

Women Leaders Network 13th Meeting, May 12-14, 2008 Arequipa, Peru

Gender and Regional Trade Agreements
Heather Gibb, The North-South Institute

Are RTAs good for women?

- It depends!
 - Are women entrepreneurs ready to compete?
 - Enabling environment for women?
 - Negotiators understand and integrate women's trade priorities?
 - Negotiators have the right information!

Trade and gender equality: mutually reinforcing

If trade rules work for women, they work
for trade

Trade and gender equality: mutually reinforcing

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Beijing Platform for Action

Advantages and disadvantages

- Advantages:
 - Easier to reach agreement on important issues in smaller negotiations
 - Reciprocal benefits are easier to identify
 - Easier to achieve progress in difficult areas
 - Lower costs in negotiating with fewer partners
 - More influence on the outcome

Advantages and disadvantages

- Potential to distort trade
- RTAs can create a maze of regulations that can be confusing and costly for traders
- Developing countries may have difficulty getting full benefit from market access provisions because of limited supply capacity
- Some FTAs require developing countries to take broader and deeper liberalization commitments than required by WTO

Gender dimensions of trade

- **Agriculture**
 - Open up new markets for cash crops and agricultural products
 - Small producers may need support before they can take advantage of potential new trade agreements
 - Changes in production structures can hurt small producers

Gender dimensions of trade

- **Labour mobility**
 - Temporary movement of people (Mode 4) provisions are usually for professional and senior business executives, but women's businesses are small; professional categories listed in labour mobility agreements are usually in male-dominated professions (engineering, accounting)

Gender dimensions of trade

- **Government procurement**
 - Public procurement is an important policy lever to support small business sector – it can be excluded from an RTA
 - SMEs may not compete for government tenders because the projects are too large – preference could be given to contractors that include small producers as sub-contractors
 -

Gender dimensions of trade

- **Intellectual Property Rights**
 - IP protection for handicrafts and Indigenous artisans
 - IP rules in RTAs go beyond WTO requirements – there may be contradictions between standards required by trade agreements and government commitments in other multilateral agreements that are concerned with traditional knowledge

Gender dimensions of trade

- Handicrafts
 - Very important sector for women and small traders
 - Competition from lower-cost producers
 - IP concerns
 - Case-study of Lima crafts exporters

Trade agreements can reinforce gender equality

- At present, gender equality is not included in trade agreements
- May be included in social dimensions of trade agreements, or in labour cooperation side agreements

Gender aware trade policy

- Supports enterprises and sectors where women are dominant
- Is informed by sex disaggregated statistics on women's activities in both formal and informal economy
- Consults and engages women's business associations, women's organizations
- Includes gender expertise at senior levels in negotiating teams

Suggestions for WLN

- Engender trade negotiating mandates
 - Instruct trade negotiators to ensure that trade and gender equality commitments are mutually reinforcing
- Engender APEC's Individual Action Plans
 - Amend IAP template to show how improvements address gender considerations

Suggestions for WLN

- Strengthen APEC capacity to address gender dimensions of trade
 - GPFN annually commission 1 or 2 case studies to identify impacts of trade agreements for different sectors and groups of women
- Improve sex-disaggregated data on impacts of trade