

Questions for the CUTS International's Session  
on  
**Impact of Covid-19 on Women Traders in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal**  
At  
**WTO's Aid for Trade Stocktaking Event 2021**  
Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 09:30-11:00 (CET)  
on Zoom

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**Kamala Gurung, Gender and Natural Resource Management Specialist, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu**

1. How can private sector and civil society organisations become a part of bridging gender divide in business and trade?
2. Since women make up a large share of trade and employment in the informal sector (for example, women-owned informal micro units), how can their voice be represented at national and international forums and achieve policy-makers' attention? Are providing relief packages to informal workers associations or non-government organisations working for women traders is a remedy?

**Duncan Overfield, Deputy Development Director for Asia, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Organisation of the United Kingdom**

1. Many women face financial constrains to establish and sustain their business, primarily due to absence of collaterals to avail loans. The Covid-19 pandemic has added a double whammy for them. Are governments making enough efforts to resolve this issue in a short to medium term?
2. What are the gender differentiated impacts of free trade agreements? How and in which way women traders are affected by FTAs? And why gender as a subject that is largely missing from trade negotiations?

**Cyn-Young Park, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economics Research and Regional Cooperation Department, Asian Development Bank**

1. What was the situation of women before the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of opportunities and gender equality in Asia? What has the impact of COVID-19 been on women's labor market participation?
2. What are some challenges women are currently facing outside work? What are other risks that some girls and women are currently confronted with? What can policy makers do to improve the situation of women during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Mandakini Kaul, Senior Regional Cooperation Officer for South Asia, The World Bank Group**

1. What specific tools should BBIN countries adopt/adapt to formalise women-owned MSMEs and overcome the barriers to trade to gain benefits of government schemes? Why and how gender-sensitive policies can help recognition, access and rights to women traders?
2. What are the methods, reforms and actions needed to overcome gender-specific challenges such as insufficient infrastructure for women, differential treatment of women entrepreneurs/traders at borders, customs and other related offices?

**Selima Ahmad, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh and President, Bangladesh Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry**

1. What is the current situation and future of women-owned/managed MSMEs given the high-level of restrictions on the movement of people including closed borders? What policy measures could serve the purpose of turning the pandemic into an opportunity?
2. Can border haats become a medium for women entrepreneurs to recover from damages caused by Covid-19 and to further encourage their participation in cross-border trade?

**Kunzang Lhamu, Director General, Department of Employment and Human Resources, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan**

1. A number of women including a large section of women entrepreneurs have faced domestic violence, increased household work, and unequal treatment by family members during Covid-19 lockdown. This has resulted in further difficulty for them to contribute enough time to work. What kind of social changes or policy relevant decisions can be made to better address such negative effects in future?
2. More or less the beneficiaries of Covid-19 pandemic relief packages are those economic winners who can shift quickly their operations to sustain and expand their business including through lobby groups or industry associations. To what extent women entrepreneurs of the MSME sector have the abilities to make this shift to their favour?

**Anoush der Boghossian, Head of Trade and Gender, WTO**

1. What are some major gender-specific impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in the business and trade sector? What can governments do to mitigate gender-specific impacts of Covid-19 and support women entrepreneurs/traders? Are steps being taken by governments sufficient or there is a need for course correction?
2. How have advancements in new technology (for example, artificial intelligence and robotics), digital economy and e-commerce impacted the women traders and workers facing Covid-19 disruptions?