

GENDER AND TRADE COALITION

A Feminist Alliance for Trade Justice



Gender and Trade Coalition Strategy Meeting

12 March 2019, 9:30AM - 1:00PM

13 March 2019, 2:00PM - 6:00PM

at Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

747 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017

1. Meeting Concept Note and Agenda
2. Participant List
3. GTC-TWN issue Brief
4. Proposed GTC Governance Structure
5. GTC Unity Statement

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CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

On the margins of the sixty-third UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63), one year after the Think Meeting that initiated the Gender and Trade Coalition, this strategy meeting will create a collective timeline of action towards analyzing and opposing the neoliberal instrumentalization of women's rights as a tool to facilitate the free flow of capital, resources, and labor. In the twelve months since 160 women's rights and allied organizations signed a unity statement challenging the gendered consequences of the global trade system, the Gender and Trade Coalition has grown to over 200 members reflecting a cross-section of civil society organizations, feminist groups, academia, and trade unions. Over the past year, the coalition has been sustained and led by an interim working group of members around the world. For the first time since its inception, the strategy meeting will convene members in the same space, in alliance with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, to deepen analysis on the intersections of trade and gender and galvanize action around policy alternatives.

The strategy meeting will generate, and build on, momentum around the formal launch of the Gender and Trade Coalition, taking place on 12th March as a side event of CSW63, to foster strategic conversations around the growth and direction of the coalition. The principle objectives of the meeting include:

1. Articulating collective political goals, both short and long term, grounded in shared political analysis.
2. Strengthening the policy analysis and advocacy capacity of the coalition.
3. Mapping allies and strategizing the growth of membership with a view towards building a robust coalition.
4. Formalizing the coalition through a governance structure and sustaining it with communications processes and funding.

AGENDA

Day 1, 12 March 2019

9:30 - 9:45 Welcome, Introductions, and Expectations

Luise Rürup, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Office
Anita Nayar, Regions Refocus

9:45 - 10:45 Political Analysis

- *Clarify our shared analysis of gender and trade toward (a) preventing “gender” being used as a vehicle to advance further liberalization without any regard for the adverse impacts on women; and (b) articulating a constructive approach to gender and trade (e.g. through domestic industrial policy) without it being instrument of exploiting developing countries.*
- *Articulate collective political objectives we want to achieve based on our shared political analysis.*

Mariama Williams, South Centre

Misun Woo, Asia Pacific Women Law and Development

Graciela Rodriguez, Latin America Gender and Trade Network

Chair: **Michelle Maziwisa**, African Women's Development and Communication Network

10:45 - 11:00 Break

11:00 – 12:00 Policy Arenas

- *Map the political dynamics of institutional actors in the gender and trade arena such as WTO, UNCTAD, the EU and governments with gender provisions in their trade agreements. This will lay the foundations of an advocacy plan and timeline of action.*

Ranja Sengupta, Third World Network

Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei, Third World Network-Africa

Chair: **Nicole Bidegain Ponte**, ECLAC

12:00 - 12:45 Political Opportunities

- *Review upcoming advocacy opportunities as pathways for achieving our shared political objectives with an understanding of the political dynamics of various policy arenas.*

Norma Sanchís, Red de Género y Comercio

Jessica Woodroffe, Gender and Development Network

12:45 - 13:00 Wrap-up

- *Review action points drawn from discussion*

14:30 - 16:00 CSW Side Event: “Launch of a Global Feminist Alliance for Trade Justice” at 4 West 43rd Street (between 5th and 6th Ave), Aqua Room

Day 2, 13 March 2019

14:00 - 14:15 Recap from Day One

- *Summarize action points and highlights of discussion from Day One.*
Marina Durano, Open Society Foundations

14:15 - 15:45 Action Timeline

- *Discuss growing membership, alliances, and mobilization*
- *Draft an action timeline*
Katie Gallogly-Swan, Action Aid
Ranja Sengupta, Third World Network

15:45 - 16:00 Break

16:00 - 17:30 Governance Structure, Communications Systems, and Sustainability

- *Review draft governance structure and agree on an inclusive online process to nominate and elect a steering group; Develop communications tools to stimulate the coalition; and Discuss funding needs and sources to sustain the coalition*
Carol Barton, Women in Migration Network
Misun Woo, Asia Pacific Women Law and Development

17:30 - 17:45 Next Steps and Closing

- Anita Nayar**, Regions Refocus
Mariama Williams, South Centre

Gender and Trade Coalition Strategy Meeting

PARTICIPANT LIST

Aishu Balaji



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Program Associate
Regions Refocus

Aishu is a Program Associate for Regions Refocus. She grew up in India and Australia. After experiencing frustration working in the neo-colonial context of INGOs, she undertook research on the development industry through a critical lens as a master's student at the London School of Economics and a Research Assistant to development academics. Her areas of inquiry have included caste-intersectionality in the Indian women's movement, the political organizing of asylum seekers, autonomous development in post-Independence Somaliland, and the politics of return migration.

Carol Barton



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Executive
Community Action United Methodist
Women

Carol is Executive for Community Action with United Methodist Women, based in New York City. She leads the current justice priority on economic inequality with a focus on living wages for all. In this capacity she works to engage members in municipal and state legislative action that builds the base for a living wage. She previously served as lead staff on United Methodist Women's Immigrant and Civil Rights Initiative and in the Racial Justice office. Carol is Co-coordinator of the global Women in Migration Network (WIMN). A popular educator, she has created many workshops and curricula on social justice concerns. Carol has also worked with Church Women United, Women and Philanthropy, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, and the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice. She holds a Masters in Political Economy from the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Nicole Bidegain



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Social Affairs Officer
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As Social Affairs Officer, Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Nicole contributes to the intergovernmental work of ECLAC member States in the framework of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Author and collaborator to several publications on women's human rights, development and gender equality public policies, including "[The 2030 Agenda and the Regional Gender Agenda: synergies for equality in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)". Nicole is a sociologist from the University of the Republic in Uruguay and holds a Masters in Contemporary Latin American Studies by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. As a member of regional and global civil society networks, Nicole actively participated for more than a decade in following up on the commitments of the United Nations Conferences on women's rights, population, financing for development, education and sustainable development.

María Graciela Cuervo



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Co-Coordinator
Development Alternatives with
Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Aluma of DAWN's Training Institute (DTI), María is now the Co-Coordinator. María graduated as a lawyer and obtained a Master's degree in Labor Policies and Globalization from the Berlin School of Economics and Law. As an activist, she has national and international experience advocating for human rights especially with regard to education, women and labor rights. She was previously a Program Officer at the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Secretariat, and prior to this María worked for the Dominican Republic Ministry of Labor, and with CIPAF, one of the oldest feminist organizations in the Dominican Republic. Maria has been engaged in several international advocacy processes in the United Nations system, including recent work on the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

Marina Durano



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Program Officer
Women's Rights Program
Open Society Foundations

Marina is currently a Program Officer with the Women's Rights Program of the Open Society Foundations creating a grant making portfolio that will promote economic justice for women. She has spent more than 15 years strengthening women's political engagement with macroeconomic policies and global economic governance structures alongside Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and the International Gender and Trade Network. Along with Prof. Gita Sen, she released in 2014 an edited volume entitled *The Remaking of Social Contracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World* published with Zed Books. She has a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Manchester in the UK.

Priyanthi Fernando



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Executive Director
International Women's Rights Action
Watch Asia Pacific (IWWRAW-AP)

A social development and communications professional with over 30 years of experience both in Sri Lanka and overseas, Priyanthi has worked in the areas of technology, infrastructure and poverty. She has worked in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Yemen, the UK and Australia and has led several organisations: the Centre for Poverty Analysis, an independent Sri Lankan think tank; the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, a specialist global network and the Sri Lanka country programme of Intermediate Technology Development Group (now called Practical Action), the Sri Lankan arm of an international NGO. Early in her career she worked with the Lanka Mahila Samiti, a grassroots women's organisation in Sri Lanka and more recently served on the Boards of several other civil society organisations including the Women and Media Collective, Sri Lanka.

Katie Gallogly-Swan



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ActionAid UK

Katie has worked in women's rights advocacy at the local, national, and international levels in the UK and leads ActionAid UK's advocacy on women's economic rights. She began her career working in grassroots organising in Scotland focusing on civic space, economic alternatives and refugee/migrant access to public services. She has contributed to several books on social movements and radical democracy and is currently undertaking new research on women's economic rights in post-conflict reconstruction. She sits on the board of several grassroots and campaigning organisations and was formerly a research associate at the Harvard Weatherhead Centre for International Relations where she specialised in constitutional tensions in Europe. She holds a BA in Social Anthropology from Harvard University and soon to hold an MSc in Violence, Conflict and Development from SOAS, London.

Camden Goetz



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Research & Communications Associate
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Camden grew up in rural, grassroots movements (especially with anti-racist and feminist groups and trade unions) in Wisconsin, USA. He continues to be dedicated to working-class community organizing now in Queens, New York, based in leftist, anti-imperialist movements. He studied International Relations and Colonialism Studies at Tufts University and works as Research and Communications Associate at Regions Refocus.

Bea Hackula



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President
Africa for Africa Women

Bea, founder and President of Africa for Africa Women Empowerment is a globally respected leader, strategist, a philanthropist and public speaker. She is a Fort Hare University and Harvard Business School Alumnus. Bea is passionate about community development and is a champion of women and youth empowerment professionally and in her personal capacity. On the 17th February 2018 she was awarded the 'Women Super Achievers Award' at the 26th World HRD Congress in India in recognition of her professional achievement as a thought leader and a contributor of value on Women Leadership.

Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei



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Head of Programmes
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Tetteh is the Head of Programmes at the Third World Network-Africa. He holds an LLM in International Economic Law and has more than 20 years of work experience in international trade and investment policy and negotiations. His work has been informed by fundamental questions of Africa's economic developmental challenges.

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Anita Nayar



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Director
Regions Refocus

Anita is Director of Regions Refocus, an initiative that fosters regional dialogues on progressive policies among civil society, governments, sub-regional alliances, and the UN. She has worked nationally and internationally on issues including women's human rights, economic globalization, development, and climate justice. Most recently she served as Chief of the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service in New York and on the Executive Committee of the South-based feminist network, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN).

Mari-Claire Price



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Realizing Sexual and Reproductive
Justice (RESURJ)

Mari-Claire is a member of the RESURJ secretariat and the Executive Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. Mari-Claire has worked in the field of Sexual and Reproductive Rights for over 10 years, including as the Executive Coordinator of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Executive Coordinator and Board member of YouAct, European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Alongside working with homeless and at-risk young people in Croatia, Bosnia and Vietnam, Mari-Claire has worked on various projects within her own community in the UK, in particular on social and economic justice projects. She was previously the youth coordinator with FORWARD UK and a Campaigns Officer on an IPPF research project related to child marriage.

Graciela Rodriguez



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Luise Rürup



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Luise Rürup is the Executive Director of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) New York office. She holds a master's degree in Political Sciences from the University of Hamburg (Germany) and a degree in development cooperation (Centre for Rural Development / Technical University Berlin, Germany). Subsequent to working at the field level (empirical research in Costa Rica and Tanzania), Luise joined FES in 1992. At the interface between policy oriented consultancy, research and political practice, Luise has worked with FES in Germany, as head of department at headquarters in Berlin and head of office in Erfurt (Thuringia), as well as in Santiago de Chile, New Delhi (India) and Istanbul (Turkey). Luise has published on a wide range of topics related to development, social justice and democracy.

Norma Sanchís



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Norma Sanchís is a sociologist from Argentina. She is a feminist activist and researcher on gender issues, including economics, care, labor market, migration. Norma is part of the Latin America Gender and Trade Network.

Gita Sen



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Co-Coordinator
Development Alternatives with
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Gita Sen is a Southern feminist working nationally and internationally on gender equality and women's human rights, combining an academic career with policy advocacy and activism. She holds a PhD in Economics from Stanford University, and is Distinguished Professor and Director of the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health at the Public Health Foundation of India. A co-founder, and now General Co-Coordinator of the South-based feminist network, DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), she has worked on the political economy of globalization, and has helped to shape the global paradigm shift towards sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to advance gender equality with a number of partners – governments, multilateral and bilateral organizations, and civil society. She has held national and international positions on multiple commissions, committees and boards. Her publications include *The Remaking of Social Contracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World* (Zed 2014). Her combination of advocacy, activism and analysis has resulted in receipt of the Volvo Environment Prize, and honorary doctorates from the University of East Anglia, the Karolinska Institute, the Open University (UK), the University of Sussex, and the University of Edinburgh.

Ranja Sengupta



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Senior Research Fellow
Third World Network (TWN)

Ranja Sengupta is a Senior Research Fellow at Third World Network (TWN). TWN conducts research on economic, social and environmental issues pertaining to the Global South; publishes books and magazines; organises and participates in conferences, seminars and workshops; and provides a platform representing broadly Third World interests and perspectives at international fora such as United Nations agencies, conferences and processes, WTO, the World Bank, and IMF.

Pauline Vande-Pallen



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Pauline Vande-Pallen is a Programme Officer with the Third World Network Africa. She holds a Masters in International Political Economy of Development from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

Marisa Viana



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Marisa Viana is Executive Coordinator of RESURJ and has been a member of the alliance since 2011. Marisa is from the Brazilian Amazon and has been a human rights and social justice advocate since the age of 18. Her commitment and dedication to the empowerment of young women, justice, and human rights is deeply rooted in her experiences growing up in the Brazilian Amazon where discrimination and violence against girls and women continues to be the norm. Prior to this, she managed the Young Feminist Activism Program at the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID); worked at the Foundation for Tropical Medicine in Brazil; and worked as Program Associate at the International Women's Health Coalition.

Mariama Williams



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Senior Programme Officer for Global
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Mariama Williams, Ph.D. is a feminist economist with over 20 years of experience working on economic development, with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment and social equity in international trade & external debt and finance arenas and more recently on climate change issues. Her path breaking publications include *Gender and Climate Financing: Coming Out of the Margin* (Routledge 2015) and *Gender Issues in the Multilateral Trading System* (Commonwealth 2003). She also co-authored *Trading Stories: Experiences with Gender and Trade* (with Marilyn Carr, Commonwealth Secretariat 2010) and *Gender and Trade Action Guide: A Training Resource* (with Catherine Atthill, Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Marilyn Carr, Commonwealth Secretariat 2007). Williams is currently Senior Programme Officer at the South Centre, an inter-governmental think tank of developing countries based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Misun Woo



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Regional Coordinator
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law
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Misun Woo is the Regional Coordinator of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) a leading feminist network in Asia-Pacific. With a diverse and active membership from 27 countries, APWLD develops capacities, produces and disseminates feminist analyses, conducts advocacy and fosters networks and spaces for movement building to claim and strengthen women's human rights and Development Justice. APWLD's newest programme 'Women Interrogating Trade & Corporate Hegemony (WITCH) prioritises building the capacity of women's rights organisations to understand the impact of trade and investment rules on women's human rights; and increasing the power of feminist movements to interrogate and halt the growing power of corporations.

Jessica Woodroffe



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Executive Director
Gender and Development Network
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Jessica is part-time Director of the Gender and Development Network and a freelance advocacy consultant, specialising in research, facilitation and strategy development. Before becoming Director of GADN she held the post of Chair with the network for three years. Over the last 20 years Jessica has held a variety of advocacy posts in the international development sector. These included Director of Policy and Campaigns at ActionAid UK, Head of Policy and Campaigns at the World Development Movement and Head of Campaigns at Christian Aid. Throughout her career she has focused on both women's rights and economic justice issues. As Head of Campaigns at the Fawcett Society, Jessica also campaigned for gender equality in the UK.

GENDER AND TRADE COALITION

A Feminist Alliance for Trade Justice

TWN

Third World Network

ISSUE BRIEF

Why Government Procurement Liberalisation is Contradictory to a Gender-Just Trade Policy in the South¹

Trade and investment policies have been growing in depth and coverage worldwide and are legally bound through an increasing number of agreements such as the WTO, the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), various issue specific plurilateral agreements, and investment agreements. Such trade and investment policies, and liberalisation thereof, has created enormous impacts globally, cutting across economic, social, and environmental spheres. There has also been differential impact across countries, sectors, and constituencies.

The adverse impact of trade liberalisation on women, exacerbated by historically unequal social relations, has long been advanced as an area of concern by feminists and women's rights groups. But the recent resurgence of discussions on the gender impacts of trade at the WTO, with its overwhelming emphasis on woman entrepreneurs, has focused a lot of attention on two so called 'new issues': liberalisation of e-commerce and government procurement (GP). This is premised on the argument that these will be of major benefit to women in general and will provide a major boost to women who engage in trade. However, given the sensitivity of most developing countries to these issues, and the fact that liberalisation of GP was a Singapore Issue (not allowed for negotiations in the WTO to protect developing country interests), a closer examination of whether GP liberalisation under a multilateral framework such as the WTO will actually be of benefit to women in

developing countries is necessary. This brief summarises a set of arguments to show GP liberalisation is not of clear and necessary benefit to women in developing countries; in fact, the opposite may be true.

Background

Government or public procurement (GP) refers to government contracts that involve purchases by government department and agencies of goods and services, including construction and public works. In developing countries, this market is a substantial and lucrative one at 15-30% of the total market. Not surprisingly, this has been a target of trade liberalisation efforts for some time, and chapters on GP are increasingly included in FTAs, especially North-South FTAs. However, since GP is a Singapore Issue, the WTO has a plurilateral agreement called the 'Government Procurement Agreement' (GPA) which has only 47 members including the EU Member States.

Many developing countries use the GP markets as a preferential tool to address inequity and development concerns by promoting domestic industries, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), cottage industries as well as economically and socially marginalised constituencies such as women, indigenous communities, backward castes and so on. Access to domestic GP markets is clearly a very useful tool for providing market and economic opportunities for women. Many governments, both developed and developing, already practice this, even though implementation levels vary quite a lot across the globe and women still face many barriers in practice, which need to be addressed.

¹ Prepared by Ranja Sengupta, Third World Network, member of the Gender and Trade Coalition.

This is the reason most developing countries have been hesitant to join the GPA or include market access in GP under FTAs (even if they agree to transparency and information sharing), because it can take away vital policy space for development, as they need to specifically negotiate for carve-outs, or else, give full access to companies from other countries. Preferences may even need to be given at par for trade partners (to all SMEs, all women and so on). As such, when GP markets are liberalised, it is much more complex, both because of the opening of markets to foreign and often more powerful companies, and the constraints it places on domestic policy space. The potential impacts on vulnerable constituencies, such as women, is even more significant.

GP Liberalisation and Gender-Just Policy

The following arguments explain why the liberalisation of GP markets, as envisaged under the WTO or seen so far under the GPA, cannot benefit women in developing countries.

- The current arguments in this discussion tend to assume the same conditions for domestic and global GP markets whereas in reality, they are quite different. Countries (and their women entrepreneurs) participating in the global market are of very different economic strengths, ranging from LDCs to very rich countries. Women in developing countries often cannot access their own markets very easily, so accessing foreign markets is even more difficult and unrealistic, most often due to high and even irrational standards and technical barriers, especially in advanced countries.
- All women producers do not have the same economic power just because they are women. Triggering competition between a small woman producer in a developing or least developed country and a women entrepreneur based in a developed country is unfair and irrational. Even if reservations were made for women, it can unleash a competition between very unequal players.
- In fact, liberalisation of GP can threaten the preferential access to domestic markets currently offered by many developing countries for constituencies such as women, indigenous peoples and so on. This is because such preferences have to be separately negotiated for each trade agreement. Even then, this may create an unequal playing field (see point above).
- In sum, women producers in developing countries may actually end up losing market access even in their domestic GP markets and not gain anything in foreign markets, especially in developed countries. They, therefore, face the risk of being net losers, even with preferential treatment for women.
- Developing countries have been rejecting GP liberalisation as they are adversely placed in such a competition, and their producers --especially SMEs, where most of their women entrepreneurs are likely to be-- are even worse off. SMEs cannot meet the standards and other logistical and non-tariff barriers that global GP markets, especially in developed countries, pose. The same problems will be valid to an even greater extent for women producers in these countries.
- Importantly, the GP markets in most developed countries are blocked off by a host of non-tariff barriers, due for example to language, laws, citizenship etc. Even GPA members can hardly access each other's markets. For example, of the 2088 billion Euro GP market in the EU, only 309 billion or 3.5-4.2% (2007) is accessible to non-EU suppliers, of which the US claims the largest chunk, leaving very little for all non-US non-EU countries, even GPA members. Similarly, only 5% of Japan's

GP market is catered by foreign countries. Given this reality, the idea that small women entrepreneurs in developing countries could access GP markets in rich countries, even with preferences, is a myth.

- The economic empowerment of women in developing and LDCs cannot be achieved if it is disconnected from their broader national development context. The WTO is attempting to replace special and differential treatment for developing countries with horizontal preferences for groups such as women and SMEs. Women cannot benefit or get empowered by trade policy if their countries cannot pursue development objectives related to food security or public health, for example, due to trade liberalisation commitments under the FTAs or WTO. The current approach in the WTO first needs to be examined in terms of being able to benefit women's general economic and social conditions. Women's empowerment needs to go hand in hand with the broad economic and social development objectives of their countries and not get usurped into replacing these objectives. Moreover, this cannot be achieved through artificially constructed gender chapters or carve-outs.
- Most of the ideas circulating in the WTO, though so far not very concrete, talk about increasing access for women in global GP markets by promoting GP liberalisation, possibly through a multilateral agreement under the WTO on GP or by promoting the GPA in addition to GP liberalisation through the FTAs. However, the GPA does not yet provide special access for women. But some of these ideas seem to hint towards special treatment for women to be protected or given a waiver from the provisions. If they need a waiver or protection from the agreement, then the rationale to broaden such agreements in the name of women is not plausible.

- New instruments like GP liberalisation are clearly constraining the policy space in much deeper ways than traditional liberalisation. They have direct impacts on developing country governments' ability to pursue domestically suited development policy objectives to, for example, conserve natural resources, protect public health objectives, and pursue necessary regulations including to protect women's welfare. While much remains to be done in developing countries towards achieving women's economic empowerment and rights, liberalisation of government procurement poses new regulatory and economic challenges to their women and men, especially small scale, producers.

In sum, a gender argument is being used to push presumably for a multilateral liberalisation of GP markets, which is a 'new issue' and is not mandated for negotiations at the WTO. However, the arguments for women's access to domestic markets do not automatically extend to a global GP market and therefore does not rationalise the case for GP liberalisation. When even the benefit for other players in developing and least developed countries is not established, it is unlikely this liberalisation will work for women who suffer from unequal access to economic, social, and political resources. Even with preferential treatment, the reality does not favour women players in poorer countries and may even make them worse off.

As such, while preferences for women in domestic GP market is a clear and desirable development policy objective, the same is not true of liberalisation of GP markets, so a clear analytical distinction must be made between the two. Obscuring this distinction will work against women, especially in the developing south. At the same time, governments in developing countries need to engage more with women's groups to analyse and implement policy reforms to secure more access for women in domestic GP markets.

GENDER AND TRADE COALITION

A Feminist Alliance for Trade Justice

Gender and Trade Coalition Strategy Meeting

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

A new Gender and Trade Coalition – to specifically articulate a feminist agenda on trade justice – was called for at a think-meeting on gender and trade in March 2018, held on the margins of the sixty-second UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62). At this two-day strategic meeting, participants envisioned the new Gender and Trade Coalition, or “feminist alliance for trade justice,” as a space for widespread participation by trade-focused NGOs, women’s groups, trade unions, and other social constituencies through an iterative process of development and coalescing of the coalition.

An ad-hoc Working Group was formed as part of the process of defining the Coalition and its working methods in the lead up to forming a long-term governance structure. This proposed structure of governance and membership is put forward for discussion.

I. Steering Committee

The Gender and Trade Coalition, made up of broad membership (see below), will be governed by a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee’s role will be to coordinate the activities, including research direction, of the Coalition according to a shared strategy. This includes responsibility for securing funding to establish and maintain the Coalition.

Composition

The Steering Committee should be made up of a maximum of 8-10 groups, of which at least 50% should be women’s organizations (i.e., women-led and women-focused). The remaining 50% or less should be made up of organizations, trade unions, etc. that work on macroeconomics and trade, from a progressive and/or feminist perspective. Every effort should be made to ensure regional and thematic diversity amongst the Steering Committee. No more than two organizations should be INGOs.

Co-Chairs

Two co-chairs of the Steering Committee should be elected (by a majority vote) and hold the position for two years (as an organizational rather than individual role to ensure continuity). Regional and thematic balance should be ensured among the co-chairs in addition to the Steering Committee. At least one of the co-chairs should be a women’s organization.

Activities

The SC will be in charge of creating and following processes for collaborative decision-making on these and other aspects of the coordination of the Coalition including fundraising, research, and advocacy.

II. Membership

The Gender and Trade Coalition is envisioned to consist of broad-based constituencies and groups, including widespread participation by trade-focused NGOs, women’s groups, trade unions, and other relevant groups working on macroeconomics, trade, and related issues from a progressive and/or feminist lens. These should include farmers, students, health groups, labor, service providers, traders, and indigenous peoples – beyond the scope of the traditional “NGOs.”

Mobilization

The Steering Committee is tasked with outreach to mobilize additional participation, especially throughout the global South and in regions historically underrepresented in multilateral arenas (the Caribbean, the Pacific, Arab States, etc.).

Member Registration

To ensure general alignment of purpose, members are required to sign on to the Unity Statement.

Feedback Mechanism

A mechanism for feedback of its membership must be established, along with typical ways of working such as a listserv, closed online space for resources, etc. All members should be invited and enabled to submit ideas for research, strategy, and political opportunities in which the Coalition can engage. For the Coalition to co-sponsor such activities, a basic majority/quorum of the Steering Committee should be in agreement.

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Gender and Trade Coalition Strategy Meeting

UNITY STATEMENT

We, women's rights organisations, movements and allies committed to advancing women's human rights, come together to form the Gender and Trade Coalition in the firm belief that a feminist alliance on trade justice is required to address the pernicious impact of trade rules on women's human rights and to produce informed policy responses addressing the structural causes of gendered human rights violations.

We welcome the increasing recognition from governments and institutions that trade and investment rules create gendered consequences. We are concerned, however, that common policy responses are simply designed to increase the numbers and role of women involved in the free flow of capital, resources, and labour. This approach positions women as instruments of trade growth, failing to address any adverse discriminatory and exploitative consequences of the global, rules based neoliberal order on women's human rights. This is regardless of the significant role women play as producers, consumers, traders, workers, and principal providers of unpaid care.

The movements and organisations we represent recognise that the policies of austerity—trade liberalisation; finance, investment and labour deregulation; privatisation of public goods and services; and the constraints on public policy making and service delivery—produce devastating human rights outcomes for many of the world's women.

We believe the guiding principles of the global economic order upon which trade and investment rules are built are fundamentally destructive for the advancement of women's human rights. We recognise that neoliberalism, austerity, and trickle-down economics has failed around the world, yet the rules of this model are being cemented and deepened through trade and investment rules. We believe that the existential crises facing humanity—climate change, mass displacements and migration, obscene inequality and growing authoritarian, patriarchal governance—are linked to the global economic rules that have shaped the past forty years.

Trade rules constructed around principles of competition rather than solidarity, growth rather than human and sustainable development, consumption rather than conservation, individualism rather than public good, and market governance rather than participatory democracy cannot be the basis of a trade agenda that advances women's human rights.

We believe that economic cooperation and multilateralism based on equitable, fair, sustainable, and gender equality principles can play a significant part in advancing women's human rights. Global cooperation—rooted in principles of transparency, democracy and participation—that ensures capital contributes to the public goods and services necessary for the fulfilment of human rights is necessary. Global cooperation that redresses harm resulting from global trade supply chains is essential.

We believe that trade policies must affirm the primacy of governments' human rights obligations under the UN Charter and international treaties and customary laws. Should trade policies diminish state capacity to meet human rights obligations, including the right to development, they must be modified.

We believe trade rules must not increase protections for multi-national corporations who are exerting a gigantic influence on trade policy making, avoiding taxes and accountability and exploiting labour, natural resources and personal data for their own profit maximisation. Trade rules must increase accountability of corporations who commit grave human rights violations, rather than provide corporations with unique recourse when judicial systems hold them accountable.

We believe trade policies should meet sustainable development needs of all countries, especially developing and Least-Developed countries, and the people including the women within these countries. Therefore trade policies must ensure the widest possible access to essential medicines, technologies and data and information, rather than restrict access. Trade policies should promote the sharing of seeds, resources and knowledge rather than penalising solidarity. Trade rules should expand and not limit governments' capacities for broad-based and decent job creation based on living wages, especially for women. Trade rules should support governments to develop pro-poor policies and access to food including through the provision of food subsidies, public stockholdings and through providing preferential support to local, especially small-scale, women producers. We believe trade rules should support, not discourage, the growth of public spending on and ownership of public goods and services essential for human rights and the reduction and redistribution of women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. These include food, water and sanitation, energy, infrastructure, transport, early childcare and education, healthcare services—rather than encourage privatisation.

We believe powerful vested interests should be prevented from influencing trade policies or providing financial support to political parties where they stand to benefit from the outcomes of trade negotiations. Instead trade policies should be developed democratically and facilitate informed participation in decision and consent processes by representatives of those most potentially impacted, such as women farmers, women workers, and Indigenous women.

We form this coalition to increase consciousness, capacity, research, and advocacy for trade and investment policies that facilitate a more equitable, socially just and sustainable global society in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms are actively promoted and can be fully enjoyed by all women.

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