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# ***TRADE AS VEHICLE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS: THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE***

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# Introduction

- Women has the full potential to be agent of social progress. To be able to harness the full potential of women, an inclusive social condition have to be met.
- Inherent inequalities between men and women in access to and control of economic resources, and gendered division of labour continue to challenge women.
- “Gender equality is smart economics,” (World Bank, 2007). Increasing female labor market participation and improving women’s access to assets is bound to generate productivity gains and boost economic growth.

- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has women and the economy as one of its mandate. Governments are encouraged to translate the Declaration into policy on the ground.
- Women economic empowerment is also central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG 5 call on government to achieve rather than just promote gender equality and women empowerment.
- The latest European Parliament's research on women's empowerment in 2016 found that economies grow when women are given the equal opportunity for paid works and access to productive assets.

## **What are the main barriers faced by women that prevent them from fully benefitting from trade liberalization and the global economy?**

- **Data from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium-Size Enterprises of Indonesia reported that 60% of the MSMEs are managed by women.**
- **During crisis, MSMEs contributes to support national economy resilience.**
- **However, majority of these MSMEs are in stagnation and have limited opportunities to grow due to limited knowledge in business development and access to financial institutions.**

- Findings from OECD confirms that entrepreneurial activities of women are still hampered by constraints that often tend to be gender specific. In some countries, women's access to formal financial resources can be jeopardized by legal requirements for husbands to sign for loan approval or through smaller inheritances for daughters than for sons.
- OECD also found that women are also confronted with lack of government support in policy, laws, and services, and limited access to formal bank accounts, which prevents them from accessing loans or credit.
- Limited education, skills training or career guidance only compounds these difficulties, and the lack of technological know-how or access to modern, affordable technology further stops women from reaching their full potential.

## **What specific examples exist of good practice and suggestions on how to gender-sensitize the rules, negotiated agreements and working culture of WTO?**

- **Inclusiveness is the key. Starting by integrating gender dimension into the work of WTO.**
- **Incorporating gender component into aid-for-trade programs. WTO should ensure that donor can engage in policy dialogue and provide support on gender equality.**
- **Specific resources and tools for capacity building among stakeholders.**
- **Using quota as a “fast track” to systematically promote women’s participation in economy and boost women’s leadership role in decision making related to trade.**

- **Several examples of good practices on women economic empowerment from Indonesia are:**
  - “Pro-women” policies were implemented through National Program for Community Empowerment or Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Mandiri (“PNPM”) and micro loan for MSMEs (in local language known as *Kredit Usaha Rakyat/KUR*), initiated and implemented during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono terms.
  - Development of women business network through Indonesian Women’s Business Association (“IWAPI”). It has over 30,000 members across 34 provinces who represent a range of economic sectors.
  - Women’s Cooperative (“Kopwan”), that was generally originated from micro-credit activities among members of a social gathering, takes a great leap from saving and loan initiative to become the backbone of rural and village economy. It also meets women strategic gender needs of gaining skill and knowledge through workshop and training.

- In my capacity as the Member of Parliament, I have initiated a forum for Indonesian women, in form of cooperative for women in handicraft and home industry, to increase their access to means of funding (micro loan/KUR) and nurture the spirit of entrepreneurship.



- **Several examples of good practices on women economic empowerment from Regional Southeast Asia are:**
  - **Commitment to economic empowerment as enshrined in APEC Leader's Declaration of 2014 and 2015. Through regional initiative such as the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE), APEC creates a network of single public-private entity to streamline and elevate the inclusion of gender issues in the work of APEC.**
  - **In ASEAN, the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community has seen as the opportunity to connecting networks and enhancing the capacity of women's entrepreneurs toward a more prosperous region with ASEAN Women's Entrepreneurship Network (AWEN) as one of the mechanisms.**
  - **The Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of women (GREAT Women) initiative was launched at the ASEAN SME Showcase and Conference (ASSC) in May 2015. This is a regional platform for gender economic empowerment as well as competitive supply-chain integration in ASEAN.**

## How should the collection of gender-disaggregated data and research on the trade-gender nexus be promoted?

- Advocacy at national and international level is essential to promote a collection of gender-disaggregated data and research on trade-gender nexus.
- At national level, the collection of gender disaggregated data could involving wider and deeper inter-agency collaboration.
- At international level, it could be done by engaging formal institution such as UNDP, UN Women, and UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW).
- Gender-sensitization and analysis training should be provided to a broad cross section of national stakeholders followed by monitoring and evaluation. This is to increase sense of ownership and also to facilitate lesson-learning and capacity-building.
- Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) could also contribute to the process by assisting countries in the collection of gender-sensitive trade statistics, develop trade-related gender statistics and indicator, as well as undertaking micro level gender impact studies.

# How should the constraints be remedied so that MSMEs run by women can participate in global value chains?

- *First and foremost*, support from society in promoting societal attitudes that are conducive to women's entrepreneurship.
- *Second*, it is crucial to set a condition that enable equal access to loan and ownership rights to assets through Women's Bond and government subsidized micro loans for MSMEs.
- *Third*, women empowerment is a must. Women involvement in public life means that institutions are more representative of a range of voices and lead to gender sensitive policy and budgeting. But empowerment through quota is only a starting point. For the quota to be able to work, greater role of female leaders in supporting and enabling leadership capacity for women and girls is certainly a vital component.

# Conclusion

- Support from society is vital to remedy the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs and enable women led MSMEs to integrate into global value chains.
- The responsibility to deliver the unfulfilled promise of gender equality is not only responsibility of men or women, but of society as collective political and social institution. In the end, it is not *#HeForShe* that matter, but the emphasis should be on *#AllForShe*.
- WTO should make the agenda of gender equality and MSMEs in addressing poverty as a priority. To make it more efficient, the discussion on gender-differentiated impacts of trade policy and trade agreements must be encompassed at every phases of trade policy formulation and negotiation.
- The negotiation on trade agreements and trade laws must also take into account the concrete measures on addressing the challenge of integrating women led MSMEs into global value chains.
- Parliamentarians, as the beacon of democracy, must stay true to our mandate and deliver our promises of equal share of benefit from economic growth and trade liberalization.

- The role of parliament is expected to go beyond ratifying international trade agreements. We have the power to bridge the aspirations of our constituents with the work of WTO, and to exercise our oversight function on the works of WTO. Through IPU and PCWTO, we must step up our concerted efforts.



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***Thank you***

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