



SheTrades

SheTrades Outlook Results in Sri Lanka

18 September 2025



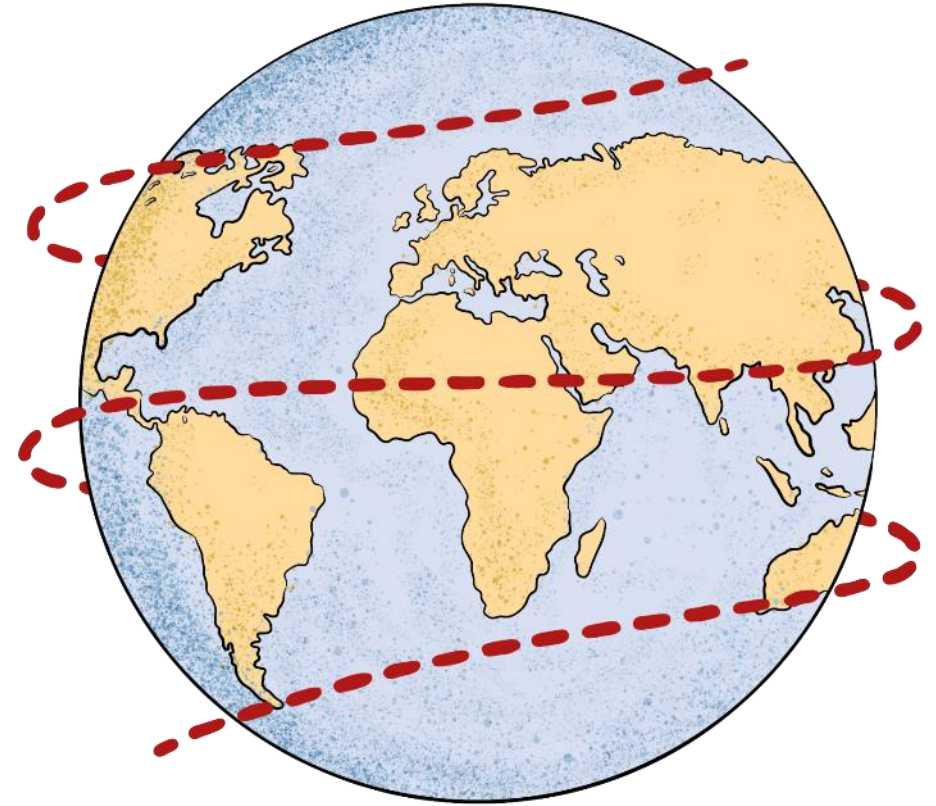
Why does it matter?

MSMEs are the foundation of the global economy, accounting for:

- Almost 90% of all businesses
- 60% of global employment
- Almost half of global GDP

However:

- Women lead one-third of all MSMEs
- One-fifth are exporting firms
- Tend to be smaller and more vulnerable to crises



Despite this, women still face barriers

that prevent them from participating in and benefiting equally from trade.



Limited access to productive resources

Finance, digital connectivity, land, inputs, market information, skills, and networks.



Sociocultural norms

Including gender biases that discriminate against women.



Gender-neutral policies and lack of data

Policies that do not take into account gender-specific barriers and solutions; limited data on trade and gender.



OUR APPROACH

About ITC SheTrades

Established in 2015, the SheTrades Initiative is ITC's flagship Women and Trade Programme.

ITC SheTrades aims to create the right capacities and conditions to level the playing field for women producers and entrepreneurs. Our work is underpinned by three pillars of action:

1

Supporting women entrepreneurs to grow and trade globally

2

Transforming business ecosystems to unlock opportunities for women in trade

3

Advancing inclusive policy reforms and shaping the global agenda

WHERE WE WORK

Our Global Footprint

SheTrades has worked in
94 countries, including **21
SheTrades Hubs**.



LIST OF SHETRADES HUBS

1. Argentina	2. Bangladesh	3. Brazil	4. The Caribbean*	5. Dominican Republic	6. The Gambia
7. Ghana	8. India	9. Indonesia	10. Kenya	11. Mauritius	12. Middle East & North Africa*
13. Mongolia	14. Nigeria	15. Philippines	16. Rwanda	17. South Africa	18. Sri Lanka
19. Trinidad & Tobago	20. Uruguay	21. Viet Nam	<i>*SheTrades Regional Hubs</i>		

What have we achieved since 2015?

Women entrepreneurs and producers

100K

Women-led businesses directly supported to become more competitive and connected to markets.

\$40

In finance and investment facilitated for women in trade.

M



Changing ecosystems

294

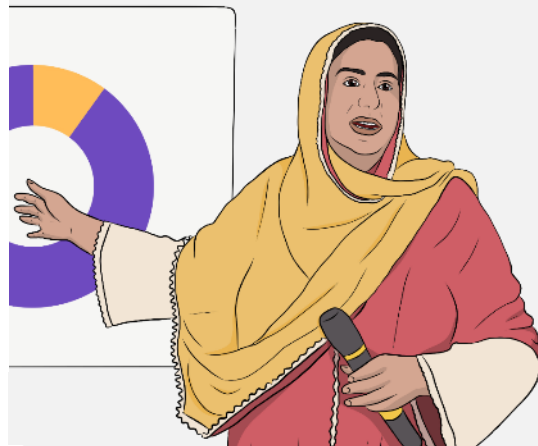
Business support organizations supported to improve their services for women.

21

SheTrades Hubs launched across Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East.

69

Service providers in agrifood systems supported to adopt gender-responsive services.



Inclusive policy and data

61

Developing and developed countries launched SheTrades Outlook.

156

Members supported to join the Continental Network for Women Business Associations in Africa.

16

Countries supported to adopt inclusive policy reforms.



About SheTrades Outlook



About SheTrades Outlook

An online tool launched in 2020 to help assess, monitor and improve the policy landscape for women in trade

Purpose:

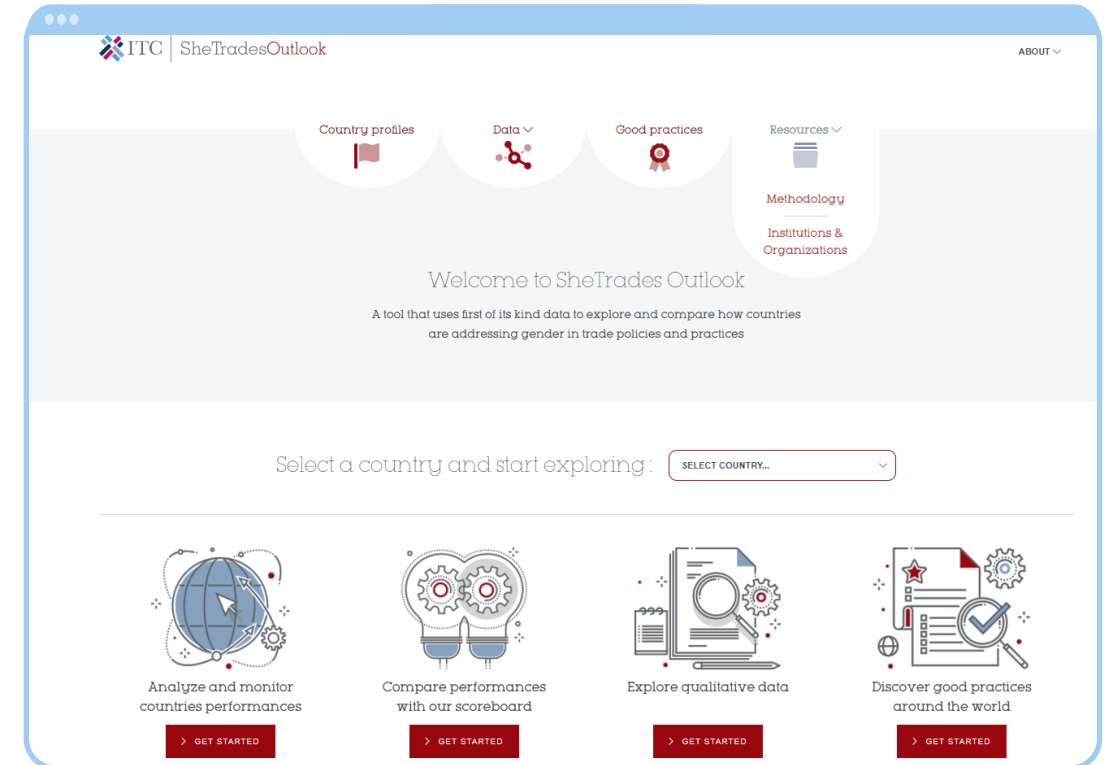
Help unlock markets for women by identifying and eliminating obstacles in the policy ecosystem

Target:

Policymakers, women entrepreneurs, associations, researchers, and NGOs

Objectives:

- Map the environment for women in trade
- Examine data gaps
- Identify areas for potential inclusive policy reform



<https://outlook.shetrades.com/home>

SheTrades Outlook: Pillars and Indicators

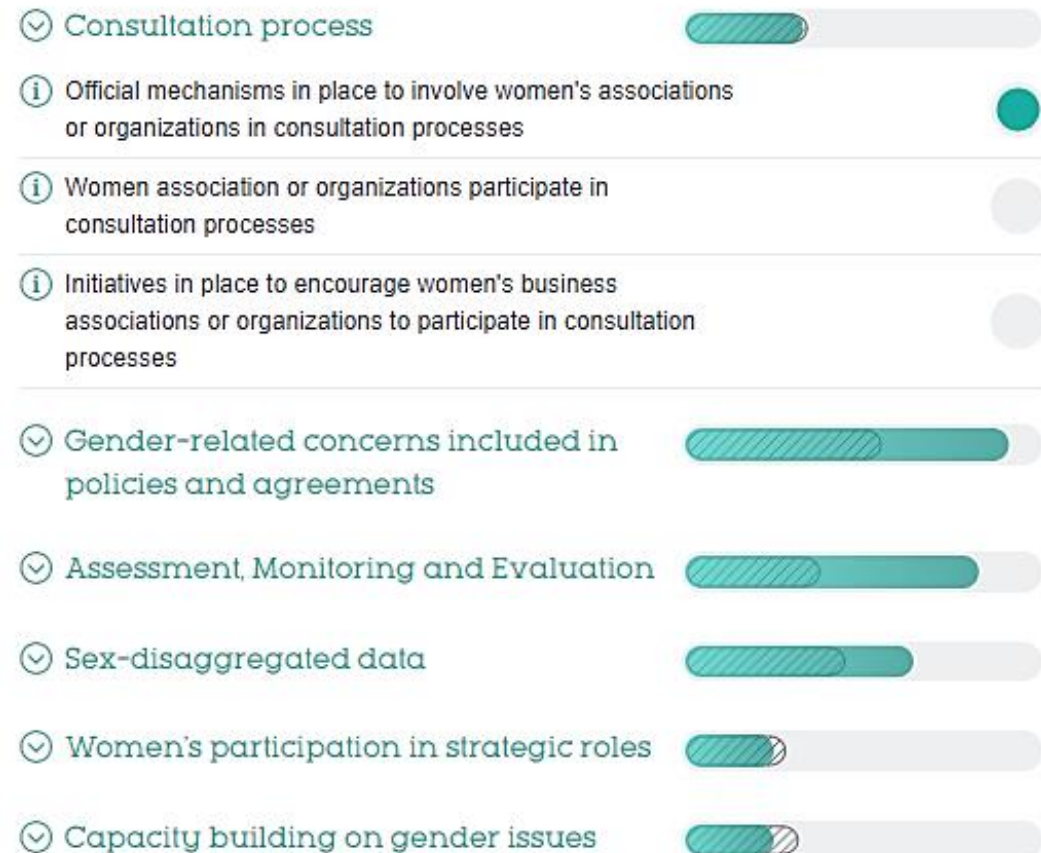
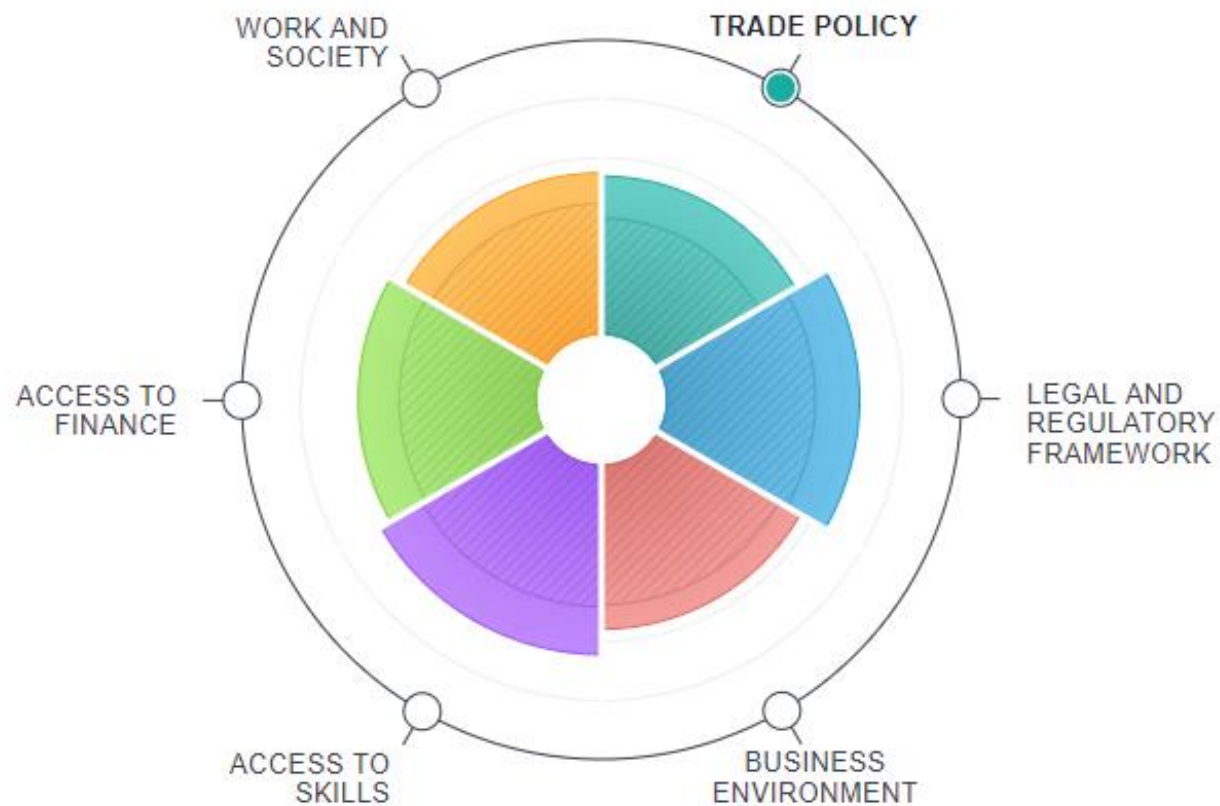
- Covers **6 policy dimensions and 55 indicators** comparable across countries, regions and economic groupings
- **80% new data** on trade and gender
- **Does not rank countries** based on performance

01	Trade Policy	
02	Legal and Regulatory Framework	
03	Business Environment	
04	Access to Skills	
05	Access to Finance	
06	Work and Society	

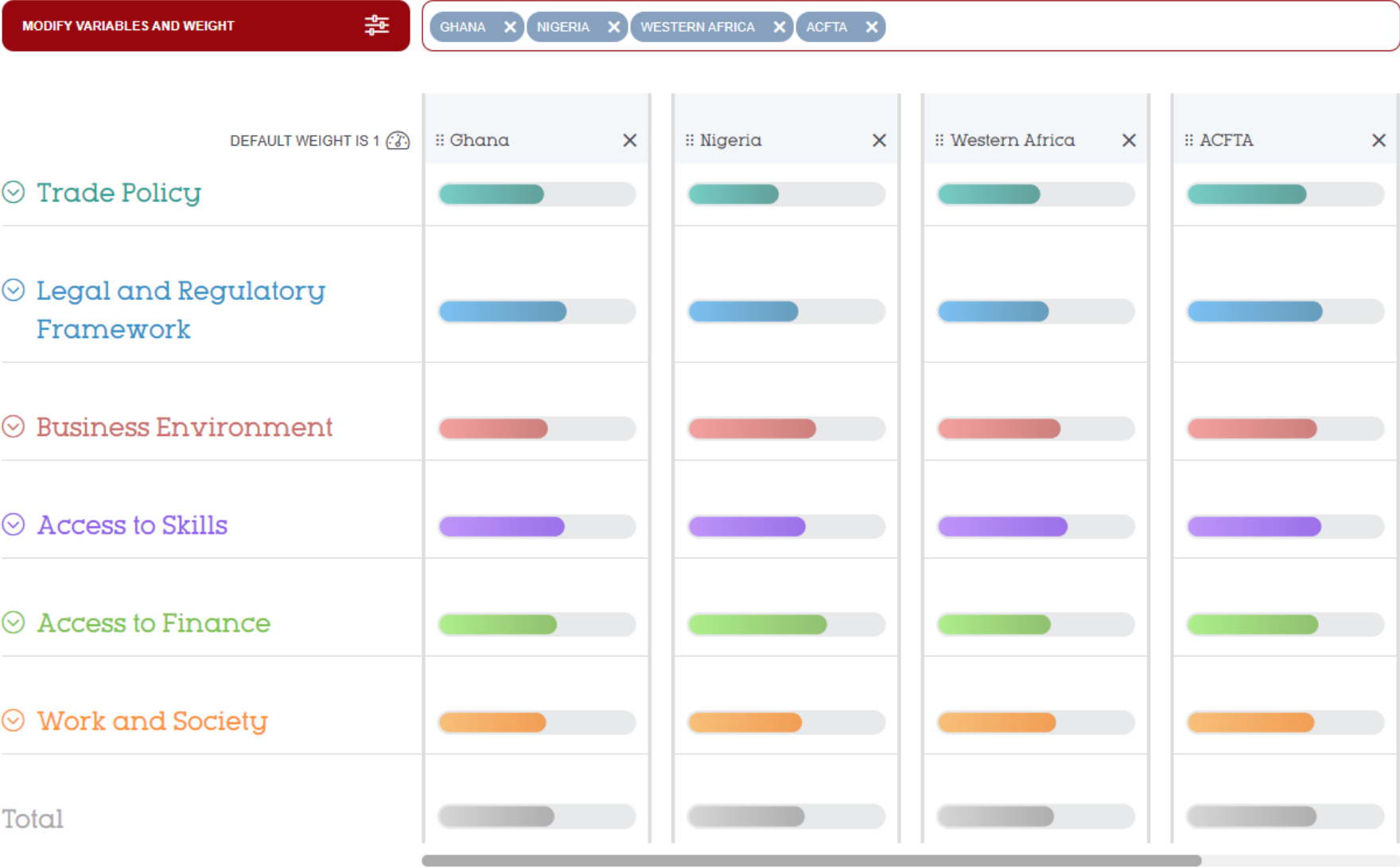
SheTrades Outlook: Highlights



Explore a Country Profile



Compare Results



Learn from Good Practices

Repository of good practices

This repository of Good Practices aims to exchange experiences and lessons learned from various initiatives that are working to improve women's participation in trade. Each Good Practice provides background about the policy or project, key success factors, challenges and measures taken, achievements and links to more information. The Good Practices have been categorized into 10 topics, focused on most common barriers that women face when participating in trade. To explore the Good Practices of an individual country, select the country in the dropdown above or visit the corresponding country profile page.



SHOW FOR ALL COUNTRIES

There are no good practices from Ghana

SEARCH...



Access to Skills

9 +



Access to Finance

8 +



Policies, laws and regulations that support women in trade

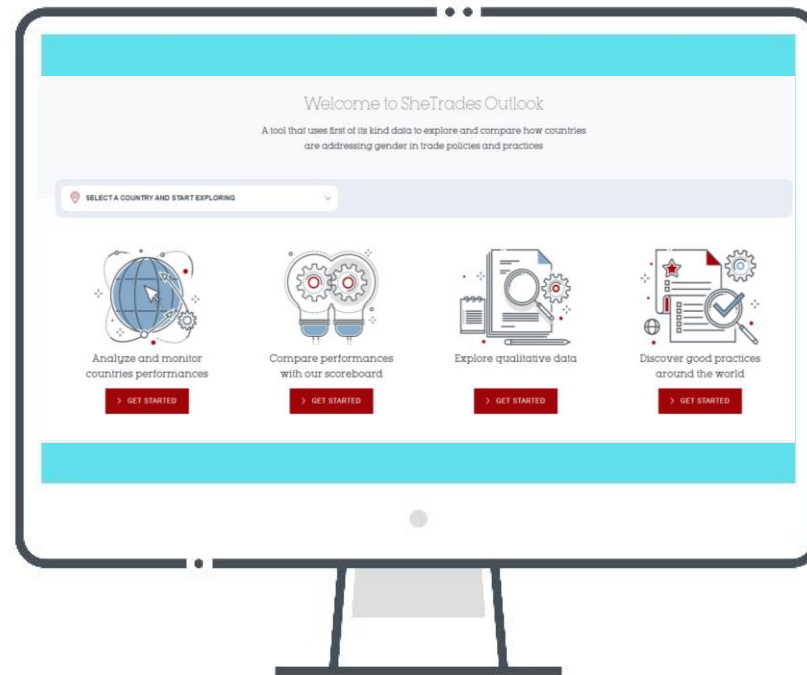
2 +



Access to Networks

3 +

SheTrades Outlook: Online Walk-through



<https://outlook.shetrades.com/home>

SheTrades Outlook in Sri Lanka



Past collaboration

- 2019 – SheTrades Outlook in Sri Lanka. Twenty public and private sector institutions contributed data to the tool.
- 2024 – ITC and Sri Lanka technical cooperation on mainstreaming gender in the Gender Equality Bill and the Women’s Economic Empowerment Bill
- March 2025 – ITC launches SheTrades Hubs in Sri Lanka. Export Development Board is the host institution.
- March 2025 – ITC and EDB carry out an update of Sri Lanka’s SheTrades Outlook country profile. EDB leads the data collection.
- August 2025 – ITC and Sri Lanka collaborate to include the updated SheTrades Outlook insights in Sri Lanka’s upcoming WTO Trade Policy Review

SheTrades Outlook

Updated results in Sri Lanka

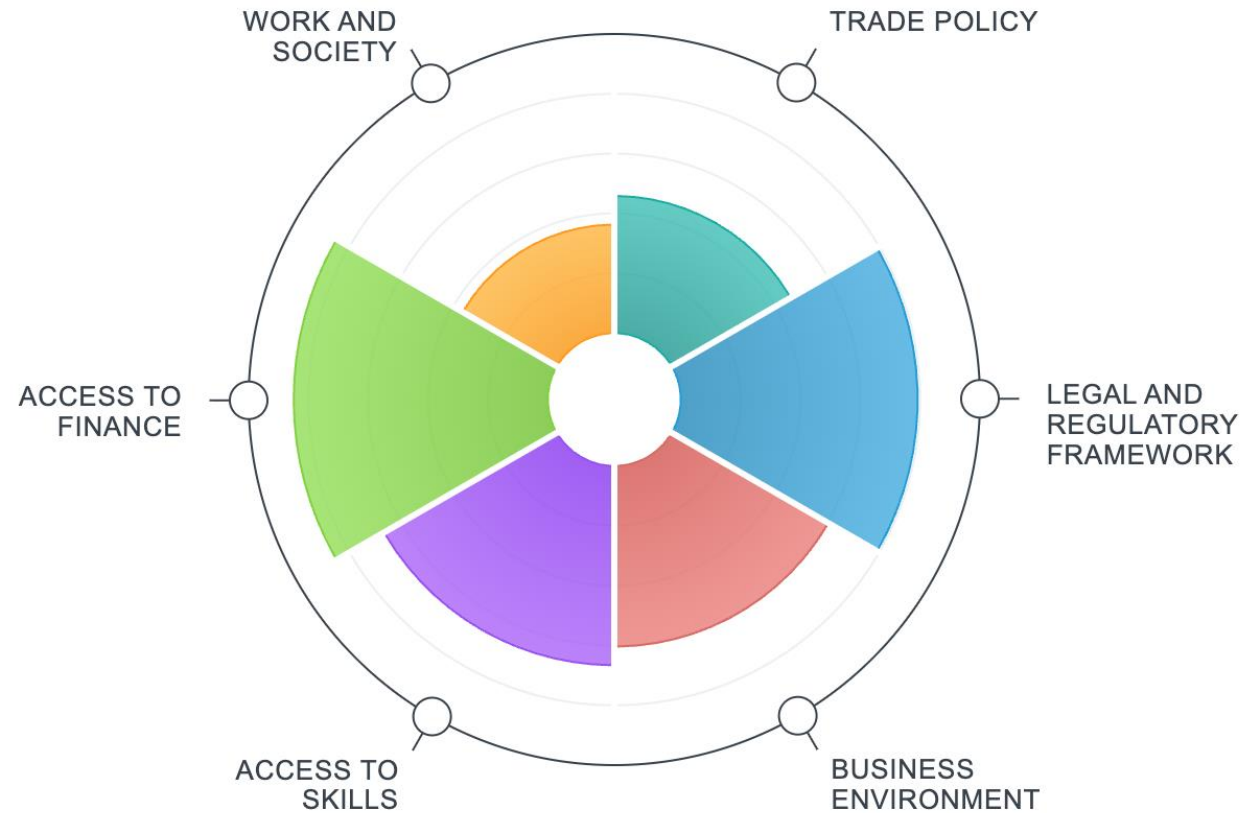


SheTrades Outlook in Sri Lanka: Institutions

1	Board of Investment	12	HATCH
2	Bureau of Foreign Employment	13	Ministry of Industries
3	Central Bank of Sri Lanka	14	Ministry of Science and Technology
4	Ceylon Chamber of Commerce	15	Ministry of Women's Affairs
5	Chamber of Northern Exporters	16	National Chamber of Commerce
6	Department of Census and Statistics	17	National Enterprise Development Authority
7	Department of Commerce	18	Small Enterprise Development Authority
8	Department of Measurement Units, Standards, and Services	19	Sri Lanka Accreditation Board
9	Department of Trade and Investment Policy, Ministry of Finance	20	Women Development Federation
10	Export Development Board	21	Women in Management
11	Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce	22	Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce
		23	Women's International Foundation

SheTrades Outlook in Sri Lanka: Updated Results

Performance of Sri Lanka



Results: Trade Policy



WHAT WORKS:

- Adopting a standard definition of women-owned and women-led businesses.
- Mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated data across government agencies and departments through the Statistics Ordinance and the Census Ordinance
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on companies – As of June 2024, 54% of exporting companies in Sri Lanka are women-led.
- Adopting the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – includes productive employment and entrepreneurship concerns
- Adopting the Women's Empowerment Act 2024 – includes targets on ensuring that women contribute not less than 50% to the national economy.
- Including women in consultation processes on trade policy
- Using gender indicators to monitor outcomes of trade policy
- Building capacity of Ministry of Commerce staff on trade and gender issues.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Aligning the standard definition with internationally recognized definitions of a woman-led/owned business.
- Incorporating gender issues in trade policy and agreements.
- Carrying out gender-impact assessments before and after signing trade agreements.
- Establishing and strengthening the capacity of a trade and gender focal point within the government.

National Definition for Women-Owned/Led Businesses



ORGANIZATION/S:

Ministry of Finance,
Economic
Stabilization, and
National Policies

ACTIVITY/IES:

Adopting a standard definition of women-owned and women-led businesses based on the following criteria:

- >50% owned by females, or
- $\geq 20\%$ owned by females, and i. Has one or more females as a major decision-maker; and ii. Has equal to or more than 30% of the Board of Directors comprising of females, where a Board exists

OUTCOME/S:

ISO IWA 34: Terms & Definitions

WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS

*business that is **more than 50 % owned by one or more women**, whose **management and control lie with one or more women**, where a woman is a **signatory of the business's legal documents and financial accounts**, and which is operated **independently** from businesses that are not owned by women*

WOMEN-LED BUSINESS

*business that is **at least 25 % owned by one or more women**, whose **management and control lie with one or more women**, which has **at least one third of the board of directors comprised of women**, where a **board exists**, where a **woman is a signatory of the business's legal documents and financial accounts**, and which is operated **independently** from businesses that are neither led nor owned by women*

Including gender provisions and conducting gender analysis of FTAs



ORGANIZATION/S:

The Government of Canada

ACTIVITY/IES:

In June 2017, Canada and Chile signed the modernized Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA), which includes a dedicated trade and gender chapter.

Canada applies the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in the Canada-Mercosur FTA negotiations.

OUTCOME/S:

- Activities implemented under the CCFTA include sharing policies and good practices, collecting and analyzing gender data, and exchanging experiences for conducting gender-based analysis of trade agreements.
- GBA+ helped officials to develop new gender-responsive provisions (e.g. SMEs) and it effectively informed Canada's FTA negotiation strategy.

Results: Legal & Regulatory Framework



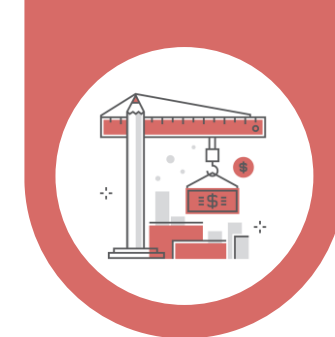
WHAT WORKS:

- Ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the CEDAW Optional Protocol without any reservations
- Ratifying ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration), 111 (non-discrimination in employment and occupation)
- Adopting a gender-responsive budgeting approach
- Legislating to guarantee equal rights to ownership and inheritance of immovable property, and protection from sexual harassment in the workplace
- Prohibiting gender-based discrimination when opening a bank account

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Ratifying ILO Convention 183 (maternity protection)
- Establishing laws to guarantee protection from discrimination based on gender in employment
- Establishing laws to guarantee equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value and equal access to credit

Results: Business Environment



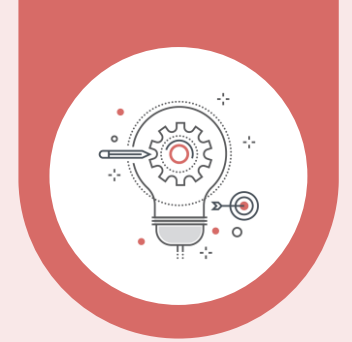
WHAT WORKS:

- Facilitating representation of women's business associations at the national level and in all sectors – Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce.
- Providing support services when starting a company and establishing help and information desks on export/import requirements.
- Providing incubator or accelerator programmes for women-led start-up businesses.
- Updating information on customs procedures and trade regulations via online and at the borders.
- Establishing a grievance mechanism to report complaints on malpractices in trade.
- The Board of Investment Sri Lanka has pledged to advance gender equality through foreign direct investment in partnership with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific and FDI Centre

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Fully implementing a national single window to facilitate trade.
- Providing border-level customs officials training on gender-sensitive practices.
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on the vendors in public procurement
- Raising awareness on gender-responsive public procurement
- Adopting a preferential scheme for women-led businesses in public procurement

Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme



ORGANIZATION/S:

Export
Development Board

ACTIVITY/IES:

- The Export Development Board facilitates women's participation in international trade through the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme.
- It provides the following support:
 - product development,
 - market access,
 - competitiveness, and
 - opportunities to integrate with international value chains through trade fairs and exhibitions.

OUTCOME/S:

In 2024, 128 women-led businesses benefitted from the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme. |

Sustainable Public Procurement Policy



ORGANIZATION/S:

Bangladesh Public
Procurement
Authority

Business Initiative
Leading
Development
(BUILD)

Public Procurement
Research Centre
(PPRC)

ITC

ACTIVITY/IES:

- The government of Bangladesh adopted the Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) policy which aims to promote greater participation of women-led businesses in public procurement.
- The policy was developed based on consultations with government officials and women entrepreneurs on the specific challenges women-led businesses face in public procurement.

OUTCOME/S:

The SPP includes a number of key features to promote the participation of Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs in public procurement:

- It simplifies tender documentation and allows more time for applicants to submit their expressions of interest.
- Contracts are divided into smaller lots.
- It limits the number of lots awarded to a single bidder allowing more vendors to participate in public procurement.

Results: Access to Skills



WHAT WORKS:

- Providing skills upgrading programmes to workers and entrepreneurs.
- Providing training on trade regulations and export-readiness to women entrepreneurs.
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries of skills-upgrading programmes.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Mainstreaming gender in business innovation programmes.
- Collecting gender-disaggregated statistics on internet and mobile usage.

Improving digital skills of women entrepreneurs



ORGANIZATION/S:

Department of
Trade and
Industry

National
Confederation of
Cooperatives
(NATCCO)

Lazada

Shopee

Facebook

ACTIVITY/IES:

The E-Taas ang Pinay MSMEs Programme provides comprehensive training and mentoring support to women entrepreneurs to improve their digital skills and connect to the digital economy through e-commerce platforms.

Training topics include:

- Digital marketing
- E-commerce

OUTCOME/S:

- From July 2020 to February 2021, 348 women entrepreneurs successfully graduated from the training programme and 227 have online businesses.

Results: Access to Finance



WHAT WORKS:

- Facilitating the availability of digital financial services.
- Implementing the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2021 which focuses on improving women's access to formal finance and the Financial Literacy Roadmap 2024-2028 with women as one of the focus groups.
- Encouraging financial institutions to collect and report gender-disaggregated data.
- Providing financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs.
- Providing financial instruments to support entrepreneurial activities targeting women.
- Providing trade finance schemes to facilitate exports.
- Providing venture capital financing opportunities to women-led businesses.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

The Re-Energising Package



ORGANIZATION/S:

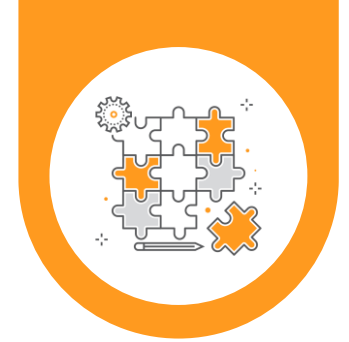
Ministry of
Industries

ACTIVITY/IES:

- The Ministry of Industries implements a loan scheme called the Re-Energising Package.
- It prioritises women-led industries.
- New investments are eligible for loans of up to Rs. 15 million at an 8% interest rate.
- Non-performing loan holders can access up to Rs. 5 million at a 7% interest rate.

OUTCOME/S:

Results: Work & Society



WHAT WORKS:

- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on time spent on unpaid domestic chores and care work – women spent 3 hours 12 minutes more than men on unpaid domestic work.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Providing a conducive legal framework that allows women to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks in the same way as men.
- Facilitating women's employment in managerial positions.

SheTrades Outlook

Practical applications



National ownership of data

Leveraging the Export Development Board, the SheTrades Hubs in the country, SheTrades Outlook can support:

- Localization of data collection on trade and gender and national ownership of collected data
- The integration of the trade and gender agenda into the mandate of national institutions
- Capacity building of national institutions to undertake regular data collection on trade and gender
- Inclusive policymaking and ensuring relevance
- Progress tracking over time on the trade and gender agenda



Supporting inclusive policy reform

Launched the SheTrades Outlook Network for in-country government officials to share and learn from good practices. So far, 41 countries have joined.

Supported 18 countries and counting to make trade and trade-related policies more gender responsive.

- Trade and SME Policies
- Export Strategies
- African Continental FTA Implementation Strategies
- Public procurement policies, acts and regulations
- COVID-19 stimulus package
- Developing definitions of women-led & women-owned businesses

- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Mauritius
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Sierra Leone
- Sri Lanka
- Uganda
- Zambia

3 Step-by-Step Guides for Inclusive Policy Reform



[Making Public Procurement Work for Women](#)



[Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements](#)



[From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women](#)

Informing Sri Lanka's WTO Trade Policy Review

- SheTrades Outlook has become the go-to resource for policymakers, informing global discussions on trade and gender – WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, G7 and G20.
- SheTrades Outlook is being used as an essential tool to inform the WTO Trade Policy Review (TPR).
- Sri Lanka's Trade Policy Review (TPR) is scheduled for 15 and 17 October 2025.
- ITC has supported the Mission by providing technical assistance and sharing SheTrades Outlook results to include Sri Lanka's progress on trade and gender in:
 - The Government report currently being drafted in Colombo
 - The Section report prepared by the Mission's WTO division





SheTrades

Thank you.



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