

Concept Note

2nd CUTS -GIZ Public-Private Policy Dialogue on Making the AfCFTA Work for Women-Led MSMEs in Ghana

Background/Introduction

Women are key players in cross-border trade. It is estimated that 70% of informal cross-border trades are carried by women in Africa of which Ghana is not an exception (African Union, 2021). With the commencement of AfCFTA, women in the informal trade are expected to take advantage of cross-country export and the regional markets to expand their businesses. Ensuring that intra-African trade liberalization is inclusive, particularly in creating equal opportunities for African women contributes to sustainable peace, sustainable development and human rights. Evidence shows that trade can help women move into the formal economy, offering them better working conditions, more frequent access to health or retirement benefits, better occupational safety and health standards and address the issue of inequality (World Bank-WTO, 2020).

Instead of helping to empower women, trade has exacerbated gender inequalities and negatively affected women's livelihoods. Confronted with multiple forms of discrimination and pervasive inequalities, women across the continent including Ghana remain disproportionately among the left behind.

Although, benefits from trade liberalization for women have resulted in increased job creation and increased market access (Higgins, 2013), trade liberalization can negatively affect women's livelihoods. Lowering a tariff can affect women negatively. Because women hold a disproportionate share of lower-skills jobs, they can be particularly vulnerable to trade-related shocks - such as trade liberalization that directly exposes female-dominated industries to foreign competition or layoffs due to the introduction of new technologies. women agricultural workers are especially vulnerable to imports because they are more likely to be engaged in less productive, subsistence farming (World Bank-WTO, 2020). Whether as workers in export industries, small farmers or the owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), women are more exposed than men to the risks of liberalized trade (Gender and Development Network 2017).

Ghanaian women led businesses need to take advantage of the agreement, produce and export to other countries in Africa. They need to expand their capacities to be able to produce quality goods and services at economy of scale. However, for Ghanaian women like any other member country to thrive or benefit from this agreement, there is the need to

address the teething challenges confronting them. This hinges on addressing legal discrimination, social norms, lack of specific gender trade policy, risk of gender-based violence at the border, education and skills gaps, confidence and risk preferences among many other general challenges confronting Ghanaian business.

In view of the benefits inherent in the AfCFTA Agreement, vis a vis the challenges confronting women in trade, it has become necessary to have a policy dialogue involving both the private and public actors to look at the issues and address them. The role of the government agencies and private sector in aligning with the protocols and its implementation is very critical towards the success of the agreement.

To realize potential of the women business in Ghana, public-private dialogues (PPD) will play a key role in identifying bottlenecks, promoting best practices, and implementing enabling business environment reforms for the success of AfCFTA implementation in Ghana. PPD promotes good public and private interaction. It sets an example of transparency and dynamism and collaboration between the government and the private sector.

Aims and Purpose of the Public-Private Dialogue

This PPD initiative follows a research study that was conducted by AYA Institute for Women with support from GIZ entitled “**Assessing the Potential of Women-Led MSMEs in Ghana to Take Advantage of the AfCFTA.**” The study among other objectives, sought to enhance the capacity of women-led MSMEs and cross-border traders to take full advantage of the AfCFTA and to advocate for policy reforms that would address any institutional and structural barriers to trade.

Against the backdrop of the research study, the PPD seeks to engage relevant stakeholders with the findings of the diagnostic report, the current state of play of AfCFTA implementation and seek their inputs and recommendations on how to practically enhance the capacity of women-led MSMEs to take advantage of the AfCFTA.

The overall objective of the dialogue is to improve public and private dialogue relations in improving the discourse on AfCFTA.

Participants

The PPD would bring together the following participant; AfCFTA Policy Network-Women’s Wing, Chairperson, Women in Agribusiness, AGI, Eden Tree, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Gender Desk, Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), Ghana Enterprise Agency, Afro Magansa Enterprise, Baruscans Group, AWEF Ghana Limited, Cadlin Fashion Limited, Private Enterprise Federation (PEF), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Information, Sleek Garment Exports Limited, Createline Senses Limited, E90 Ghana Limited, Evyta Afrik, Excel Industries Limited, Eye Express, Fay International Limited, Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GNCCI), Ghana

Made Limited, Global Instincts Limited, God's Wisdom Artifacts, Halbawk Enterprise, House of Damaris Ghana Limited, House of Pearls Enterprise, Economic Unit of Various Embassies in Ghana, donor agencies, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), Ghana Union of Traders Associations (GUTA), academia, economists, trade experts, CSOs, business men and women etc

The discussions would be based on the findings from the research study including but not limited to:

- General little knowledge among Ghanaian women-led MSMEs about the existence of AfCFTA
- Access to networks and information
- Household allocation of productive resources
- Finance and assets
- Time constraints and care
- Legal discrimination
- Social norms
- Lack of specific gender trade policy
- Risk of gender-based violence at the border
- Education and skills gaps,
- Confidence and risk preferences

Expected outcomes

Policy Briefs: After the expert dialogues, a policy brief will be developed highlighting the recommendations by experts in the forum. All the previous data collected through primary research including surveys, will make part of such policy brief. That will help substantiate or differ from the forum proceedings and recommendations, thus giving a complete picture of the on-ground realities. Such briefs will be circulated to all experts and stakeholders including the specific sector ministry (duty bearers), and meetings will be held with key duty bearers for implementation.

Date:	Wednesday 2nd November, 2022
Time:	9:30am
Venue:	Alisa Hotel, North Ridge, Accra

For more information

For more enquires regarding this event, please email: sny@cuts.org. Or call Shadrack (0558045500/0265592058)