerment and Leadership representation
- Social and cultural barriers

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- The United Arab Emirates' Government

Description

Emirati Women's Day is a national day celebrated annually in the United Arab Emirates on August 28th. It is dedicated to honoring the remarkable achievements and contributions of Emirati women to the nation's development. The day aims to highlight the progress made in empowering women, celebrate their successes, and inspire future generations of female leaders. The celebration often includes various events, workshops, and initiatives focused on women's empowerment, education, and economic

participation. It is a significant occasion for recognizing the vital role that Emirati women play in society and promoting gender equality.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- The UAE ranked first in the Arab world, and 11th globally, in the UNDP 2022 Gender Inequality Index (GII), topping the countries of the MENA region for the third consecutive year. And topped the countries of the MENA region for the third consecutive year in the World Bank's "Women, Business and the Law Report 2023". Also ranked first among Arab countries in the WEF 2022 Global Gender Gap Report.
- The UAE has succeeded in enhancing women's participation in political life, The UAE has significantly increased women's representation in government, with nearly 27.5% of ministers and 50% of Federal National Council members being women, which is among the highest regional and global rates, according to reports and competitiveness indicators.
- The UAE ranked first globally in women's parliamentary representation for 2020 and 2021 within the Global Competitiveness Index issued by Switzerland's Institute of Management Development, as well as within the index of women's parliamentary representation for 2021 and 2022 in WEF's Global Gender Gap Report.
- The UAE has implemented numerous legal reforms to enhance women's rights and protections in areas such as work, protection, political participation, personal status, judicial corps, wages, banking transactions, freedom of movement, marriage, entrepreneurship, property and pension. These reforms have contributed to the UAE's improved global standing in competitiveness indicators.

References

- <https://www.mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/topic/emirati-womens-day/>
- <https://www.mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/community/sheikha-fatima-bint-mubarak-commends-achievements-of-emirati-women-on-emirati-womens-day-2024/>

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs)

Challenges Addressed

- Limited access to finance and Insufficient infrastructure
- Barriers to market access
- Promoting opportunities for SMEs owned by women and entrepreneurship education avenues

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Economy and Gender Balance Council

Description

UAE has ensured to introduce specific provisions in Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs) to enhance the participation of women-owned enterprises, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs or MSMEs), in international trade. Furthermore, the CEPAs facilitate various activities to support these enterprises in accessing international markets, such as creating opportunities for sharing best practices, access to training programs, including those related to trade education and finance, enabling platforms identifying commercial partners, and supporting SMEs' infrastructure (including incubators and accelerators). The Gender Balance Council plays a key role in the UAE's CEPA negotiations and spearheads initiatives related to gender balance and women's economic empowerment.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- UAE-Chile Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- UAE-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- UAE-Turkey Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- UAE-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- UAE-Colombia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- UAE-South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

References

<https://www.moec.gov.ae/en/cepa>

Uruguay



Business Women 8M

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of information on how to access financing.
- Lack of information on opportunities and events
- Lack of information on business promotion methods

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining
- INMUJERES. Ministry of Social Development

Description

The *Business Women 8M* is an annual program designed to promote economic autonomy of women through participation in trade. Businesswomen and cooperative members, women and trans women are encouraged to present

projects that promote innovation, competitiveness in their companies or energy efficiency. Each company may receive non-refundable funds of up to \$450,000 (Uruguayan pesos) to finance their projects. In total the portfolio will deliver \$3,000,000 (Uruguayan pesos).

The projects must refer to productive activities or services linked to production, which are framed in public policies of ministerial interest.

In addition to the improvement in competitiveness, it assessed: innovation in products, services, production processes, commercialization and/or strengthening of the company's management capabilities and skills, creation of genuine employment, in particular quality employment aimed at women, which will be especially scored.

Professional services, commerce, tourism and services in general, nor primary production, for example, animal husbandry, agriculture, etc. are not included.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Access to financial resources
- Improvement of business infrastructure;
- access to technology that will impact in an innovative way on the productive processes of companies; incorporation of solar panels;
- access to e-commerce,

References

<https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-industria-energia-mineria/comunicacion/convocatorias/convocatoria-8m-2024-para-empresarias>

Economic importance of women in export activities in Uruguay - Report

Challenges Addressed

- Lack of statistical information

Responsible Agencies/Institutions

- Uruguay XXI (Investment, Export and Country image promotion Agency)
- UN Women

Description

The Investment, Export and Country image promotion Agency, Uruguay XXI, presented in 2023 the results of the report Economic importance of women in export activities in Uruguay, which was prepared with the Center for Economic Research (CINVE) and UN Women.

The report addressed the participation of women in the Uruguayan economy, a topic that has been examined from different perspectives, although without evidence yet on the impact on export activities.

To quantify the participation of women in export activities in Uruguay, in 2019 an online survey with telephone follow-up was carried out with a base of 1,800 companies exporting goods (700) and services (1,100). Between February and March 2023 these results were updated.

Results Achieved and Lessons Learned

- Diagnosis
- Statistical information available online

References

<https://www.uruguayxxi.gub.uy/es/noticias/articulo/empresas-exportadoras-de-uruguay-presentan-brechas-de-genero-de-acuerdo-con-nuevo-informe/>