SheTrades Outlook
Key Trends & Insights

2022

※ ITC | SheTrades

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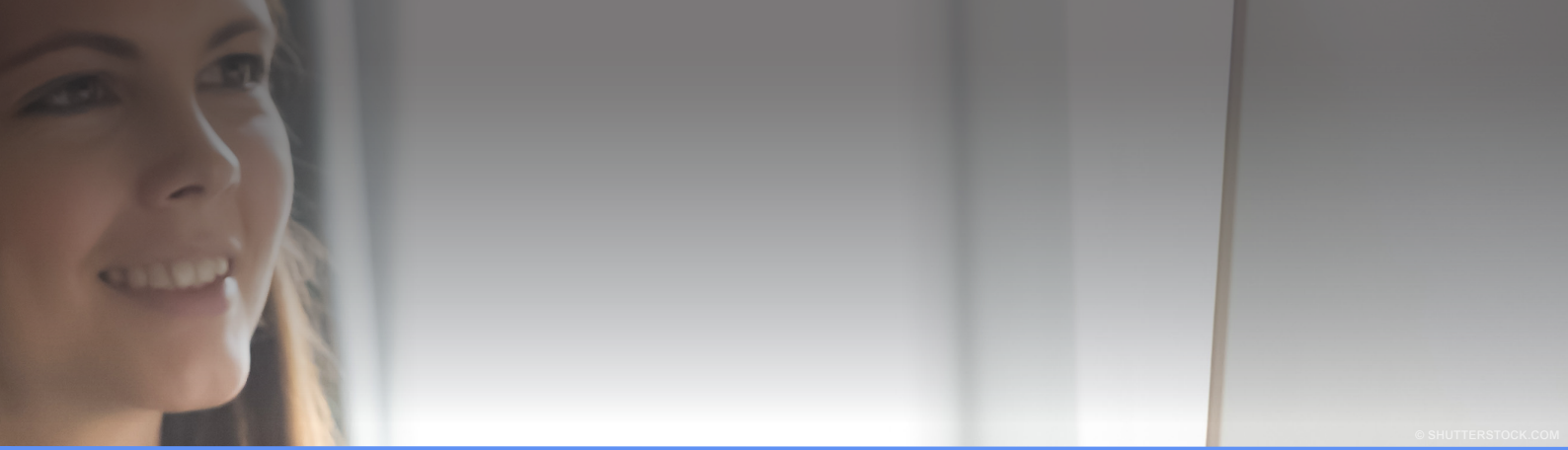
About ITC

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and least least developed countries to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development.

About ITC SheTrades Initiative

The SheTrades Initiative is ITC's flagship women and trade programme. Established in 2015, we target all stakeholders across the trade and business ecosystem to create the right conditions and capacities for every woman, everywhere, to realise their full economic potential.

ITC SheTrades provides women entrepreneurs and producers with access to key knowledge, resources, and networks, support policymakers on inclusive policy reforms, and leverage public and private partnerships to amplify the impact of our work.

With generous support of the Government of the United Kingdom, ITC SheTrades Initiative developed SheTrades Outlook to develop trade and gender data and provide resources to stakeholders for gender-responsive policymaking in trade.

About this report

Gender equality and women's economic empowerment are key objectives in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to Goal 5, which specifically deals with them, they are also cross-cutting issues in the full set of SDGs. While the objective is overarching and important in most, if not all, elements of economic policy and development practice, it has salience in trade.

Trade policy has important distributional effects, as it brings about changes in relative prices and relative incomes. This link was recognized in the 2017 World Trade Organization (WTO) Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment. Changes in relative prices and relative incomes affect everyone in an economy. However, effects tend to vary according to shared characteristics. Gender is one such characteristic, as work practices, entrepreneurship, and consumption patterns in most countries differ notably for men and women. Men and women are affected differently by trade policy changes based on the sectors they are active in as workers or entrepreneurs, and the range of goods and services they consume (Shepherd and Stone, 2012).

Against this background, SheTrades Outlook seeks to bring novel data on the institutional ecosystem that facilitates women's engagement in the international economy through trade. SheTrades Outlook provides quantitative and qualitative data that helps stakeholders assess, monitor and improve countries' progress in promoting women's economic empowerment through trade.

This report uses the SheTrades Outlook data in 38 developed and developing countries.[1] Data in 25 countries was collected in 2019, while data in the other 13 countries was obtained in 2020. The two samples are pooled together in this analysis.

The objective of this report is to inform policymakers and other stakeholders on the key trends on advancing the trade and gender agenda based on the data from SheTrades Outlook. It also seeks to provide a resource for researchers and policymakers to learn from best practices and identify areas for improvement. This report also aims to highlight important features of the data, with the aim of promoting future research. At the same time, the report recognizes that data do not tell the full story and refers to qualitative information from SheTrades Outlook to provide good practices from around the world.

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[1] *These countries include: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe*

SheTrades Outlook Pillars		Sustainable Development Goals
01	Trade Policy	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
02	Legal & Regulatory Framework	5 GENDER EQUALITY 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
03	Business Environment	1 NO POVERTY
04	Access to Skills	
05	Access to Finance	
06	Work & Society	

FIGURE 1: Links between SheTrades Outlook and the SDGs. Source: ITC (2020).

Overview and Methodology

SheTrades Outlook provides comparable indicators on trade and gender issues across countries. This enables stakeholders to:

- Map the ecosystem, identify gaps, and prioritize areas for policy reform;
- Identify gaps between commitments and achievements; and
- Share knowledge, compare experiences, and identify good practices.

The tool is based on six pillars and each pillar contains a set of indicators that assess various dimensions of the institutional ecosystem that are necessary to support women's economic empowerment. The six pillars are:

1. Trade Policy;
2. Business Environment;
3. Legal and Regulatory Framework;
4. Access to Skills;
5. Access to Finance; and
6. Work and Society

SheTrades Outlook goes well beyond the traditional confines of trade policy, which tend to focus on international agreements, import taxes, and measures affecting the cross-border supply of goods and services. The rationale for a broader perspective is that the ability of women to participate in the international economy is mediated by a wide range of factors, including their ability to invest in human capital (Access to Skills pillar) and their ability to obtain financial capital (Access to Finance pillar). Similarly, broader social and economic issues such as the ability to actively participate in the labor force (Work and Society and Legal and Regulatory Framework pillars) also affect women's participation in the global economy. The six pillars, therefore, present a more holistic view of a country's policy ecosystem than would be suggested by a narrow focus on traditional trade policy.

Data on individual variables are collected through an institutional survey. The responses to the survey questions are coded according to a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 being the maximum score. Using simple averages, indicators are aggregated into variables and pillars, and pillars are similarly aggregated into an overall composite index. This assumes that areas represented by the indicators, variables, and pillars are equally important. The methodology is set out schematically in Figure 2, using the Work and Society pillar as an example.
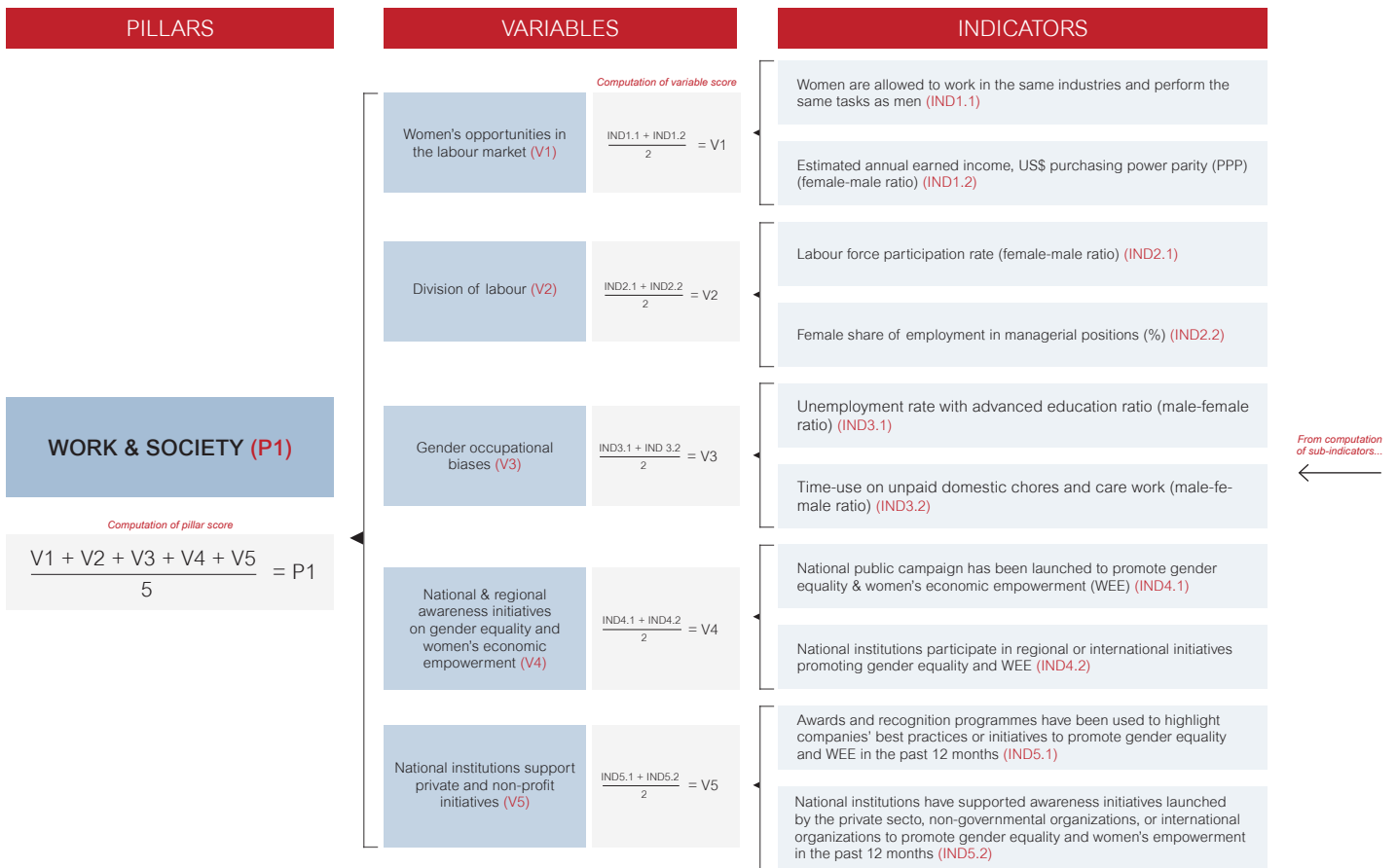
PILLARS	VARIABLES	INDICATORS

Computation of variable score

Women's opportunities in the labour market (V1)

$$\frac{IND1.1 + IND1.2}{2} = V1$$

- Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men (IND1.1)
- Estimated annual earned income, US$ purchasing power parity (PPP) (female-male ratio) (IND1.2)

Division of labour (V2)

$$\frac{IND2.1 + IND2.2}{2} = V2$$

- Labour force participation rate (female-male ratio) (IND2.1)
- Female share of employment in managerial positions (%) (IND2.2)

WORK & SOCIETY (P1)

Gender occupational biases (V3)

$$\frac{IND3.1 + IND 3.2}{2} = V3$$

- Unemployment rate with advanced education ratio (male-female ratio) (IND3.1)
- Time-use on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male-female ratio) (IND3.2)

From computation of sub-indicators...

Computation of pillar score

$$\frac{V1 + V2 + V3 + V4 + V5}{5} = P1$$

National & regional awareness initiatives on gender equality and women's economic empowerment (V4)

$$\frac{IND4.1 + IND4.2}{2} = V4$$

- National public campaign has been launched to promote gender equality & women's economic empowerment (WEE) (IND4.1)
- National institutions participate in regional or international initiatives promoting gender equality and WEE (IND4.2)

National institutions support private and non-profit initiatives (V5)

$$\frac{IND5.1 + IND5.2}{2} = V5$$

- Awards and recognition programmes have been used to highlight companies' best practices or initiatives to promote gender equality and WEE in the past 12 months (IND5.1)
- National institutions have supported awareness initiatives launched by the private secto, non-governmental organizations, or international organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the past 12 months (IND5.2)

FIGURE 2: SheTrades Outlook Methodology - Example computation of Work and Society pillar score.

Key Findings

01 — More can be done to mainstream gender into trade policy.

Broadly speaking, most of the pillars display relatively similar distributions of scores, subject to exceptions. Figure 3 plots the ranges of the six pillars by using a standard box and whiskers plot.

The Legal and Regulatory Framework pillar has a similar range of scores to other pillars, but the median is noticeably higher. The Business Environment pillar stands out due to a low-end outlier.

The Trade Policy pillar has a wider range of scores, from 0.095 to 0.856. In addition, countries tend to score lowest on the Trade Policy pillar. This implies the need for more gender-responsive trade policy to ensure that women participate in and benefit from international trade. This is especially relevant in the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

For a preliminary indication, it is informative to look at the distributions of the variables that make up the Trade Policy pillar (Figure 4). Specifically, women's participation in strategic roles has a substantially lower median score than other dimensions. This could be a significant factor that lowers the average score for the pillar. The distribution of scores for the involvement of women in consultation process, and the existence of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation programmes are also lower. By contrast, the score for incorporation of gender concerns in trade agreements tend to be higher. It is important to note that this finding does not change based on whether the 2019 sample only or the pooled 2019/2020 sample is used.

FIGURE 3: Distribution of scores by SheTrades Outlook pillar. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

NOTE: The center line indicates the median value of a series, the lower and upper box lines indicate the interquartile range (25th percentile to 75th percentile), and the whiskers indicate notional maximum and minimum values (1.5 times the interquartile range). Dots indicate outliers, that is observations lying beyond those ranges.

FIGURE 4: Distribution of scores by variable – Trade Policy pillar. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

Each variable under the Business Environment pillar has a distinct pattern. Figure 5 shows the distribution of scores by variable. Public procurement tends to display low scores. Although, Canada, Kenya, South Africa, and Botswana have much higher scores on this variable (0.83) and the Republic of Korea and Liberia have the maximum possible score (1.00).

Scores for the business startups variable are more similar across countries. Meanwhile, scores for variables on the presence and participation of women's business associations, and access to trade and customs information are somewhat higher relative to the others. The variables on grievance mechanisms and gender-sensitive frameworks have a very wide distribution of scores. There are also several outliers, both at the top and the bottom of the distributions of some variables.

These findings are reasonably consistent whether the 2019 sample only or the combined 2019/2020 sample is used. In each case, analysis of the individual indicators that make up each variable will provide a rich picture of performance patterns across countries and regions.

■	Presence & Participation	■	Startups
■	Information	■	Public Procurement
■	Grievance Mechanisms	■	Frameworks & Initiatives
■	Dialogue & Frameworks		
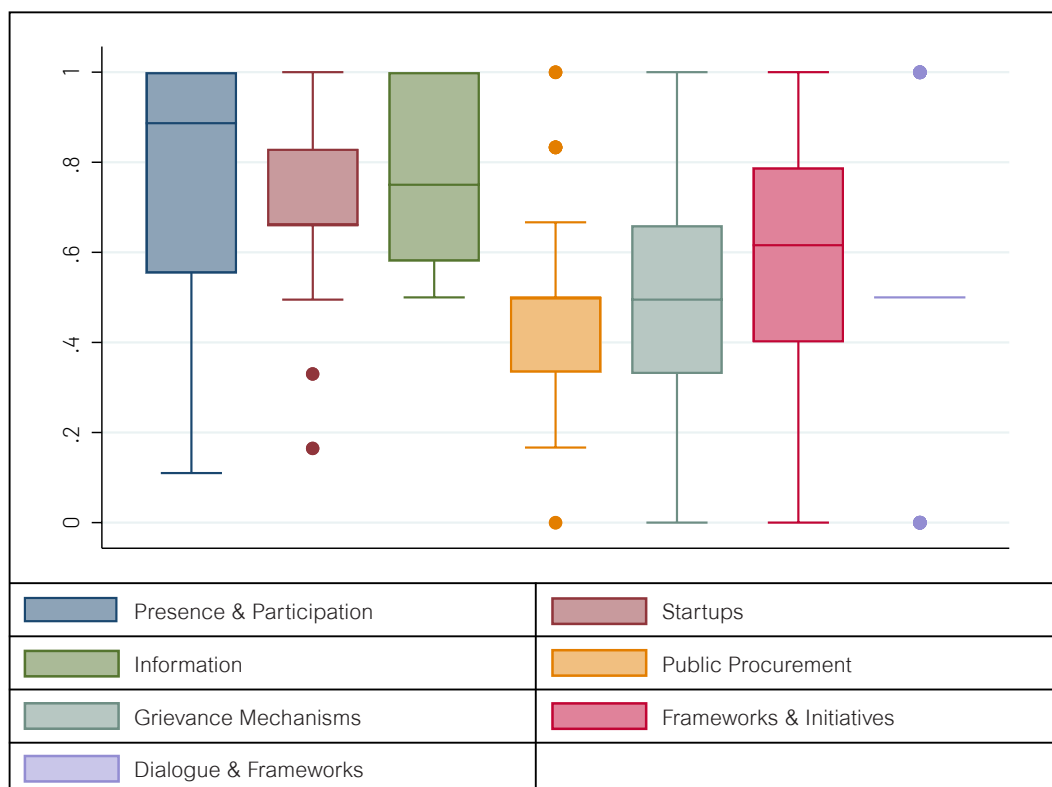
FIGURE 5: Distribution of scores by variable – Business Environment pillar. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

NOTE: The appearance of the Dialogue and Frameworks bar is due to scaling effects. Presence and Participation: women's business associations represented at national level; women's business associations represented in all key sectors and subsectors; women-owned businesses have participated in activities covered by chambers of commerce in the last 12 months. Start Ups: support services are available when starting a company; an incubator or accelerator programme exists. Information: help and information desks are available at government offices to assist companies complying with national regulations and export/import requirements; key updated information on Customs procedures and trade regulations is visible at borders and published or notified online in a timely manner. Public Procurement: access to information on public procurement is available; the public procurement process is transparent; there is a preferential scheme for public procurement for women-owned businesses. Grievance Mechanisms: means exist for women and men to report complaints of wrongdoing on regulations and procedures; official mechanisms are in place to monitor working conditions and data are collected in workers in export processing zones; Frameworks and Initiatives: a single window electronic interface exists, and digital trade facilitation measures are in place; national institutions use gender-sensitive guidelines developed by the World Customs Organization or other national monitoring framework; training and sensitization have been provided to border-level agents and officials in the past 12 months. Dialogue and Frameworks: the regulatory framework for public-private partnerships includes gender concerns; structured dialogues have taken place with the private sector regarding gender equity policies, programmes, and activities in the past 12 months.

02   Good data drives good policies.

Data availability is a key constraint in many developing countries. While National Statistics Offices frequently have strong capacity, available data are sometimes subject to measurement error. In addition, data may not be collected systematically due to resource shortages and difficulties of administering surveys in cases of high levels of informality.

These gaps naturally create challenges for policymakers, as they affect all steps in the policy process. Without credible data, it is difficult to diagnose economic and social problem areas and almost impossible to rigorously evaluate the performance of solutions. This hinders policymakers from learning from experience and adapting policies as necessary.

This issue is particularly acute in relation to gender. Gender-disaggregated statistics are not yet widely available across substantive topics and countries. While basic data on labour markets have been relatively available for some time, detailed data on women's consumption patterns and entrepreneurship are sporadic. World Bank and WTO (2020) highlight the need to improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data as a first step in designing policies and programmes to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

SheTrades Outlook takes important steps towards promoting and systematizing the collection of data relevant to trade and gender. It complements and builds on existing sources, such as the World Bank's Women Business and the Law and ILOSTAT.

In SheTrades Outlook, the Trade Policy pillar contains a variable that tracks the availability of gender-disaggregated data in a more general sense. The variable is made up of two indicators:

1. Laws or regulations exist that mandate the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

2. Gender-disaggregated data on companies are collected.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of scores on the variable across countries, on a scale of 0 (unavailable) to 1 (all scoring criteria fully satisfied). Sierra Leone, Canada, Australia, Bangladesh, Kenya, Republic of Korea, and South Africa have the highest scores. The cross-country average is 0.59, which suggests that countries typically have some but not all necessary structures and practices to collect gender-disaggregated data. However, these efforts differ substantially across countries.

It would be inappropriate to draw conclusions on regional patterns of performance, given that data coverage is currently only partial. At this stage, the data do not suggest any uniform result in terms of geography and income level. Based on a wider sample, future work can perhaps examine the determinants of country scores in this area. The data extension with the 2020 sample remains insufficient to draw broad-based conclusions on the links between country characteristics and the availability of gender-disaggregated data.

The variable of interest captures the extent to which countries require and collect gender-disaggregated data on the economic sphere. It seems plausible that many of the other areas measured by the variables and indicators in SheTrades Outlook depend on the availability of gender-disaggregated data.

To test this hypothesis, Figure 7 shows the correlation between scores on the gender-disaggregated data variable and the SheTrades Outlook total scores. It shows a positive relationship, which suggests that countries that collect gender-disaggregated data tend to perform better in tackling women's economic empowerment. It should be noted that there is considerable variation across countries. However, this simple analysis points that data is crucial to move forward on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

With a sample of 38 countries, it is difficult to be conclusive in this kind of analysis, but the indicative result is clear. An even larger sample, preferably observed over multiple time periods, will make it possible to draw stronger statistical conclusions. Indeed, the correlation presented in Figure 7 is highly statistically significant (prob. value = 0.001).

Only three countries, Canada, Republic of Korea and Sierra Leone, receive the highest possible score on the gender-disaggregated data variable. This indicates that these three countries have laws in place to mandate the collection of such data, as well as practical systems to ensure it happens. This result is an important example of a more general tendency: high-income countries do not have a monopoly on good practices on gender equality.
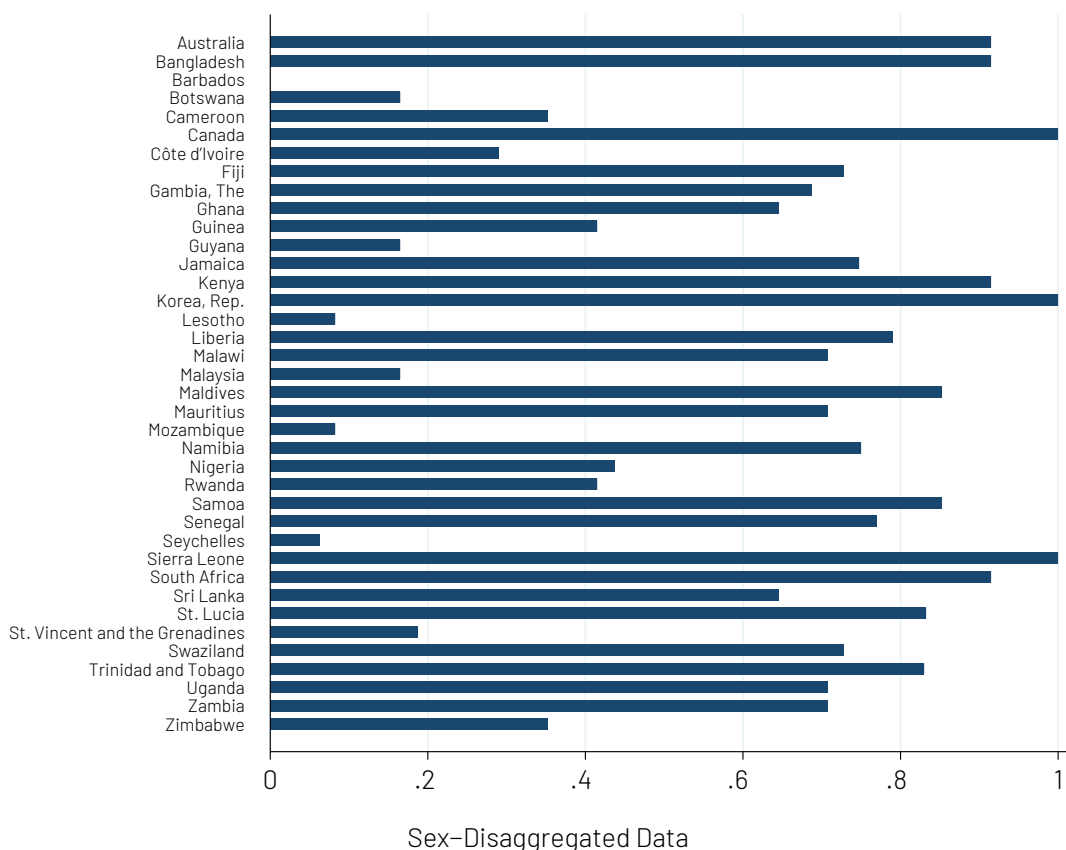

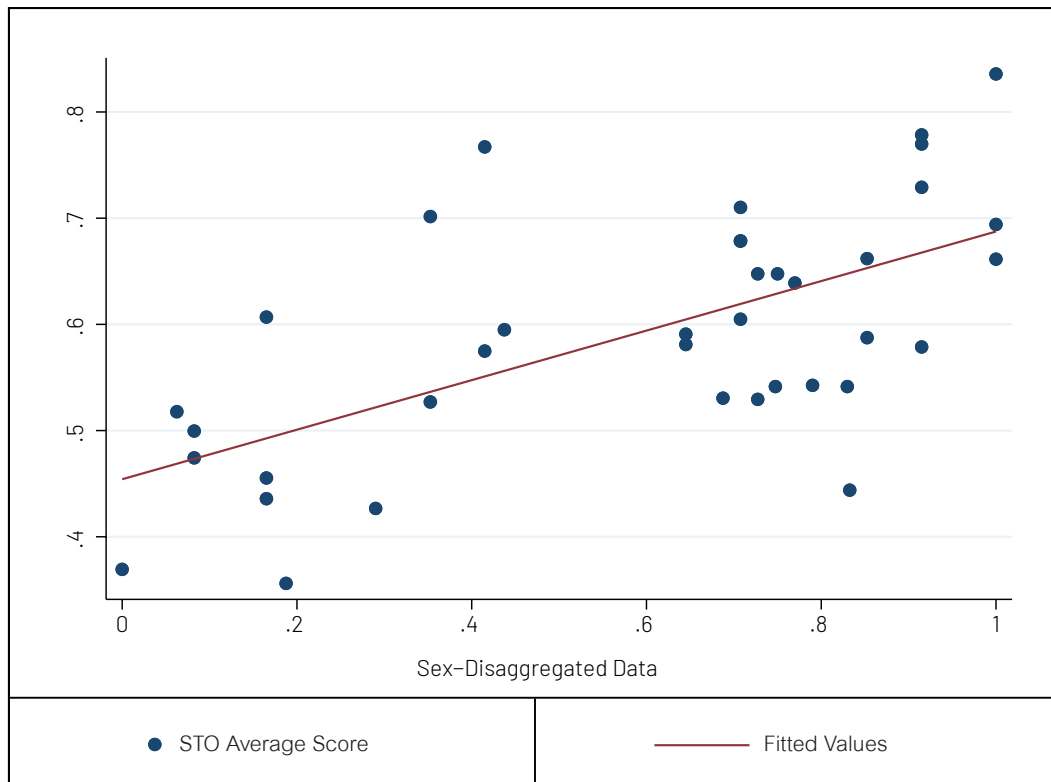**FIGURE 6:** Availability of gender-disaggregated data. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

FIGURE 7: Correlation between the availability of gender-disaggregated data and SheTrades Outlook total scores. Source: SheTrades Outlook

GOOD PRACTICE IN ZAMBIA

Zambia has recognized the importance of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue that affects a wide range of policy areas. However, the availability of reliable data has constrained policymakers from assessing the status of women in the economy and adopting necessary policies and programmes.

In response, the Zambia Statistical Agency created the Gender Statistics Unit, with the aim to ensure that all data collection processes include appropriate gender-oriented topics and gender-disaggregated indicators. The Unit has had concrete and positive impacts, including an increase in the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data and production of reports on gender.

The data and analysis have played an important role in supporting government efforts to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. While there is a long-standing commitment to gender issues at governmental level, the Unit has been an important factor behind a move towards more evidence-based approaches to policymaking.

The Zambian case shows that data is indeed crucial to advance on gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Moreover, it demonstrates developing countries alike can take concrete and effective steps in these areas, building on existing statistical capacity and political will.

Countries of different income levels can make substantial progress for women in trade.

Many development outcomes are strongly correlated with per capita income. This finding also applies to multi-dimensional measures of development, such as the Human Development Index. Hence, it is reasonable to expect performance on some or all SheTrades Outlook indicators to be higher in developed countries, where there are more economic resources for necessary initiatives.

However, the development approach of the SDGs explicitly treats the goals as shared between developed and developing countries. The starting point is a recognition that no country is perfect when it comes to sustainable development, including gender equality. Indeed, the area of gender equality is one where all countries have room to improve, regardless of income level. At the same time, there are important anecdotal examples of resource-constrained low and middle-income countries taking important steps in this area. As such, the correlation between per capita income and SheTrades Outlook scores is perhaps weaker than between per capita income and other development indices.

Figure 8 shows a positive relationship between the SheTrades Outlook total scores (average of the six pillar scores) and per capita income, measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms. However, there is considerable dispersion of SheTrades Outlook total scores above and below the regression line. This implies that the estimated positive relationship is subject to considerable uncertainty. It is also not statistically significant due to this dispersion and the small sample size (prob. value = 0.712).
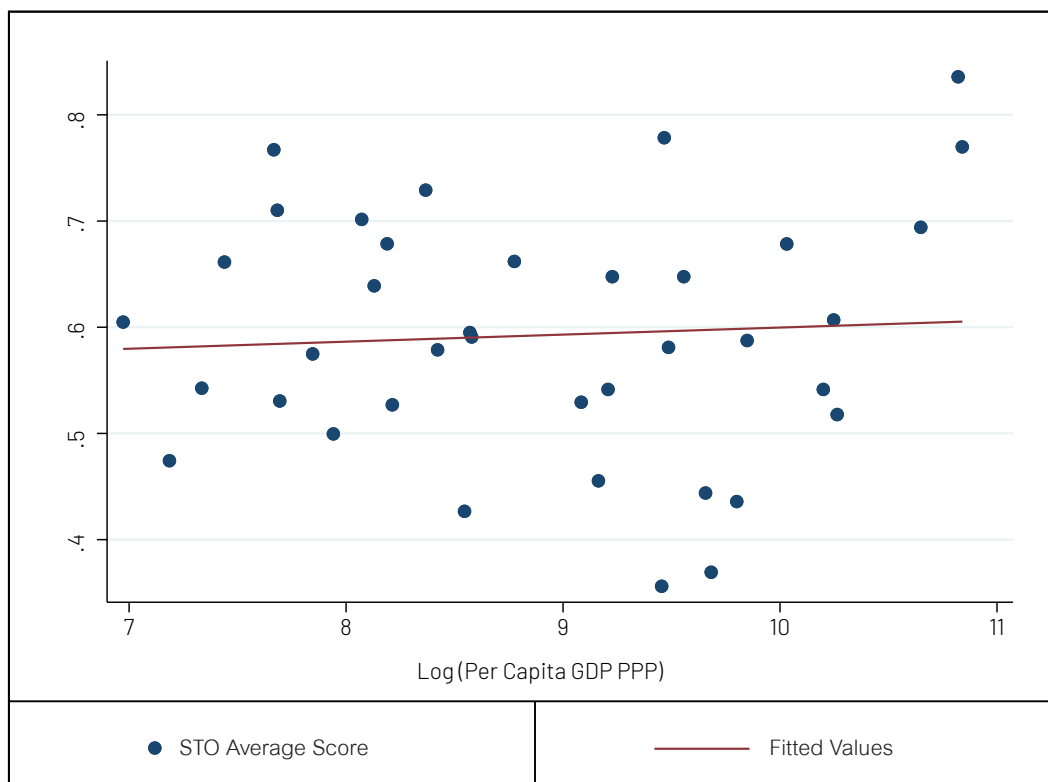
FIGURE 8: Correlation between per capita income and SheTrades Outlook total scores.
Source: SheTrades Outlook and World Bank.

The finding shows that there is no straightforward relationship between per capita income and overall performance on SheTrades Outlook. From a policy perspective, it is important to learn from the experiences of countries that sit significantly above the regression line. Although resources make reforms easier for high-income countries, some low and middle-income countries also demonstrate huge progress on women's economic empowerment.

The top performers on SheTrades Outlook are Australia, Canada, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. The performance of Australia and Canada should not be overinterpreted in the absence of a larger sample that includes more high-income countries. These two countries have substantially higher levels of per capita income than the rest of the countries in the sample.

By contrast, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda have made substantially greater progress on gender equality than their income group peers. It is important to raise awareness of such stories globally, and to examine the determinants of their high performance. In this regard, the qualitative information brought together on the SheTrades Outlook online tool will be of use to analysts, researchers, and policymakers, as it facilitates learning based on country-level experiences.

Figure 9 shows that there is a slightly negative relationship between the scores in the Trade Policy pillar and per capita income, although it is not statistically significant (prob. value = 0.642). This finding is perhaps related to the fact that the Trade Policy pillar includes several aspects that are not primarily dependent on the level of economic resources. For

instance, the Trade Policy pillar looks at involvement of women in consultation processes, inclusion of gender-related concerns in trade policies and agreements and women's participation in strategic roles. Nevertheless, the Trade Policy pillar also includes aspects that rely on the availability of resources. These include monitoring and evaluation of trade policies and agreements and collection of gender-disaggregated data.

While the availability of resources makes it easier to adopt policy reform, there are important cases of highly resource-constrained countries doing well in key areas in SheTrades Outlook. Examples include Uganda, Zambia, and Rwanda. In this regard, per capita income seems to play a relatively marginal role in determining the progress made by countries on trade and gender.
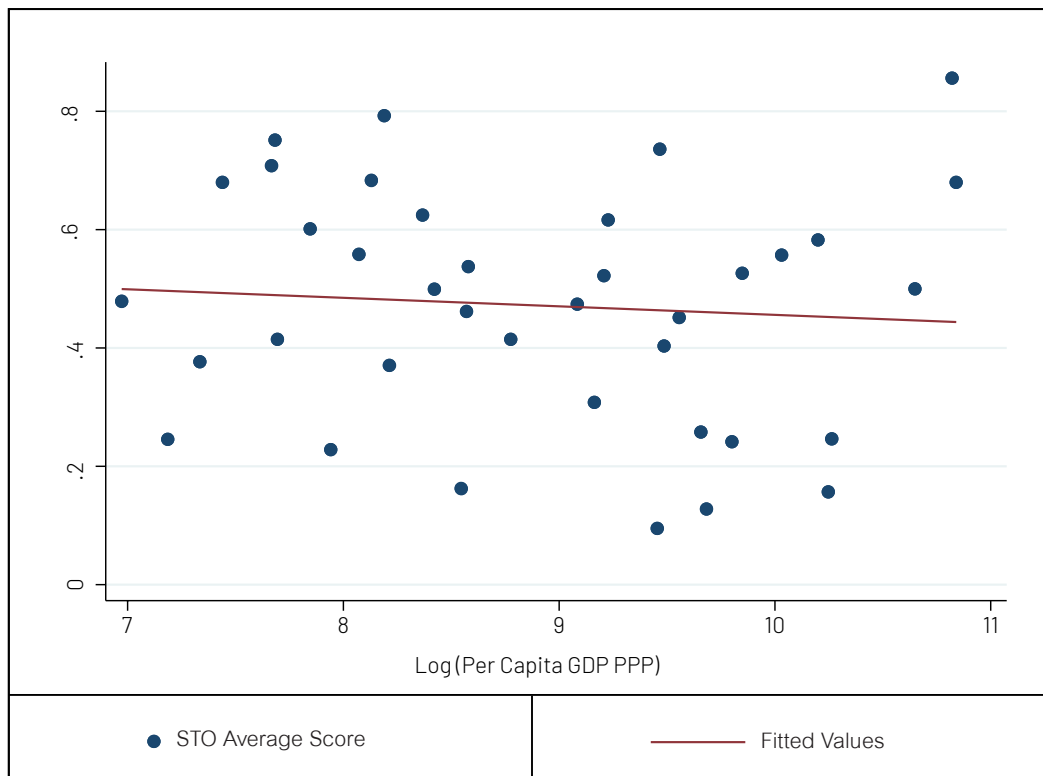
FIGURE 9: Correlation between per capita income and Trade Policy pillar scores.
Source: SheTrades Outlook and World Bank.

GOOD PRACTICE IN RWANDA

Compared to its peers with similar income level, Rwanda performs better on a range of areas tackled in SheTrades Outlook. Therefore, it is important to look at experiences in the country, to learn about the types of programmes and commitments that have enabled this result.

Women entrepreneurs have tended to have difficulties obtaining commercial financing, often due to lack of collateral. This has severe social consequences, as it leads to the exclusion of large numbers of women from the commercial sector. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion's Business Development Fund (BDF) is a government intervention that addresses women's lack of access to finance.

The BDF provides a credit guarantee up to a maximum amount for women entrepreneurs to support a commercial loan. To date, the programme has administered over $93 million to over 40,000 women. This has supported women's access to finance, and ability to start a business. The effects on women have been significant in areas such as income generation and poverty reduction.

The programme is financed through Rwanda's central government budget. This shows that strong political will was necessary to make the programme a reality. Indeed, Rwanda has seen strong political commitment to gender equality more generally. Women hold 50% of Cabinet positions and 60% of seats in the Lower House of Parliament. Rwanda's experience illustrates that resource constraints need not be an insurmountable barrier to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

A gap exists between legislations and concrete outcomes.

Many countries tend to have a gap between legal frameworks and concrete practices. Addressing this gap is particularly important to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment. For instance, many countries have a legislation requiring equal treatment of men and women in the labour market, including with regards to remuneration. Yet in practice, gender pay gaps continue to exist, although they vary in extent from one country to another.

Using SheTrades Outlook data, Figure 10 compares pillar scores on Legal and Regulatory Framework and Work and Society. It shows that 32 countries score lower on Work and Society than on Legal and Regulatory Framework. Only Eswatini, Gambia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda have higher pillar scores on Work and Society than on Legal Regulatory Framework. This suggests a gap between legal frameworks and concrete outcomes. In some cases, this gap is significant, as shown by points that lie well below the 45-degree line that indicates equal performance on the two pillars.
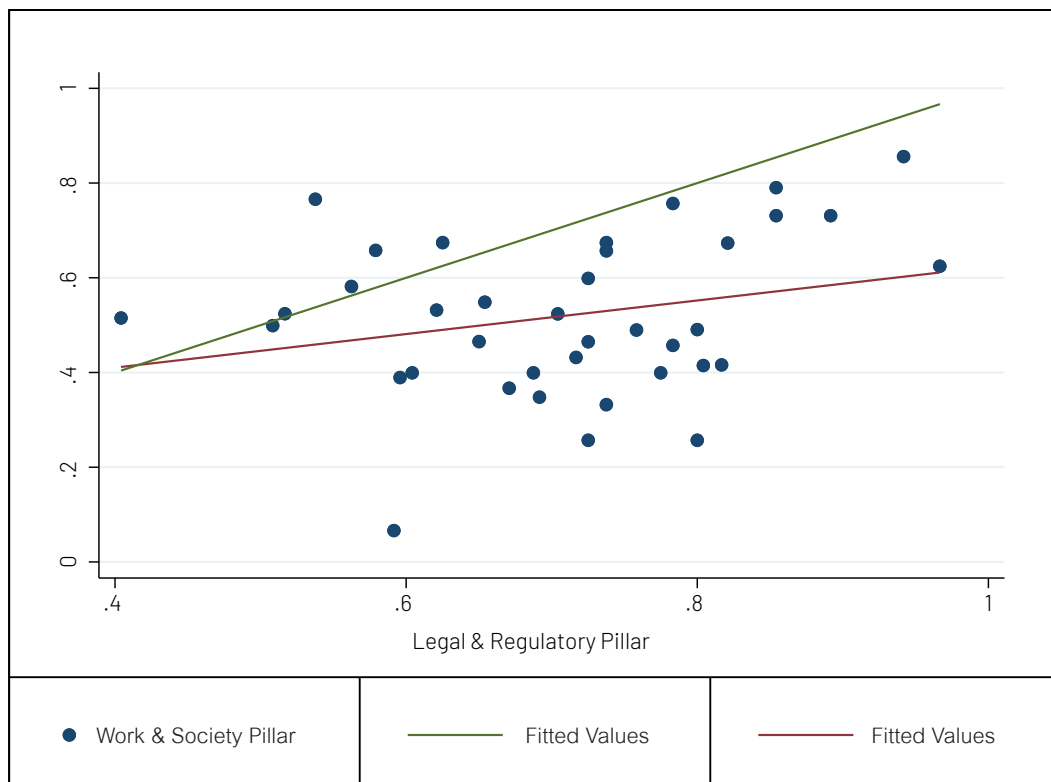

FIGURE 10: Comparison of Legal and Regulatory Framework and Work and Society pillar scores. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

LEGAL & REGULATORY PILLAR	
VARIABLES	**INDICATORS**
Signature, ratification, and implementation of international conventions	• Country has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW optional protocol; • Laws, policies, and procedures are reviewed to ensure compliance with CEDAW articles and the Committee concluding remarks; • International Labour Organization conventions 100, 111, and 183 are ratified and enforced in the country
Legislations to remove restrictions to access productive resources	• Women and men have equal inheritance rights • Women and men have equal ownership rights to immovable property • Women and men have equal access to financial services
Legislations to remove restrictions to access the labour market	• The law mandates non-discrimination based on gender in employment • The legal framework offers women legal protection from sexual harassment in the workplace • The law mandates equal remuneration for females and males for work of equal value
Paid parental leave	• Maternity leave policies exist • Parental leave is available for both parents
Child-care facilities	• Families with children under school age receive support for early childhood education and care • Parents receive child-care support • Initiatives are in place to encourage investment in child-care preschool facilities

TABLE 1: Variables and indicators in the Legal and Regulatory pillar. Source: ITC (2020).

WORK & SOCIETY PILLAR	
VARIABLES	**INDICATORS**
Woman's opportunities in the labour market	• Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men • Estimated annual earned income, purchasing power parity (female/male ratio) • Labour force participation rate (female/male ratio) • Female share of employment in managerial positions (%)
Gender occupational biases	• Unemployment rate with advanced education ratio (female/male ratio) • Time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male/female ratio)
National and regional awareness initiatives	• National public campaign has been launched including gender considerations in its message or designed exclusively to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the past 12 months • National institutions have participated in regional or international initiatives, working groups, or dialogues aimed at promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the past 12 months
Support of private and non-profit initiatives	• Awards and recognition programmes have been used to highlight companies' best practices or initiatives to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in the past 12 months • National institutions have supported awareness initiatives launched by the private sector, non-governmental organizations, or international organizations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the past 12 months

TABLE 2: Variables and indicators in the Work and Society pillar. Source: ITC (2020).

Looking at variables rather than pillars allows for a more detailed determination. Tables 1 and 2 list the variables and indicators that are included. The Legal and Regulatory Framework pillar includes national legislations and ratification of international conventions related to gender equality. This pillar has a variable capturing legislations that aim to remove gender-related restrictions to access the labour market. Specifically, it includes laws that aim to eliminate workplace discrimination against women.

The Work and Society pillar focuses on socio-economic and gender outcomes. It has a variable on women's opportunities in the labour market, which includes an estimate of the gender wage gap. In many countries around the world, gender wage gap remains a key element of workplace discrimination.

Figure 11 shows the performance on three variables under the Legal and Regulatory Framework (legislations to remove gender-related restrictions to access the labour market, legal provision of parental leave and childcare support and facilities) and the variable on women's opportunities in the labour market under the Work and Society pillar. The figure illustrates that 27 out of 38 countries have a lower score on the variable on women's opportunities in the labour market than on legislations to remove gender-related restrictions. This finding confirms that countries tend to do better in formulating laws than implementing initiatives that lead to concrete outcomes for women.

However, looking further into the issue shows its complications. The distribution of the variable scores on legislations to remove restrictions is very wide. Meanwhile two major issues facing working women, childcare and paid parental leave, also display considerable variation across countries. All of these findings hold for the 2019 sample and the pooled 2019/2020 sample.

Although the gap between laws and regulations and concrete outcomes remains a policy concern, there are nonetheless good practices found in some countries. The key is to ensure effective implementation of laws and regulations and examine mechanisms that tackle de facto barriers faced by women, beyond those that are codified into law.
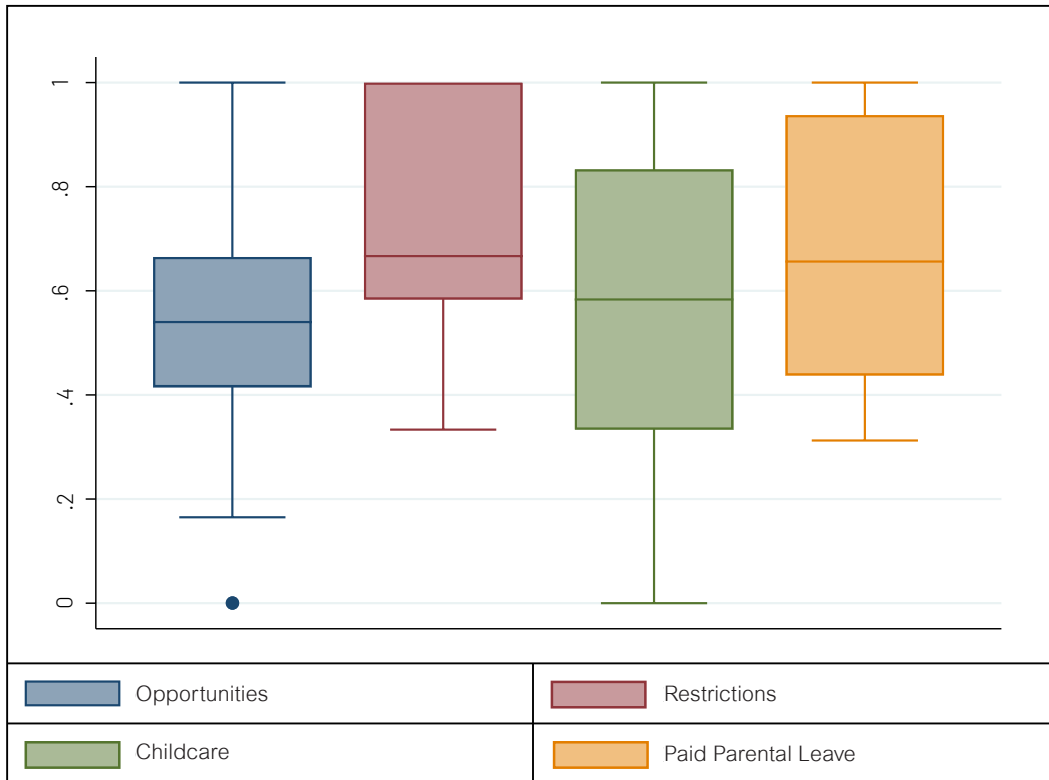
FIGURE 11: Distribution of scores on selected variables – Legal and Regulatory Framework and Work and Society pillars. Source: SheTrades Outlook.

GOOD PRACTICE IN MALAYSIA

The government of Malaysia has recognized that women tend to participate less in exportation. As such, it has gone beyond looking at the contents of laws and regulations to consider practical assistance that can help women overcome de facto barriers to trade.

The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) has implemented the Women Exporters Development Programme (WEDP). The programme encourages women-owned businesses to expand and export by providing them with customized support over three years. The types of support provided focus on addressing concrete needs of women entrepreneurs and managers. Support includes coaching, skill-building workshops, financial support to participate in trade missions and fairs, free exhibition space, networking and mentoring sessions, and leadership and entrepreneurial development. The initiative targets women-owned businesses that have high potential to export upon overcoming related challenges.

WEDP has supported 1,700 women exporters so far, with a particular focus on non-traditional sectors such as chemicals, electronics, and medical equipment. The government estimates that $150 million in export revenue has been generated by the assisted women-led businesses.

Policy Implications and Future Work

This report has presented initial results from SheTrades Outlook, using data in 38 countries. SheTrades Outlook is an important resource for research and analysis on the links between trade and gender equality and women's economic empowerment. As SheTrades Outlook expands its coverage globally, data from more countries will allow more in-depth discussions and evaluations and inform policy debates around the world.

From a policy perspective, the evidence presented suggests important conclusions. There is a clear rationale for looking beyond standard trade policy to assess the institutional ecosystem that facilitates women's participation in international trade. It is important to take account of broader aspects such as the labour market, access to skills, access to finance and legal and regulatory factors. By examining the overall performance of countries in the various dimensions in SheTrades Outlook, four key findings can be drawn.

First, based on the data in the current sample, countries tend to exhibit lower scores on the Trade Policy pillar than on the other five pillars. This is possibly due to the inclusion of non-traditional policy areas in this pillar. The finding indicates that countries still have a long way to go to mainstream gender in various areas relevant to the trade policymaking process – consultations, data collection, policy text, monitoring and evaluation and institutional capacity.

Second, and in line with the approach of the SDGs, per capita income does not exhibit any simple relationship with progress on trade and gender. This finding helps highlight the successful measures taken by low and middle-income countries to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Countries of all income levels can make progress on these objectives. Indeed, all countries can learn and share experiences in promoting the trade and gender agenda.

Third, there seems to be a gap between laws and regulations and concrete socio-economic and gender outcomes. Countries tend to score higher on Legal and Regulatory Framework than on Work and Society. The policy message is clear: it is not enough to establish national laws and sign on to international legal instruments related to gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Instead, governments need to focus on implementing concrete strategies and initiatives to address de facto barriers faced by women. While establishing laws and regulations that advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment are important, implementation is crucial. In addition, implementing programmes on these objectives is highly practical and allow for a tailored approach to address the needs and challenges so women can participate in international trade.

Finally, SheTrades Outlook clearly demonstrates the need for better data. While the database takes important steps towards systematizing available information, it also shows that data availability is an important determinant of performance

in other areas, such as monitoring and evaluation. A virtuous policy cycle is only likely if countries seriously commit to incorporate the gender dimension in as much of their data collection efforts as possible. This will help diagnose problems and challenges more accurately, propose solutions and monitor and evaluate existing initiatives.

In terms of future work, the key constraint remains data, as highlighted similarly by World Bank and WTO (2020). Existing work on women and the international economy tends to focus on women entrepreneurs and women workers. Both dimensions are important and deserving of more work. However, a key additional dimension is consumption. All women are affected by changes in world relative prices in their role as consumers, irrespective of whether they undertake paid work

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#SheTrades

FOR EVERY WOMAN, EVERYWHERE

About the ITC SheTrades Initiative

The International Trade Centre's (ITC) *SheTrades Initiative* is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the Initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and foster a better trade environment for all.

For Further Information

Data used in this report as well as more information about the SheTrades Outlook project can be found at: www.shetrades.com/outlook

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