Issue 1

Women's economic empowerment
Pressing for progress with SheTrades

ARANCHA GONZÁLEZ, Executive Director, International Trade Centre

This is an incredible time for women’s empowerment. The movement to ensure equality for women and girls is influencing all facets of our daily lives. And trade is no exception. Still, there is much left to do if we are to attain Goal 5 – empower all women and girls – of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Trade does not have a gender; it does have a gender impact and is not always gender neutral. This is why ITC launched the SheTrades initiative: to empower women economically through greater integration in trade and investment, and to connect one million women to market by 2020. Through partnerships, collaboration and shared commitments, women entrepreneurs are enabled to produce, scale up and trade.

A significant proportion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) around the world are owned by women. In developing countries around 36% of MSMEs are partially or fully owned by women. While this is encouraging, the share of women-owned companies participating in international trade stands at a more modest 20%.

An estimated one billion women are not able to fully participate in the economy. This has to do with multiple reasons that can and should be tackled, from lack of education or training for women and girls, to financial and legal constraints. As pointed out by the International Telecommunication Union, more than 250 million fewer women than men have access to the online world (see Page 18). This is alarming, especially since the economy of the 21st century will be very much technologically and digitally driven.

However, there is hope. Last year we witnessed three moments that I believe will prove a sea change to the rhetoric and policymaking for women in trade.

The first was the inclusion of gender chapters in international trade agreements. This initiative, pioneered by Uruguay and Chile at the end of 2016, was replicated by Canada and Chile, which last year signed a free-trade agreement with a dedicated chapter on trade and gender.

The second was the adoption by the G20 in Germany – on the proposal of the Women20 – of a set of commitments to address the gender digital, labour and financial gaps. The German G20 presidency can be proud. For the first time in G20 history, Women20 representatives attended the meetings of top government officials resulting in an exchange on how world leaders could increase women’s participation in the global economy.

The third big moment of 2017 was the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment, which was supported by more than 120 members and observers of the World Trade Organization (WTO) during its Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. ITC is proud to have co-led this initiative with the Governments of Iceland and Sierra Leone under the auspices of the International Gender Champions.

Over the next two years, stakeholders will exchange knowledge and share best practices; this will enable the WTO Ministerial Conference, in 2019, to set a clearer direction on how to craft trade policies that benefit women – and men.

What matters more, though, is what happens on the ground. Through SheTrades we are seeing the impact from more women entering international trade.

In Kenya, a partnership with Barclays Bank has helped to provide $3 million worth of capital to more than 200 women-owned enterprises. Meanwhile, eBay has provided free online shopfront access to dozens of selected women-owned companies. (See Page 14.)

SheTrades is also about Phyllis, an online florist in Kenya who, with ITC support, created Tandao Commerce, an e-commerce platform that is now revolutionizing online trading in Africa. And there is Charitha from Sri Lanka, who set up a sustainable, luxury eco-tourism resort and is now closing business deals with international travel agencies. (See Page 28.)

These are just of few success stories among countless of successful women entrepreneurs making a change for themselves and on society.

ITC is committed to women’s economic empowerment. I invite you all to do the same. Big steps. Small steps. Be a champion. Be a mentor. Share your knowledge. Create opportunities. Be part of the movement.
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News Brief

Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade

For the first time in the history of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a number of members and observers have endorsed a collective initiative to increase the participation of women in trade. More than 120 WTO members and observers agreed to support the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade, which seeks to foster, and remove barriers to, women’s economic empowerment.

Signatories have voluntarily undertaken to enhance their cooperation on issues related to gender-responsive trade and development policies with a view to agree on further commitments at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in 2019.

ITC to boost digital skills of Jordanian youth, Syrian refugees

Through linking Jordanian youth and Syrian refugees in Jordan to market opportunities, the International Trade Centre (ITC) will help potential entrepreneurs learn how to offer services online and how to reach new markets. Funded by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the project will help strengthen technical skills such as data entry, basic computer programming, digital content creation, document translation, integrated digital publishing, and sales and marketing.

ITC, UNCTAD, WTO launch Global Trade Helpdesk

ITC, UNCTAD and the WTO unveiled an innovative tool to help businesses, in particular smaller firms, benefit from trade. Accessible through a new online hub – HelpMeTrade.org – the Global Trade Helpdesk will serve as a one-stop shop for businesses and policymakers to turn trade data into intelligence.

Launched at the WTO’s 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, the Global Trade Helpdesk is a multiagency response to an information gap in trade. For companies looking at potential export markets, the Helpdesk, which is still in a beta version, provides data on applicable tariffs and taxes; relevant health and safety standards and compliance procedures; details about export and import procedures such as pre-shipment formalities; and current trade patterns and trade agreements. Data will be added to the Helpdesk over a three-year period, and complemented with business information such as buyer and seller contacts as well as trade fair dates and locations.
WTO, ITC launch Cotton Portal to enhance transparency, support development

The WTO and ITC launched an online platform for market intelligence for cotton products, enabling cotton producers, traders and policymakers to better harness market opportunities in the sector. Launched at the WTO’s 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, the portal is expected to contribute to a more efficient cotton trading system by providing improved transparency and accessibility of trade-related information, providing relevant information for producers, traders and policymakers.

ITC, Dubai Exports join forces to set up SheTrades Middle East Hub

The first regional hub for ITC’s SheTrades initiative, created to connect women entrepreneurs to markets and support greater economic empowerment of women, was launched in Dubai in February 2018. The global SheTrades initiative spearheaded by ITC aims at connecting one million women to markets by 2020, the Middle East hub seeks to rally support from policymakers, business community and women’s organizations to increase women’s participation in trade.

ILO and IFC launch strategy to enhance gender equality in garment industry

Better Work, a joint initiative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation, launched a comprehensive, five-year gender strategy to empower women, reduce sexual harassment and close the gender pay gap in the global garment industry.

The new strategy aims to promote women’s economic empowerment through targeted initiatives in apparel factories, and by strengthening policies and practices at the national, regional and international levels. Although women represent around 80% of the workforce in the garment sector worldwide, they are concentrated in the lowest-paying, lowest-skilled occupations. Gender-based discrimination during recruitment processes and sexual harassment in the workplace remain widespread. Social norms and the predominance of working mothers also contribute to a sizeable gender pay gap, with female factory workers earning up to 21% less per hour than their male counterparts.
Local expertise creates global footprint

MATTHEW WILSON, Chief of Staff, International Trade Centre

In February 2018 International Trade Centre Executive Director Arancha González and her team entered a small building in a little village in Mandya, India, to see entrepreneurship at work.

Twenty women – some with their young children – were seated in a long room full of looms used to weave fabrics for homeware, and using traditional techniques to create beautiful designs. Their products, through the support of Industree Foundation, will find themselves in IKEA stores and living spaces around the world.

The set-up provides a micro-ecosystem of empowerment, skills upgrading and market connection. For ITC, it provided lessons learned that can be shared with ongoing and future projects, such as our work with women in Ethiopia under ITC’s Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa (SITA) project.

Many of the women were taking home an income for the first time in their lives. Many were gaining new expertise or translating their knowledge into marketable skills. All of them were increasing their confidence, and their contributions to their family income while also finding dignity in work.

These photographs offer a brief glimpse into the beautiful and unique work of these women, showing how local expertise can create a global footprint.
A new world paradigm

DAVID ABNEY, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman, UPS

Global trade needs a reboot to expand the global economy

In recent years free trade has come under criticism from populists who blame it for every lost factory job. In reality trade has been responsible for fewer job losses than automation, a technological force much harder to reverse. So while trade has made for a popular scapegoat, the truth is cross-border commerce has played an underappreciated role in producing the inclusive global prosperity we have enjoyed over the past 60 years.

Economic study after economic study has proven trade played a major role over the past half-century in boosting employment, incomes and average life spans. It has led to associated declines in poverty, child and slave labor and even military conflicts. One study of 40 economies also found that trade increased the purchasing power of lower-income households by about two-thirds as they spend more on basic goods that are often imported, like food and clothing.

That is evidence to the contrary, and the criticisms are not likely to go away. If advocates of free trade were honest, they would admit that the global trading system has not kept up with the changes in global commerce. They would also acknowledge that the long-term benefits have been substantial on a macroeconomic level, while the short-term losses have been felt on a more personal level.

To win over the critics, global trade needs a major refresh. Here are four areas where we can start.

For trade to drive global growth – and for that growth to be shared more widely – governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations and others must make a concerted effort to work together.
REFORM THE WTO

Since its inception in 1995 the World Trade Organization (WTO) has faced its share of criticisms, including concerns that processing cases takes too long and too many countries ignore the notification rules. It is easy to forget that before its founding the world trading system was perceived as a club controlled by the world’s biggest economies, one that resisted any change to the status quo. The creation of the WTO accelerated the liberalization of trade and gave countries both large and small a dispute settlement system guided by the rule of law, not power. As a result, more countries have been willing to bring their grievances to the WTO.

Though the WTO is not perfect, the global trading system needs a strong governing body at its core. The WTO’s rule-based system provides the predictability and accountability that businesses need before they invest. Given that, the WTO should be reformed, not replaced. The first steps would be for it to reform the transparency and notification system and speed up the dispute settlement process.

MODERNIZE TRADE LAWS

Whether regional, global or bilateral, many of today’s trade agreements were written in an era when manufacturing drove the global economy. Today the service industry is a much bigger force and services such as information technology, logistics, architecture, law and accounting now trade easily across borders.

What’s more, many forms of commerce – including retail – are now digital. Cross-border e-commerce is expected to hit nearly $1 trillion by 2020 but trade regulations have not kept pace. Only 20% of regional trade agreements address such e-commerce issues as transparency, data protection and paperless trading and it is imperative that trade laws catch up to the times.

STREAMLINE CUSTOMS

While tariffs get the most attention, what really inflates the cost of trading are non-tariff measures such as needless customs inefficiencies and the quotas, licensing and local-content laws designed to protect domestic producers. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) ratified in early 2017 could help cut the red tape and bureaucracy that needlessly increase the cost of trading.

If implemented wisely, the TFA could cut trading costs by up to 15%, facilitating a $1 trillion expansion in global trade. This will require policymakers everywhere to act in good faith as they enact customs reforms. That will require free-trade proponents to push governments around the world to do the right thing.

If implemented wisely, the TFA could cut trading costs by up to 15%, facilitating a $1 trillion expansion in global trade. This will require policymakers everywhere to act in good faith as they enact customs reforms.

MAKING TRADE INCLUSIVE

If there is any valid criticism of the existing trading system, it is that trade creates winners and losers in the short term. So even if trade has been overwhelmingly positive over the long run, we need to give more consideration to the workers displaced by trade or technology efficiencies – and to the small businesses that could trade more. A trading system is sustainable only if everyone shares in the benefits. Therefore we must ensure that trade is more inclusive and helps support sustainable development.

Governments also must create better safety nets for workers who lose their jobs to trade flows or technology. What that assistance looks like will vary by country, given the cultural differences that exist around the world. In some countries this assistance can subsidize the cost of retraining workers through classes or on-the-job apprenticeships. In others it can include wage and health insurance, even special assistance to affected businesses and farmers. While countries should tailor their approaches to their social policies, the WTO and the business community can help promote best practices.

Over the past decade regional or even bilateral trade agreements have become more popular, a reflection of the difficulties in finding consensus among the WTO’s 164 member nations. However, for trade to drive global growth – and for that growth to be shared more widely – governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations and others must make a concerted effort to work together.

Those of us who advocate for trade understand the economic benefits of allowing goods and services to flow freely across borders. A 21st-century trading system will also enable governments to improve environmental standards and labour standards. Before we can make the case for global trade, we must make a convincing argument that a 21st century trading world calls for a 21st-century policy environment in which free trade benefits everyone.

1. Cross-border trade has played a huge role in producing inclusive global prosperity.
2. The WTO should be reformed, not replaced.
Eurasia, the supercontinent that will define our century

BRUNO MACÃES, Author, ‘The Dawn of Eurasia’

The new century promises a world balanced between Western and Asian poles

The end of the Cold War was supposed to inaugurates Europe’s age of reconciliations, when the continent, finally at peace with itself, would be able to exist as a unified whole. However, reconciliation worked perhaps too well: the disappearance of the Iron Curtain also meant that Europe struggled to differentiate itself from the lands to the east. By expanding it might expand without limits; by retreating it might become an importer of instability.

The decade that brought down the Berlin Wall was also responsible for opening China to global capitalism. Deep value chains were quickly established, together with the infrastructure – both physical and digital – necessary to make them work. It is frequently forgotten that this infrastructure was first developed by Western multinationals and financial institutions.

In recent years Chinese authorities have increasingly taken on this task and with the Belt and Road Initiative, a development project of unmatched ambition, they intend to be firmly in control. Spanning some 70 countries and requiring investment approaching $4 trillion, the initiative is deliberately intended to reshape the global political and economic order. China’s trade with countries along the Belt and Road rose 17.8% year-on-year in January 2018.

NEW TRADE LINKS
With the disappearance of old ideological battle lines and the establishment of new trade links, a new geographic entity has started to emerge: Eurasia, the supercontinent extending from Lisbon to Shanghai or even Jakarta. While one could argue that this is a return to an older time, the dawn of a new age would be a more exact description. Romantic images of the Silk Road or Marco Polo’s adventures cannot hide the fact that trade along those routes was insignificant and almost no one made the whole journey from sea to sea. As for Genghis Khan’s empire, practically
limitless as it was to become, it still obeyed the iron laws of empire and was organized around a power centre. A genuine meeting between East and West is a creation of our own time.

One immediate consequence of the new political geography is how Russia will define its position in the world. Traditionally, Russian elites see their task as that of bringing about a gradual but complete integration with a more advanced Europe. That vision is now being replaced with a new self-image as the centre and core of the Eurasian supercontinent. In this position, Russia can reach in all directions and provide a bridge between Europe and China on both ends. Asia, long associated with historical backwardness in Russian minds, is emerging as a pole of attraction.

INTEGRATED POLES
This takes us to the second and deeper meaning of Eurasia, as a historical age rather than a geographic unit. A lot has been written about a new Asian century and with four of the world’s five largest economies soon to be located on the continent, the idea has some appeal. What that premise ignores is that Europe and the United States of America will keep their power and wealth largely intact and that, in some crucial dimensions, Asian economies and societies still lag significantly behind. What the new century promises is not the emergence of a new centre but a world balanced between Western and Asian poles. Contrary to the Cold War, these two poles will be deeply integrated.

Eurasia is a word perfectly suited to capture the main elements of this world, the first of which is contradiction. The new Eurasian century is not one where different regions of the world converge towards a single model. If the end of the Cold War allowed many in the West to entertain those dreams, they are conclusively over. All public and private statements coming from China speak of a country confident in its ability to master modern technology and build a modern society without in any way adopting a Western economic and political model. For the first time in many centuries, we are forced to live with cultural contradiction without immediately explaining it away as a result of societies existing at different stages of historical development.

The second element is that of integration. For all their differences, the main political and economic blocs are increasingly integrated. Modern society by its very nature pushes towards larger spheres of action and technology breaks old barriers of geographic distance. By combining contradiction and integration, we are entering the second age of globalization, where borders tend to dissolve but cultural and civilizational differences do not. I call it the Eurasian age.

Because Europe has taken the Western political model to its logical conclusion, while China remains unique in its closure and resistance to Western influence, it is tempting to think of these two regions as setting the outer limits for Eurasian politics. Between them, major powers such as Russia and India will try to find different positions within the broad spectrum of alternatives. Finally, across the oceans, benefitting from a more distant perspective, the United States may be expected to pick and choose from different models as it strives to preserve its leadership position, even if the world it wants to lead is now a Eurasian rather than Western one.

Bruno Maçães’ book, ‘The Dawn of Eurasia,’ was published in January. This article was first published on the World Economic Forum’s Agenda blog.

1. A train service for the Eurasian century.
2. Six economic corridors of the Road and Belt initiative spanning Asia, Europe and Africa.
Connecting women to markets through SheTrades

ANNA MORI, Programme and Partnerships Officer, International Trade Centre

ITC’s flagship initiative for women entrepreneurs marks its two-year anniversary

The SheTrades initiative, which aims to connect one million women entrepreneurs to the market by 2020, was launched just over two years ago. It is the International Trade Centre’s (ITC) main vehicle to support Goal 5 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to empower all women and girls.

The SheTrades initiative evolved from ITC’s Women and Trade programme, which since 2016 has focused on creating opportunities for women in trade. It aims to foster change by going beyond the traditional approach of merely improving the quality of women’s products and services. Instead it sets out to engage all actors involved in women’s economic empowerment including governments, the private sector and civil society. All have critical roles to play.

THINKING GLOBALLY
Today the SheTrades initiative works directly with 15,000 women entrepreneurs through a plethora of ITC projects and programmes. In Kenya, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, women in the services sectors are connected to regional and global market opportunities. In the Pacific, women handicraft producers are trained to improve their produce and linked to high-end fashion designers. Across the coffee sector in eastern and central Africa, ITC works with several associations to help women farmers and producers meet international quality standards.

Partnerships are crucial to increasing the reach, quality and sustainability of the SheTrades initiative.
Despite initial growing pains, the SheTrades initiative is now delivering results and impacts for women entrepreneurs.

Take for example Chiedza Makonnen. She is the founder of Afrodesiac Worldwide, a Ghanaian fashion brand and a SheTrades entrepreneur. Following participation in training provided by several SheTrades partners, was exposed to international platforms and has since conquered the European market with her contemporary Afro-Urban style clothing line.

Makonnen’s business philosophy is also aligned to the thinking behind the SheTrades initiative. For her, it is imperative to contribute to the manufacturing industry in Ghana. A fully 80% of the fabrics used in her production and employ more people. More importantly, Makonnen is now helping ITC scale up its SheTrades activities in Ghana, ensuring that more women entrepreneurs can follow the trail she has blazed by tapping into her business networks and being enabled to access credible financial institutions.

**ON THE RIGHT TRACK**

To date, the SheTrades initiative has successfully generated $80 million in export value opportunities for women entrepreneurs. And so far the initiative has been launched in 10 countries across Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America. February also saw the launch of the first regional SheTrades Hub. This took place in the United Arab Emirates in partnership with Dubai Exports and will provide support to women entrepreneurs across the Middle East and North Africa.

Such national or regional chapters, run in partnership with governments and the private-sector entities, allows for the SheTrades initiative to be adapted to the local context, further ensure that more women are connected to opportunities in trade.

So far more than 120 corporations and institutions have committed themselves to participate in the effort to connect one million women to markets by 2020.

While great strides have been made towards reaching the 1-million target, more partners will be needed to fully achieve this. The SheTrades initiative will continue to allocate a part of its resources to embracing challenges and promising high-impact solutions, basing its interventions on what is the core of the initiative’s work: engagement with and between the public and private sectors to ensure for women entrepreneurs.

To learn more and join the SheTrades initiative, visit SheTrades.com.
The feminist approach to inclusive trade and policymaking

ANN LINDE, Minister for European Union Affairs and Trade, Sweden

Sweden has proven that equal opportunities for women and men is good for job creation and good for economic growth.

When the current Swedish government came into power in 2014, the first thing it did was to state it is a feminist government. As such it made a clear commitment to promoting gender equality in all policymaking.

During the past years the government has combatted inhibitive gender roles and structures and we have let gender equality have a formative impact on policy choices, priorities, and in allocation of resources. The Swedish government pursues this agenda in all facets of its work – in Sweden, in the European Union and globally. Gender equality will permeate all areas of Sweden’s foreign policy: development cooperation, security, promotion, public diplomacy and, of course, trade.

For the government, a feminist foreign policy is aimed at achieving gender equality by eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls and improving general conditions for women and girls. It is a question of human rights, but also of equal opportunities allowing men and women to use their potential and contribute to society. But it is also a question of smart economics.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The world has witnessed an enormous economic transformation over the past three decades. As goods, services, capital, and people flow across countries faster than ever before, information and knowledge have become global commodities. Economic globalization and trade can channel and reinforce universal values of democracy, equality and human rights as ideas and skills move from one country to another.

Economic data tells us that countries in which more women participate in the labour market enjoy greater economic growth than countries that restrict the possibilities of women to work on equal terms as men.
Women's participation in the economy, as entrepreneurs, employees, leaders, producers and consumers is a measure of a country's economic viability and progress. Access to resources and economic opportunities for women and girl – and the knowledge to make use of these – enables strategic choices that can lead to positive change. Gender-based inequalities impose significant development costs on societies: they reduce the growth potential, the productivity and the performance of the economy as a whole. Economic data tells us that countries in which more women participate in the labour market enjoy greater economic growth than countries that restrict the possibilities of women to work on equal terms as men.

In the case of Sweden, women's economic empowerment and participation in the labour force were made possible mainly through three reforms: the abolition of the joint taxation system, the expansion of publicly-funded affordable child and elderly care, and the reform of the parental insurance that allows mothers and fathers to take parental leave on equal terms.

TRADE AND GENDER EQUALITY
As trade minister I wish to see that trade contributes to growth and jobs. It would be provocative to say that I want this to happen just for men. But in practice this could be the case. The problem is that we do not always know whether the actions or policies we discuss or decide upon are as beneficial for women as they are for men.

Because the link between trade and gender is complex and to a large extent depend on national circumstances. The effects can go both ways. Trade and trade liberalization can affect equality, but the equality situation in a country may also affect its ability to trade.

Generally, trade liberalization has helped to create more jobs and stronger trade and trade policy, whether they take place at the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

A challenge is the slow progress regarding gender analysis, which is as complex as it is crucial. Getting an accurate picture will enable us to design policies and measures in a way that favours women's empowerment and well-being, and at the same time avoids increasing gender inequality and mitigating existing disparities.

Unfortunately, the UN estimates that there are currently only available and reliable data to follow up a mere one-third of the global targets.

Add gender-specific data and the situation is even worse. Only a third of the world's nations gather data that makes it possible to measure and understand women's and girls' economic situation. Hundreds of millions of women and girls are still invisible.

GENDER-AGGREGATED DATA
To ensure women's equal access to global trade markets, this dimension needs to be integrated into discussions on international trade and trade policy, whether they take place at the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

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PARTNERSHIPS
Governments and relevant international organizations need to give priority to further analysis and collecting statistical data that is gender-differentiated.

Sweden also supports the important work of the International Trade Centre (ITC), an organization with long experience in the field of trade and gender that has been able to collect valuable information and data, in addition to analysis in the field.

The OECD is an organization with a clear strength in cross-sectoral analysis. A welcome addition to what other organizations are doing is therefore the growing interest in the OECD to deepen its analysis also on trade and gender. The World Bank Development Report from 2012 on gender equality and development was ground-breaking and we are looking forward to more analysis that will contribute to deeper understanding in the trade and gender nexus.

In April, Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström, Minister for International Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin and myself will host the Stockholm Forum on Gender Equality. This will cover critical issues and seek common solutions around human rights, representation and access to resources for women and girls. Participants from civil society, private sector, governments and academia will gather to exchange experiences, methods and strengthen dialogue. It will also be an opportunity to experience the feminist perspective in Swedish foreign policy during recent years.

For more information on the Stockholm Forum on Gender Equality, please visit genderqualworld.com.

1. Sweden has benefited economically from high women participation in the workforce.
2. SheTrades champions: Sweden’s Trade Minister Ann Linde and ITC Executive Director Arancha González.
Empowering women in the tech sector creates ideas, role models

We live in a world in which the near-ubiquity of information and communication technology (ICT) and rapid advances in areas like robotics and artificial intelligence are shaping the evolution of just about every other economic sector.

The technology sector is brimming with almost limitless opportunities. But regrettably for such a new industry it has inherited some pretty old problems. In Silicon Valley today women hold fewer than one in five tech jobs and fewer than one in 10 senior positions at the leadership level.

What’s more, instead of liberating women by opening up a new world of previously unavailable possibilities, it is all too often perpetuating and even reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes.

More than 25 years since the invention of the World Wide Web, we face a gender digital divide that is actually getting wider in the very parts of the world where access to technology could make the most difference.

In Africa, the proportion of women using the internet is 25% lower than that of men. In the 47 United Nations-designated least developed countries (LDCs) that gap balloons to 30% or more. Aggregated across countries, that adds up to some 250 million fewer women globally with access to the online world.

Calling time on the digital gender divide

DOREEN BOGDAN-MARTIN, Chief, Strategic Planning and Membership, International Telecommunication Union

More than 25 years since the invention of the World Wide Web, we face a gender digital divide that is actually getting wider in the very parts of the world where access to technology could make the most difference.
Inclusion can only be effective and meaningful when there is awareness of the benefits of connectivity, the skills and confidence to exploit it and affordable, attractive content that meets women’s needs.

SCIENCE GAP
The gender digital divide extends even further. Since the 1980s, when computer science courses first appeared on university curricula, the number of young women choosing to study ICT degrees has been in steady freefall.

Today, fewer than one in five computer science graduates in Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is female. Fewer than one in six app developers is a woman or girl. Only 17% of all ICT jobs are held by women and women who choose to join the ICT sector are leaving it in droves, with fewer than 1% of female ICT graduates still working in the sector after five years.

Research indicates that the problem spreads its roots at an early age: despite performing at least as well as boys in mathematics and science, by age 15 far fewer girls (4.7%) than boys (18%) say they are planning a career in computing or engineering. At the other end of the skills spectrum, university employment figures show that only slightly more than 20% of tenured staff in computing and information-science departments are women. Within the tech sector itself, many women complain of a toxic, testosterone-centric culture that undervalues women’s contribution and limits their ability to get ahead.

Predictably, perhaps, the result is a dearth of female role models to inspire younger generations and a substantial gender pay gap that many in the industry privately acknowledge but are reticent to discuss.

ITU has called time on the status quo. After several years of campaigning for gender equality in the tech sector through initiatives including Girls in ICT Day and the annual GEM-Tech technology awards, we decided in 2016 to scale up global advocacy by joining forces with other committed international organizations with a strong track record on gender issues.

EQUALS
Together with founding partners UN Women, the GSM Association (the mobile industry body), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations University, we launched EQUALS, a collaborative global multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together nearly 60 partners from private companies, government departments, regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia.

EQUALS is dedicated to promoting gender balance in the technology sector by championing equality of access, skills development and career opportunities for women and men alike. With grassroots collaboration at its heart, it’s about leveraging the power of partnership; amplifying results through collective strategies and programmes; coordinated policymaking; and shared successes that can be adapted and replicated in new contexts.

By promoting awareness, building political commitment, pooling resources, exchanging knowledge and harnessing the different skills and capacities of our members, EQUALS is striving to reverse the digital gender divide and close the gender gap by 2030, supporting United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 by empowering women through their use of technology.

To address the three core issues of access, skills and leadership, EQUALS has set up three dedicated coalitions. Its partners can choose to get involved in the work of any or all of them, depending on their areas of expertise and interest. To support the work of these coalitions, the United Nations University is leading the EQUALS Research Group, a data-gathering and analysis effort which seeks to fill the many data gaps that currently impede effective evidence-based policy-making in the area of technology and gender.

Clearly, the primary aim of EQUALS targets SDG 5 – ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’ – but the EQUALS founding partners believe it goes much deeper than that. Just as technology has become crucial to the achievement of all 17 SDGs, so gender equality and gender empowerment are fundamental to creating the world we want. To paraphrase a popular slogan, none of us can be equal until all of us are equal. That is why we are striving towards with EQUALS and we are delighted to be working alongside such a dynamic partner as ITC to achieve 50:50 gender parity by 2030.

We all lose without women’s participation in digital technology development and access to digital technology resources. Inclusion can only be effective and meaningful when there is awareness of the benefits of connectivity, the skills and confidence to exploit it and affordable, attractive content that meets women’s needs. EQUALS is about generating fresh investment and exciting, creative public-private collaboration models to unlock the power of ICT connectivity and fast-forward progress on the SDGs.

1. In Silicon Valley women hold fewer than one in five tech jobs.
2. In Africa, the proportion of women using the internet is 25% lower than that of men.
3. Closing the digital gender gap is crucial.
In Vanuatu, ‘market mamas’ are taking care of business

SIMON HESS, Coordinator, and DEANNA RAMSAY, Communications Officer, Enhanced Integrated Framework

Women entrepreneurs are helping to restore island nation’s economy after the ravages of Cyclone Pam

The island nation of Vanuatu is surrounded by bright blue ocean, so it should come as no surprise that tourism makes a hefty contribution to the country’s economy. That model was disrupted in March 2015 when Cyclone Pam struck, devastating the country and its tourism-dependent income. Its recovery from that natural disaster has been assisted in no small part by the hands of women whose livelihoods depend on tourism dollars.

Rosalie Vatu is a so-called ‘market mama’, an arts and crafts trader who sells assorted items ranging from t-shirts and baskets to carvings and colourful dresses. Her day starts at 4 a.m. making coconut crème rolls for a shop down the road. She is also the founder of Bulvanua Arts and Handicrafts, a cooperative of more than 30 women who sell and promote products made in Vanuatu.
TOURISM ECONOMY

Over the last decade the country has become an increasingly popular tourist destination, with its number of international visitors growing by 42% and its tourism sector employing 55% of Vanuatu’s total labour force. Tourism represents nearly two-thirds of GDP.

However, increased tourism has been a mixed blessing for some entrepreneurs. Foreign-owned hotels have sprung up across the main island, luring tourists to spend the majority of their time and money in those spaces rather than in local markets.

According to Willie Luen, Principal Trade Development Officer at Vanuatu’s Department of Tourism, to be competitive, many of the traders began to rely on more cheaply priced imports, which then depressed Vanuatu’s own production.

‘Profits were leaving the country as quickly as they arrived. The key to retaining the benefits of tourism was to be found in sourcing local products and presenting these to tourists, preferably outside the hotel environment,’ Luen said.

For Vatu and her fellow market mamas, the opportunity to boost their own businesses and that of people producing island-made items came with the redevelopment plans for Vanuatu’s storm-damaged seafront.

Cyclone Pam had damaged or destroyed 90% of the buildings on Vanuatu’s main island and that included the market infrastructure and ports.

‘We had to relocate temporarily and during that time it was really sad for us because we lost our businesses,’ Vatu said.

That meant the government’s post-cyclone reconstruction plans were critical to restoring the local economy and the futures of Vanuatu’s entrepreneurs.

‘We were convinced that the new seafront could provide an opportunity to better showcase local goods to tourists and provide much-needed stimulus to the local economy,’ Luen said.

SEAFRONT DEVELOPMENT

With the help of the New Zealand government in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework, in September 2017 Vanuatu completed and launched its new seafront development, now an enticing and attractive area for locals and visitors alike.

The mamas’ handicrafts market was rebuilt with added power and internet access and the women are back in the centre of town selling creative artisanal work, brightly coloured dresses and woven bags and baskets from the outer islands.

In the process, they are generating stronger linkages between tourists and Vanuatu-made products and services.

As tourist arrivals increase by a projected 36% and the mamas pivot towards local producers, a supply chain is developing that links the country’s many artisans to eager buyers at the new seafront, with the promise of improving the lives of people way beyond seaside kiosks.

The impact on the lives of ordinary people has been marked, Luen said. He speaks of a highly visible change at least partly owing to the increased income from tourism: new and better houses, schools filling with children and markets, specifically the thriving Port Villa Seafront.

‘One of the carvers recently told me that because people see his works on the seafront and are contacting him for orders, he now has enough income to send his daughter to school,’ Luen said.

In her efforts to better connect local producers with traders, Vatu, who started selling goods to visitors in 2003, is already seeing change.

‘[Tourists] are no longer going back to the shops where all the imported products are,’ she said. ‘I see the opportunities that men and women of Vanuatu can do out of the local resources around them. With busy hands, they can create something to help Vanuatu to build its economy.’

There is a lot more on the horizon for Vatu with her business acumen, as well as the others playing a role in boosting local livelihoods and, with that, Vanuatu’s economic recovery.

‘Where the new beautification is at the moment I always love to sit there looking over the horizon,’ Rosalie said. ‘It means a lot to us. It’s a beautiful site. ☺

1. Rosalie inspects a building in Port Vila destroyed by Cyclone Pam.
2. Rosalie weaves a basket.
3. It’s 4 a.m. and Rosalie is up making coconut crème rolls.
Women are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

CATHRINE G. JAHNSEN, Executive Programme Manager, Virke

Promoting trade as a tool for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development

Norway has a long history of dedicated policy for achieving gender equality in the workplace. Virke, the Enterprise Federation of Norway, is a strong supporter of this agenda and believes it should be duplicated in development policies. Paid work is an important part of transforming from the notion that women are somehow an economic burden to an equal contributor. Indeed, women’s participation in the workforce plays a crucial part in much-needed sustainable economic growth and welfare – in Norway and elsewhere.

Achieving Goal 5 – empowering all women and girls – of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is crucial for improving all parts of society. At Virke we consider inclusion of business – and especially the service sectors – a necessary part of the solution. There is no doubt that international trade is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and thereby increased human welfare.

Every day, Virke works to promote sustainable economic growth and increased welfare through free trade and increased imports from developing countries and emerging economies. A central part of this effort has been on promoting ethical trading in compliance with international recognized conventions with partners home and abroad. For example, in 2000, we were one
An overarching goal of the capacity training and partnerships initiated by Virke for nearly two decades has been to professionalize enterprises in developing countries to meet the business requirements of Nordic and European markets.

of the founders of the Ethical Trading Initiative Norway, which aims to strengthen members’ efforts to promote decent working and environmental conditions in their supply chains and to support ethical trade in general.

TRADE AND SERVICES
The importance of the trade and service sectors for job creation is evident. They are the largest private sector employers in Norway with most of the employees being women. Their importance does not stop there. China has lifted more than 700 million people out of poverty through development of manufacturing industries, while Viet Nam and Cambodia have created 2.5 million and 600.000 jobs respectively in the textile and apparel sectors. Countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya are currently developing their light-manufacturing industries: nine out of 10 jobs being established in developing countries are in the private sector and a large share of workers and entrepreneurs are women.

WORKPLACE INTEGRATION
At home, Virke has worked with enterprises to better include women immigrants into Norway’s workforce. As part of this effort, Womentor, a mentoring programme for highly educated non-Western women living in Norway, was launched in 2009. The mentors were Norwegian female leaders from private and public sector, including Crown Princess Mette-Marit. The main aim for the programme was to match the skills and qualifications of non-Western women with needs of Norwegian employers.

In 2015, a new mentor programme based on diversity management, VS-Humentor, was launched by Virke and Seema. Mentees participating in VS-Humentor comprise of highly educated women with international backgrounds, while the mentors are experienced top managers from Norwegian businesses, for example Statkraft, NorgesGruppen, Innovation Norway and Accenture. The aim of the programme is to shed light on how diversity in the workforce will have positive results on increased returns, productivity, innovation and access to new markets, when included in an enterprise’s management strategy.

BUSINESS NETWORKS
Virke has been supporting private-sector partners in developing countries since 2003, with a strong focus on women’s economic empowerment. This has been possible through programs funded by Norad, and collaboration with other partners such as CBI – the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries, the International Trade Centre and Chamber Trade Sweden.

Networks are an important part of strengthening opportunities for women in business. Whereas there are many women working in the Norwegian-African business ecosystem, most business leaders are men. In response to this, Norwegian-African Business Association (NABA) joined forces with Virke and initiated the NABA Female Business Network. Launched in 2017, the initiative provides a platform for women working within the Norwegian-African business community and actively promote ways of empowering women in business.

REGIONAL FOCUS
An overarching goal of the capacity training and partnerships initiated by Virke for nearly two decades has been to professionalize enterprises in developing countries to meet the business requirements of Nordic and European markets. This may prove to be a too tough challenge for many entrepreneurs, in addition, exporting may come with a high financial risk.

An important part of our work with partners in developing countries, is to widen their business network and identify new markets and partners in their own region. For businesses in Africa and Asia, their main growth markets will not be in Europe, but in their own neighbourhood.

Women constitute a key economic force in all countries and, as such, there is a need to promote and nurture women-led best practices and ensure the development of women as role models. Many women participants in our training programmes have shown great pride in acting as mentors and as ambassadors of female entrepreneurship. They have shared their best practices at business schools, organized entrepreneurial workshops and addressed young graduates about their possibilities.

The Millennium Development Goals showed us that if we have specific common aims, political will and sufficient funds, we can solve the great challenges. According to a new UN Women report ‘Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,’ we still have a long way to go. At Virke we will continue to support women in our common quest for equality, both in Norway and abroad. ☞

1. One of the many mentoring courses arranged by Virke for African business women.
2. Leather goods produced by women Ethiopian entrepreneurs.
Making Aid for Trade work for women

ANOUSH DERBOGHOSSIAN, Gender Focal Point, World Trade Organization

Studies show benefits of a more inclusive economic model

Let us go back 12 years, to when the Aid for Trade Task Force was created. Gender was written into the initiative’s guiding principles: ‘Aid for trade should be rendered taking full account of the gender perspective. Donors and partner countries jointly commit to the harmonization of efforts on issues such as gender.’

Fast forward to today. It turns out that momentum on gender has been building. Some 87% of Aid for Trade donors surveyed for the Aid for Trade Global Review in 2017 have integrated women’s economic empowerment into their Aid for Trade programmes. Similarly, most of developing countries believe the programme can meaningfully contribute to women’s economic empowerment. All surveyed countries and Aid for Trade donors consider that it contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

While momentum is growing, a lot remains to be done. We also need to do it effectively.

Some of the results show $1 of Aid for Trade is worth $20 of exports. That dollar has a positive, although implicit, impact on women’s economic empowerment because Aid for Trade is a tool for women’s development.

WOMEN’S TRADE CAPACITY

Supporting the participation of women in international trade is one of its key components of the inclusive trade solutions many
Developing countries are making progress in integrating gender perspectives into trade and development programming.

governments want to employ. Through Aid for Trade, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been focusing on women with the aim of building their trade capacity and using trade as a tool for their development.

Past Global Reviews have highlighted a broad range of areas in which Aid for Trade support is effective.

Some of the results show $1 of Aid for Trade is worth $20 of exports. That dollar has a positive, although implicit, impact on women’s economic empowerment because Aid for Trade is a tool for women’s development. As the initiative matures its impact is becoming increasing clear.

Since 2011 Aid for Trade has increasingly focused on women’s empowerment and through the global survey – one of the WTO’s main monitoring processes – we have a better perspective on policy trends related to development and women’s empowerment.

Gender was specifically addressed at the 2011 Aid for Trade Global Review, which highlighted a virtuous circle of efforts to improve women’s economic empowerment through trade capacity building.

Launched at the 2015 Global Review, ‘The Role of Trade in Ending Poverty’, joint WTO-World Bank Group publication, analysed how trade integration can positively impact women’s economic empowerment. One strong conclusion was that high trade costs fell heavily on least developed countries (LDCs), particularly on their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and also on women traders. This higher cost prices them out of international trade.

The 2015 Global Review also reported on impacts in female employment and examined how to include women into value chains and barriers facing women traders, especially in Africa.

Gender was a cross-cutting issue within the 2016-2017 Aid for Trade work programme. The latest edition of the At a Glance report launched at the Global Review in July 2017 has a plethora of information and analysis on this critical issue. The report clearly highlights the divides that prevent women from fully reaping the benefits of international trade.

These divides still exist and persist: in accessing the information and skills needed to export; in accessing and using of technology for global and regional value chain integration; in owning and managing firms. These are divides that can and are being addressed by Aid for Trade programmes. Developing countries are making progress in integrating gender perspectives into trade and development programming.

DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

The new Work Programme 2018-19 will go deeper into the issue and, among other topics, will focus on young women, women-owned firms and the digital gender divide.

Aid for Trade is geared up for women’s empowerment. To be sure that we are making a difference, we need data to track the impact of trade on women. There is insufficient information in that regard and we need to understand the links between trade and gender. For this purpose, the WTO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are currently working to assess how Aid for Trade has benefited women in the past 10 years.

Similarly, the WTO is now partnering with the World Bank to undertake a deep and comprehensive publication on this issue, generating new data in this field. This is a very complex issue because it implies combining economic analysis with an understanding of the different national and regional contexts. The Aid for Trade monitoring exercise can potentially help here by tracking national policy trends and understanding the role of the private sector.

We are moving forward, making Aid for Trade work for women and ensuring it becomes a springboard for their economic empowerment. The question today is not if Aid for Trade provides economic opportunities for women, it is for how many it provides them. Determining how we can do more to make a difference is the challenge we need to take up.

1. WTO wants Aid for Trade to become a springboard for the economic empowerment of women.
2. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo presents the 2017 edition of Aid for Trade At a Glance report during the Global Review.
Harnessing export potential to create employment opportunities for women

ANNA JANKOWSKA-ERIKSSON, International Consultant and JULIA SPIES, Market Analyst, International Trade Centre

Export potential data can help policymakers make better decisions on which sectors promise job opportunities for women.

Creating an inclusive economy is critical for making progress towards achieving Goal 5 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – empowering all women and girls. Yet, making real progress in this regard relies on creating more and better employment opportunities for women. Export potential data supplied by the International Trade Centre (ITC) serves to estimate potential job creation by gender across industries in order to guide policy actions that promise more employment opportunities for women towards specific sectors.

TRADE ANALYSIS, SIMPLIFIED
Export potential refers to the pattern of trade that you could reasonably expect between two countries for a specific product when taking into account supply, demand and the relative strength of the bilateral trade relationship between them. It simplifies market research by highlighting opportunities with room for additional export growth by comparing real trade values to the calculated potential benchmark values.

In Morocco, the employment estimation results revealed that realizing the untapped potential in the apparel, food and beverage, and agriculture sectors could serve to create over 230,000 jobs for women.
In the Philippines, over 578,000 potential jobs for women are associated with realizing export potential in computers, electronics and optical products, food products, apparel and wood products.

Policymakers may be seeking to optimize employment opportunities for specific groups by gender, age, skill level or region. With access to information about the job possibilities for each group that derive from the export potential of different economic sectors, they can better target sectoral support, adapt their strategies according to their development plans and the specificities of their labour markets and evaluate how the gains from trade could be distributed within the general economy.

Export potential data provides an overview of sectors with additional room for growth to estimate the direct and indirect employment impacts associated with a full utilization of their untapped potential. Direct effects arise because the additional exports raise demand for labour in the same sector. Indirect effects result from this sector being interconnected with other input sectors in the economy, where labour demand will rise as well.

Linking export opportunities with employment effects provides policymakers with a comparison of the formal jobs likely to be created across sectors if export potential is realized. Such employment impacts distribute unevenly across sectors and economic actors, thus recognizing in which sectors more opportunities for women are likely to emerge is crucial. This again can help inform policymakers on how to foster inclusive growth.

PILOT-COUNTRY RESULTS

Thus far, the methodology has been piloted in eight countries: Benin, Morocco, Ghana, Guatemala, Jordan, Myanmar, Rwanda and the Philippines. The diversity in productive structures and untapped export potential across countries provided a rich array of outcomes for comparison. We highlight the results for Morocco and the Philippines demonstrating the number of jobs that could be created across sectors and by gender, allowing policymakers to design programmes that economically empower women.

In the case of Morocco, the employment estimation results revealed that realizing the untapped potential in the apparel, food and beverage, and agriculture sectors could serve to create over 230,000 jobs for women. It also showed the apparel, textile, and leather sectors were likely to create the greatest share of opportunities for women relative to those created for men, while there would be proportionately fewer opportunities for women associated with the electric machinery sector, in which women hold only 30% of the jobs on average.

In the Philippines, over 575,000 potential jobs for women are associated with realizing export potential in computers, electronics and optical products, food products, apparel and wood products. The relatively large number of jobs associated with realizing export potential in the food and wood-products sectors stem from indirect opportunities created in the labour-intensive agricultural sector that provides many inputs into the food- and wood-processing industries. In the apparel sector, most of the new jobs will be for women as the sector already employs a higher share of women relative to men.

This analysis allows policymakers to evaluate how gains from trade could be distributed within the domestic economy depending on the sectors prioritized for export growth. This demonstrates how access to multifaceted and robust information on untapped export opportunities can help inform government officials about the trade-offs their country faces in potential export revenue and the economic empowerment of different actors. Understanding where the greatest potential for empowering women lies is the first step towards creating more and better employment opportunities for women.  

1. Morocco has could realize more jobs for women in the textile sector.
Women entrepreneurs breaking barriers

MICHELLE KRISTY, Associate Expert, POONAM WATINE and CAROLINE KEMUNTO, International Consultant, International Trade Centre

Meet the ‘SheTrades’ entrepreneurs making a difference in trade

While entrepreneurs face challenges starting up businesses everywhere in the world, women often experience an extra layer of hurdles. These include regulatory and cultural biases, as well as lack of access to capital, market information, networks and technology. These barriers often mean missed opportunities to further raise growth rates and to create opportunities for more people.

These are the stories of five ambitious women who pursued and broke barriers to become successful women entrepreneurs with the help of the International Trade Centre’s SheTrades initiative, which connects women entrepreneurs to markets.

TOURISM TRAILBLAZER
Charitha Abeyratne Hettiarachchi took the leap to create a sustainable eco-tourism resort, Saraii Village, in Hambantota District in southern Sri Lanka. With the support of SheTrades, Hettiarachchi was able to increase her exposure, resulting in closing business deals with international travel agencies and becoming known as an eco-luxury wedding and honeymoon destination. Couples can explore the rustic paradise while nestling in a treetop and awakening to the sound of blissful birdsongs.

However, in pursuit of success her ambition was confronted by specific gender-related challenges, such as securing access to funds and gender biases. It was her perseverance that allowed Saraii Village to become a

I would say face your fears confidently. Fear is the only thing that would keep us from reaching the top.
ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES

**Saliza Mohamadar** is the owner of Iboih Inn, a restaurant and lodging business in Weh Island, Indonesia. With the support of SheTrades, she also took part in the ITB Berlin trade fair and increased her capacity and knowledge to make Iboih Inn better known in European markets. By exploiting digital marketing methods and using social-media platforms she has been able to target more online customers. Her company has experienced a 20% increase in sales since June 2017 and she is currently planning to expand her services facilitated by the SheTrades business networks.

**DIGITAL INSPIRATION**

**Phyllis Mwangi** paved the way to becoming an inspirational businesswoman in Africa through the success of her online flower shop. That inspired her to create Tandao Commerce, an e-commerce platform operating out of Kenya that is helping to revolutionize the way people shop and how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) doing business in Africa.

With the support of SheTrades, Tandao Commerce attended CEBIT Hannover in March 2017, an important digitization and innovation trade fair. There the company was able to secure a $60,000 grant to fund its social program to get 100 women-owned businesses online and train them to run sustainable enterprises. ‘The really great thing about Tandao Commerce is that it’s an e-business, most people are not dealing with a person, they interact with us on an online portal,’ Mwangi said. ‘I believe this is a model that favours women as it is not immediately perceived who the business owners are.’

**DIVING DEALS**

**Shana Fatina** reached new heights after participating in the ITB Berlin tourism trade fair in March 2017 by closing deals and gaining potential partnerships for her diving experience company ORA Dive in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia. With many opportunities from potential partners and buyers presented during the trade fair, she learned how to improve her services and products as a global player. ‘The help from ITC SheTrades resulted in deals for our business,’ Fatina said.

success by empowering the local population by adopting sustainable practices. Her vision is to expand the resort to other regions in Sri Lanka with the help of SheTrades. ‘I would say face your fears confidently,’ Hettiarachchi said ‘Fear is the only thing that would keep us from reaching the top.’

**BRAND BUILDER**

**Rose Topisian**, director of travel operator Asilia Safaris, Kenya, participated in ITB Berlin 2017 and received support on how to approach international buyers. Her company went to the next level by building brand awareness and developing relations with international buyers during the fair. She identified new partnership opportunities and new markets such as India and Turkey. ‘I am grateful to the entire ITC SheTrades team for their commitment, resources and the time they have taken to support women entrepreneurs,’ Topisian said.

1. Shana Fatina.
2. Saliza Mohamadar.
3. Charitha Abeyratne Hettiarachchi.
4. Phyllis Mwangi.
The future of women’s economic empowerment

Policy, labour and social changes are necessary to create equal opportunity

Women often carry out a double shift, working as producers as well as bearing the lion’s share of responsibility for reproductive labour, through unpaid care and domestic work to sustain their families. This affects the way women participate in – and benefit from – economic growth.

Globalization and technology have created new opportunities for women to participate in global and regional value chains, and to increase participation in formal and informal labour markets. Still, wide gender gaps persist.

For instance, women often enter the labour market on unfavorable terms with lower wages, less protection and less bargaining power. Their contribution to society is hugely underestimated as several weeks of unpaid care and domestic work are not recognized in national accounts, especially in the global South.

But a report published last year by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and research firm Gallup found that the majority of women across the world want to have paid jobs, and that men agree they should have the right to do so. Making this a reality and ensuring that work pays off for women is therefore long overdue.
Poor working conditions and the lack of support for women taking on these double burden promotes the casualization of the female workforce. It leaves women workers facing greater job insecurity, have fewer chances to become skilled workers, and less freedom of association.

WOMEN IN VALUE CHAINS
While women worldwide participate in global value chains, work within these is often highly gender-specific and segregated. Women are often forced into the worst-paying occupations and earn low wages, in some cases only 85% of a man’s full-time earnings, according to Korn Ferry, a consultancy. Some companies deliberately engage women as workers because they see them as more docile than men.

Despite companies at the top of such value chains touting the use of stringent sustainability and labour standards, in reality, very mixed results have been reported in working conditions – especially in developing countries. Pervasive sexual harassment, inadequate healthcare, negligible child support, poor on-site living conditions and long working hours continue to prevail in the electronics, garments and agricultural sectors. Dealing with such issues is expensive and lead firms would rather invest in economic upgrades.

Poor working conditions and the lack of support for women taking on these double burden promotes the casualization of the female workforce. It leaves women workers facing greater job insecurity, have fewer chances to become skilled workers, and less freedom of association.

TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN
For some, technology can help achieve equality in the workplace and close the gender gap faster. Still, careful examination of women’s experiences in digitally mediated work reveals significant challenges.

For instance, the expansion of app-based services has encouraged the ‘Uberization’ of domestic work. Technology provides marginal benefits to workers in the form of flexibility and choice over working times, tracking of hours worked; and wages earned. According to recent research by Overseas Development Institute (ODI), tech can potentially provide better remuneration than other available options. Overall, however, domestic gig work often also means lower, less-secure incomes; discrimination; further entrenchment of unequal power relations within the traditional domestic work sector; and the erosion of established labour and social protections.

Similarly, research conducted by ODI on Syrian refugee women in Jordan shows that the gig economy has the potential to create new economic opportunities for women whose options to access paid work are extremely limited. Still, making these opportunities accessible and beneficial for all refugee workers requires improved digital access and increased mobility so women can enter the workplace. There is also a need to end pervasive harassment and violence experienced by women at and on the way to work.

WOMEN IN SOCIETY
In an era where with increased labour mobility and opportunities, globalization and technology have brought uneven benefits for women and men. Much of this boils down to social constructs that continue to define women’s supposed place in society, preventing them from expanding into areas of work dominated by men.

Governments need to break down such barriers by enabling women to not just participate in but also to benefit from these increased opportunities. Promoting women’s economic empowerment means recognizing the value and contribution of women’s work and alleviating the unpaid care load of women who wish or need to enter the labour market.

REBOOTING POLICY
There is a need to broaden the depth of macroeconomic, industrial, labour, social, health and agricultural policy to include gender-specific needs and issues at their very core. Women need more and better opportunities to work if they choose to do so.

The right to decent work cuts across domains and sectors in domestic and global industries alike. Work must provide and just social minima such as a liveable income, respect of employee health and safety, social protection and the right of association.

In addition, social and economic policy should also provide support for the unpaid care and domestic work disproportionately shouldered by women. This means providing support to families and young children in order to promote equal participation in the labour market. More broadly, this entails recognizing and eradication the precarious situations faced by women in the labour market.

1. Despite advances, technology have brought uneven benefits for women and men.
2. Women often have lower wages, less protection and less bargaining power.
The ITC fellowship experience: what happened next

Fiona Walker, Human Resources Adviser, International Trade Centre

International Trade Forum sat down with Bosun Tijani to discuss his time as a fellow with ITC – and how this shaped what he did after

Fiona Walker: Tell us about your fellowship experience with ITC.

Bosun Tijani: I had the rare privilege of being an International Trade Centre (ITC) and Hewlett Packard (HP) fellow in 2004/2005. As a young graduate of economics from Lagos, Nigeria, spending time across 12 months between ITC and HP in Geneva was beyond my imagination.

The first three months of the fellowship programme were spent with ITC’s enterprise development section with significant support from the section chief. While the application was made through AIESEC (an international student exchange organization) my preparation for the fellowship was entirely taken care of by ITC. Everything felt right from day one.

The three months was a crash course on international trade. I was challenged to learn by exploring tools and materials, reviewing programmes, giving feedback and building cases for opportunities in international trade, with a particular focus on African countries. The experience molded me for the task ahead at Hewlett Packard.

My fellowship experience remains a significant part of my personal evolution. It wasn’t only professionally enriching but also shaped my overall view of society and the role of systems.

At HP I was attached to the education team as deployment lead for Africa. - Dropped right in the middle of the Micro-enterprises Acceleration Programme, I was responsible for supporting the identification
ITC is an incredible place. The organization’s approach to supporting international trade, placing enterprises at the core, makes it incredibly rich in knowledge and networks.

of business development service providers who received support from HP to coach microenterprises in select African countries. The programme was aimed at coaching businesses on how to leverage technology for improved performance.

My fellowship experience remains a significant part of my personal evolution. It wasn’t only professionally enriching but also shaped my overall view of society and the role of systems.

FW: What kind of business are you in now?

BT: I am the co-founder and CEO of Co-Creation Hub (CcHUB), a technology innovation centre and start-up incubator, based in Lagos, Nigeria.

The centre is Nigeria’s foremost open-living lab, designed as space where work to catalyze creative social-tech ventures takes place. Among so many things, CcHUB is renowned for its role in building one of the fastest-growing technology clusters in Africa and also for being the first point of call for Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on his first trip to Africa.

FW: After ITC, what path did you take?

BJ: The experience with ITC ignited a new level of curiosity in me for the place of technology in society and more importantly, enterprises. I enrolled in a masters degree programme in information systems and management at the Warwick Business School in the United Kingdom. There I had the opportunity to study technology and innovation management within large enterprises with exposure to businesses like Accenture, NHS, SAP and many more. Upon completion in 2007 I got a job as a research network manager with one of Europe’s leading innovation consulting firms.

Altogether, the opportunities inspired a passion in me to explore how society organizes to leverage science and technology for prosperity. This gave birth to a desire to contribute to a movement in Africa, one geared towards harnessing the gains from collaborative problem solving and technology to leapfrog the growth of the continent. It was this that propelled me towards founding Co-Creation Hub.

FW: What advice do you have for other ITC fellows?

BJ: I consider myself an accidental entrepreneur. My journey into entrepreneurship was inspired by the desire to build a platform that provides the building blocks for the application of technology in society. More specifically, I see the urgent need to accelerate how we apply social capital and technology in addressing many of the social challenges in Africa.

The most successful entrepreneurs in my opinion are those who consciously put in the incredible amount of work into creating unprecedented value for society. While it is possible to be successful when driven simply by money, creating a lasting and sustainable business in today’s changing world begs for more. As such, I see entrepreneurs as creators constantly seeking to make our world just a little better.

FW: What advice do you have for other entrepreneurs?

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My advice would be for fellows to immerse themselves in the wealth of knowledge available across the organization. Explore the amazing work done across the different divisions and sections. It will shape your thinking and give you a unique voice.

The tools and knowledge available at ITC are of incredible value. Hence the reason I would encourage fellows to take proper advantage of them. It is one of the few places where knowledge on international trade is put to actual use for the benefit of businesses.

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#SheTrades
Disrupting trade processes

The International Trade Centre (ITC) surveys of traders in developing countries consistently show that procedural inefficiencies such as excessive time and cost of cumbersome trade formalities are a key obstacle to cross-border trading. While the TFA aims to introduce administrative efficiency and transparency into these formalities, the processes of submitting, moving, verifying and securing trade documentation are also particularly ripe for technological disruption.

Global trade is experiencing a major boost to easing movement of goods across borders. The implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) is driving the reduction of time and cost of cumbersome trade formalities. However, an equally powerful force expediting cross-border trade is the accelerating progress of the digital technology in areas spanning from trade logistics, automated processing and e-payments to immediate access and exchange of trade information and documentation.

Facilitating international movement of goods via blockchain could become a reality for developing countries

Blockchain technology allows real-time tracking of changing ownership of goods across borders. The end-to-end visibility of live data on the transaction increases transparency and access to information for the private sector and government authorities alike.

One of the most hyped and potentially game-changing technologies of the day is the distributed ledger – commonly known as a...
blockchain, a design form of the technology – which is a shared digital database that can record every transaction. Thanks to its features all kinds of financial, trader and product-related information can be made available digitally and the cloud-based ledger should, in theory, ensure that records are immutable. Its use started in financial services in the form of virtual currency bitcoin and more recently in trade finance. Since 2016, the technology has increasingly been tested for cross-border trade-facilitation purposes.

**AMPLIFYING TFA BENEFITS**

Blockchain technology allows real-time tracking of changing ownership of goods across borders. The end-to-end visibility of live data on the transaction increases transparency and access to information for the private sector and government authorities alike. This traceability and immediate data access should improve predictability for the actors involved and boost efficiency across the supply chain. Its adoption by border-regulatory agencies in particular can remove the need for manual, paper-based, lengthy formalities and documentation requirements as information such as e-certificates and e-permits are immediately shared by all authorized parties.

For the private sector, access to such eased processes should help reduce trading costs and may reduce the need for intermediaries such as customs brokers and agents. Customers, meanwhile, should have better information on the origins, movements and features of the product. For border agencies, and particularly customs entities, blockchain solutions can in turn improve their capacity for risk analysis and targeting, optimizing clearance processes.

Most importantly, collective transparency, authorized and authenticated participation, and the immutability of records on blockchain should help to build trust between all actors in the trading process – a key requirement to joint design and implementation of trade facilitation reforms. Bringing light onto every aspect of a transaction should level the playing field and build confidence.

In January 2018, following a number of test and proof-of-concept initiatives, IBM, the technology company, and Maersk, the Danish shipping company, announced a joint venture in developing blockchain solutions to help track international freight and replace inefficient trade documentation processes. Previous pilot projects included mapping the total paper flow of the door-to-door shipment of flowers from the Kenyan city of Mombasa to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, while IBM collaborated with Singapore Customs in deploying blockchain to send customs declarations from the United States of America to Singapore.

**BLOCKCHAIN ROADBLOCKS**

Despite its potential advantages, blockchain poses some serious challenges for businesses and authorities alike. First, the extensive transaction volumes and computation requirements involved demand adequate technical and operational capabilities in the form of sufficient electricity and reliable internet access, as well as human resources and skills to manage the system. The current databases and software, such as existing single-window systems used by border agencies, need to be integrated with blockchain technology.

Second, the records must be immutable, secure and the ledger itself inviolate. A data breach – let alone a hacking attack and theft of actual cryptocurrency, a case of which was reported in December 2017 – would immediately reduce trust in the system. Border agencies must have access and confidence in all the required certificates, permits and licences in the database to clear shipments. Businesses, on the other hand, need to trust that the ledger provides an appropriate level of confidentiality and security for the sensitive commercial information they may be required to share. Ultimately, such systems work only when all parties trust and use the technology and have the tools and capacity to do so.

The recent pace of other digital technologies suggests that distributed ledger technology will also evolve rapidly. Competing forms of the technology will emerge that will operate under differing access rights. A system may function with permission rights managed by only one or a few actors – for example the government or the technology provider itself – or by all individual actors given authority to decide with whom they want to share data. The chosen underlying technology will then determine the type of governance system required.

A clear legal and regulatory framework mandating and governing the use of blockchain is required to address those concerns. Just as e-signatures and e-documentation require the same legal standing as their physical counterparts, so must blockchain be mandated by domestic legislation to allow border agencies to operate and clear valid declarations.

Beyond domestic laws, international standards should be created to increase the legality and mutual trust of documentation shared across borders. On this front, the European Commission’s Directorate-General Connect is currently studying standardization needs. Finally, given the rapid advancement and applicability of this technology, urgent regional and international regulatory cooperation is needed to ensure the documentation shared using the distributed ledger is recognized as valid by authorities in different jurisdictions.

Just as some developing countries have adopted advanced technology over existing mainstream infrastructure, such as the use of 3G networks instead of copper cables, so can blockchain help economies to leapfrog current best practice systems.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Despite concerns, blockchain raises hopes for accelerating the benefits of trade facilitation, especially where trade formalities are most costly. Just as some developing countries have adopted advanced technology over existing mainstream infrastructure, such as the use of 3G networks instead of copper cables, so can blockchain help economies to leapfrog current best practice systems. With the assumed gains in efficiency and cost-effectiveness that the technology offers, business should benefit, and government become more effective. Its tamper-proof nature should also provide less opportunity for fraud and corruption. ☑
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**Tuesday 26th June**
- Plenary: Opening session
- High level policy dialogue
- Industry Insights: Preparing to do business
- Gala Dinner

**Wednesday 27th June**
- SheTrades Hub: Inspiration Talks
- Industry Insights: Meet the Expert
- Doing Business: B2Bs
- Speed Networking

**Thursday 28th June**
- SheTrades Hub: Investment Challenge
- Partners Speak
- Doing Business: B2Bs
- Plenary: Closing session
### Agenda

**from 3 March 2018**

#### Upcoming events

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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
<td>International Women's Day</td>
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<td>12-23 March</td>
<td>United Nations Commission on Status of Women, New York</td>
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<td>19-23 March</td>
<td>World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva</td>
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<td>20 March</td>
<td>Journée internationale de la Francophonie</td>
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<td>26-27 March</td>
<td>Africa CEO Forum, Abidjan</td>
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<td>16-20 April</td>
<td>UNCTAD E-Commerce Week, Geneva</td>
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<td>22-25 April</td>
<td>Fourth World Cocoa Conference, Berlin</td>
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<td>23-26 April</td>
<td>Forum on Financing for Development, New York</td>
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<td>23-24 April</td>
<td>Eighth Global Commodities Forum: Building skills for sustainable development, Geneva</td>
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<td>25-27 April</td>
<td>China-Africa-UK Investment Forum, Hangzhou, China</td>
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<td>26-27 April</td>
<td>Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa (PIGA) Business Matchmaking Event, Hangzhou</td>
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<td>9 May</td>
<td>Europe Day</td>
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<td>15-16 May</td>
<td>Africa SME Finance Forum 2018, Nairobi, Kenya</td>
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<td>15-17 May</td>
<td>Second All for Good Global Summit, Geneva</td>
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<td>28-30 May</td>
<td>OECD Forum, Paris</td>
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<td>5 June</td>
<td>United Nations World Environment Day</td>
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<td>5-6 June</td>
<td>3rd annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, New York</td>
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<td>5-6 June</td>
<td>European Development Days, Brussels</td>
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<td>20 June</td>
<td>United Nations World Refugee Day</td>
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<td>26-28 June</td>
<td>ITC’s SheTrades Global 2018, Liverpool, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
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<td>27 June</td>
<td>United Nations Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day</td>
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<td>27 June</td>
<td>EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade Award Ceremony, Brussels</td>
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<td>10 July</td>
<td>52nd meeting of the International Trade Centre's Joint Advisory Group</td>
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<td>9-18 July</td>
<td>High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, New York</td>
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<td>12 August</td>
<td>United Nations International Youth Day</td>
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<td>5-6 September</td>
<td>ITC’s 18th World Export Development Forum, Lusaka, Gambia</td>
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<td>World Economic Forum on ASEAN, Ha Noi, Viet Nam</td>
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<td>14-15 September</td>
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<td>18-30 September</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly, New York</td>
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<td>20 September</td>
<td>Launch: SME Competitiveness Outlook on business ecosystems, Geneva</td>
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<td>21 September</td>
<td>United Nations International Day of Peace</td>
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<td>1 October</td>
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<td>2-4 October</td>
<td>World Trade Organization Public Forum, Geneva</td>
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<td>14 October</td>
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<td>12-14 October</td>
<td>2018 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, Bali Nusa Dua, Indonesia</td>
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<td>16 October</td>
<td>World Food Day</td>
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<td>24 October</td>
<td>United Nations Day</td>
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<td>22-28 October</td>
<td>World Investment Forum, Geneva</td>
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<td>25-26 October</td>
<td>ITC’s 12th World TPO Network Conference (WTPO), Paris</td>
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<td>5-7 November</td>
<td>Global SME Finance Forum, Madrid</td>
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<td>5-9 November</td>
<td>Geneva Peace Week, Geneva</td>
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<td>30 November</td>
<td>G20 meeting</td>
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<td>3-14 December</td>
<td>24th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change, Katowice, Poland</td>
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www.intracen.org/publication/ntm-bangladesh

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Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can benefit more if the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement is implemented in a coordinated manner at regional level. This report charts a roadmap for regional policy frameworks on trade facilitation. Such arrangements have the potential to boost intraregional trade, reduce bottlenecks and increase the participation of SMEs in regional value chains, thus deepening regional integration.
www.intracen.org/publication/Charting-a-roadmap-to-regional-integration

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This report helps small businesses tap into the Chinese e-commerce market, which is the world’s largest. The publication recommends cross-border e-commerce, which allows opening stores in marketplaces rather than creating Chinese sites. It provides systematic instructions on the process, including logistics and payments.

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This guide offers SMEs insights on negotiation and collaboration with lead firms in international value chains. It addresses topics such as compliance with standards and regulations; contractual relationships; production and performance management; types of upgrades; and strategies to avoid lock-in. It also highlights five company success stories, illustrating how small companies grew to become regional or global leaders. The guide is based on excerpts from the 2017 edition of the SME Competitiveness Outlook – The region: A door to global trade.

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