

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

# Gender and Trade

A bimonthly newsletter published by the Commonwealth Secretariat in association with Gender and Trade Initiative (GATI) and Department of International Development (DFID)



## EDITORIAL



The agenda of mainstreaming gender into trade policies and practices at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels is yet to receive adequate attention at the hands of academics, policy makers, civil society and the media alike. This has been despite the fact that a number of credible researches have highlighted both the impact of gender blind trade policies on gender outcomes and the way forward for mitigating them.

There is a need to engage with this issue at several levels with all the concerned stakeholders and sensitise them to the different dimensions of the issue at hand. The newsletter marks a modest step in that direction. It is an attempt to generate new information and analysis for raising awareness for action amongst the concerned stakeholders and towards furthering the overall objective of gender mainstreaming in trade.

We are happy to present before you the inaugural issue of the bimonthly newsletter on Gender and Trade. Together with the web based e-resource also titled "Gender and Trade", we hope these initiatives would serve a valuable purpose in bridging the distance between advocacy groups and policy makers as well as deepen dialogue on a subject which deserves our collective attention.

## Message from Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Ransford Smith

*Dear Readers*

As we are all aware, the rapid pace of globalisation and changes in the international trading system present new opportunities and challenges for developing countries. For many, access to global markets is increasingly being seen as a way out of poverty. At the same time, debates on the development dimension of the multilateral trading system are occurring and "development" itself is being redefined. Economic development is for example being re-evaluated from a human development perspective, and within this, one of the fastest growing areas of research is that of the gender impact of trade on society, especially among the poorest.

International Trade is one of the Commonwealth Secretariat's key programme areas of work aimed at contributing to pro-poor growth and sustainable development, as set out in the Commonwealth Secretariat's four year Strategic Plan 2004/05 – 2007/08. The aim is to enhance the ability of developing member countries, especially small states and LDCs, to formulate, manage and implement trade policies at the national, regional and multilateral levels and to take advantage of the benefits of globalisation while

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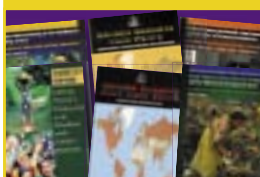
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# Gender and Trade

## An Overview of Key Issues and Concerns

Over the past couple of decades, the importance of international trade in the global economy across bilateral, regional and multilateral contexts has grown exponentially. The volume of trade in goods has been growing at six percent thereby outpacing the four percent growth in merchandise output. The phenomenal growth in trade can be seen in the fact that nearly 25 percent of the world production is now traded. Most countries of the world are either active participants or are seeking to enhance their participation in the global economy. It is in this backdrop that an overview of select issues and concerns relating to the impact of trade on gender needs to be carried out.

Trade today touches practically every aspect of our day-to-day lives. Existing gender roles in social reproduction, participation in the economy, and ability to negotiate and access the markets are skewed to

the disadvantage of women when compared to men. This is also true for women workers and producers engaged in trade. Trade patterns and trends affecting sectors such as agriculture, industrial and services sector have a major influence on gender outcomes. Contrary to some approaches and beliefs, the impact of trade on gender is not neutral and deserves to be analysed and understood in depth. It also needs to be factored into the overall macroeconomic domestic and external policy making environment.

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There exists a dynamic two-way relationship between gender and trade. Trade can serve to either better or worsen existing gender relations depending upon the larger socio-economic and political contexts. Not only do changes in trading patterns affect gender relations, gender disparities are in themselves an important factor impacting overall trade performances. Trade liberalisation processes may increase or depress wages, create new job opportunities or displace workers across the formal, informal and household sectors dominated by women workers. Thus for instance, cheaper imports of goods and services may increase the vulnerability of micro and small women enterprises who have thus far not been exposed to the forces of international competition. Keeping in view different country experiences, it has been found that while employment avenues for women workers have expanded in sectors such as textiles and clothing, the same are volatile, casual and more often than not under hazardous and unregulated working conditions. Volatility has meant that for women workers, employment is created and lost within a short span of time.

In many developing countries women dominate the farming sector. With the increasing openness and liberalisation of the agricultural sector, cheap subsidised agricultural products may uproot poor women farmers from their traditional livelihoods often without any safety net of alternative employment avenues. Also, with the commercialisation and mechanisation of agriculture, there are apprehensions that the export oriented farms would end up displacing farmers especially



women farmers. Though export opportunities do open up, it is a moot point whether the poor women farmers who are engaged in farming for subsistence would benefit to any significant degree. Again, trade liberalisation has also meant a reduction in subsidies on inputs such as power and irrigation while high levels of subsidies to developed country farmers continue. As a larger part of trade liberalisation, financial liberalisation has also meant that possibilities of accessing institutional credit have shrunk further for the vast majority of poor women farmers.

In the services sector, the opening up of tourism, information technology, health and educational services has brought significant benefits for women workers in both the formal and informal sectors. However, these benefits have been accompanied by, and need to be weighed against, the costs, such as an increase in 'sex tourism', threat of further spread of HIV/AIDS and heightened care burden for women. It is well recognised that women workers now face a double burden of paid employment and unpaid work of social reproduction. Gender advocates have also noted apprehensions pertaining to the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement and its potential negative impact on access to affordable health care, nutrition and rights on community knowledge systems.

Trade liberalisation accompanied by larger processes of structural adjustment and fiscal disciplining has another downside. As government revenues in most newly liberalising economies start to shrink on account of the



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lowering of custom duties across the board and a lower taxation base, so does the ability of governments to commit to appropriate levels of social sector expenditures. It can scarcely be overemphasised that existing gender inequities in areas such as health and education need a sustained and enhanced financial commitment by state agencies. It has also been seen that with interrelated pressures of privatisation and fiscal disciplining, the quantity and quality of public services deteriorates entailing a shift in the distribution of costs of such activities from the public sphere to the household and ultimately to women and girl children.

Clearly, as this brief overview reveals, there exist a range of important issues and concerns

relating to trade liberalisation and gender impacts. Despite this, there is an awareness deficit amongst most stakeholders at large about these interlinkages and their upshots for policy. Effective gender based advocacy in trade still has limited subscribers and is yet to attain critical mass. Indeed, with the increasing dominance of trade in the domestic and global economies, trade related gender advocacy ought to be a key area for continuing engagement at several interlinked levels with government and other stakeholders. There is a patent need to carefully underline the opportunities and threats vis-à-vis gender and trade. There is also a need to systematically undertake a critical review of the entire gamut of issues, provide a platform for bringing together diverse experiences and perspectives and build awareness and capacity of concerned stakeholders leading to objective evidence based advocacy.

It is relevant to note that gender outcomes depend upon a host of sectors and region specific factors. Thus, gender concerns in terms of employment, wages, care burden and poverty ought to be analysed and understood in a context specific manner. It is only when these concerns are recognised, trade related gender impact assessments carried out and corrective action taken at the policy making levels can we hope that trade liberalisation would lead to an improvement in the position of women by increasing access to better jobs and enable participation of more and more women entrepreneurs in different countries and regions.

■ **Biplove Choudhary**  
email: [feedback@gationline.org](mailto:feedback@gationline.org)

# Case Study

## Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and Gender Linkages in India

With a low sex ratio of 933 females per thousand males as well as on other counts such as maternal mortality rates, property rights and literacy rates, India ranks low on the gender equality index. The National Human Development Report of the Planning Commission in India (2001) notes that the attainments in human development indicators for females as a proportion of that of males has only marginally improved from 62 percent in the early eighties to 67.6 percent in the early nineties. This means that on average the attainments of women on human development indicators were only two-thirds of those of men.

There are apprehensions that design, planning and implementation of the Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in India would worsen the gender asymmetry in terms of accessing affordable health care, nutrition and

their rights on community knowledge systems. At one level, the granting of monopoly rights serves to enhance the costs of products and services especially those related to medicines. Also, at another level, TRIPS by extending legal recognition to only individual rights excludes protection to community based knowledge systems wherein women have a critical stake thereby ignoring both its economic significance and contribution.

Taken together, the implementation of the TRIPS agreement is likely to impact adversely the right to affordable health care, nutrition and property of women.

It has been estimated that 38 percent of India's 5.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS are women. Women constitute nearly 47 percent of the cancer burden in India. Approximately 67 percent of the women between the age group of 13 – 50 are suffering from anaemia. In India, it has been found that though

women report more illnesses with an increase in income (this is primarily because reporting of morbidity increases with an improvement of standard of living) treatment of the disease does not show a corresponding trend. As per the National Sample Survey, financial constraints and lack of affordable of medical care are the chief factors contributing to this trend. In addition to the same, women are more susceptible to diseases such as gynaecological disorders, cancers and tumors and diabetes mellitus. Maternal and perinatal conditions constitute nearly 11.6 percent of the disease burden in India.

A recent study shows effective drugs for the treatment of anaemia are out of reach for the vast majority of poor women. Existing prices of breast cancer treatment drugs such as endoxane, melphalan are in the range of approximately US \$3 –\$43. Clearly, once the product patent regime is operationalised, these prices would climb further by elimination of generic competition and creation of monopoly rights over new drugs and new vaccines. Thus for instance, a patent on the new vaccine for cervical cancer would effectively put it out reach for poor and needy women.

An important challenge relates to the complex linkages of the TRIPS Agreement with food production, food security and nutrition in developing countries. It is believed that Article 27(3)(b) of the TRIPS Agreement permitting patents on seeds and microorganisms such as algae, bacteria and fungi would increase the prices of seeds and fertilizers while restricting traditional exchange, use or sale of seeds by farmers. Increasingly, women farmers access farming



Women waiting outside a Health Centre

inputs from the market and given existing disparities between women and men's access to cash and credit, women farmers would undoubtedly face a greater risk of falling into chronic indebtedness.

It is apprehended that the TRIPS Agreement would lead to increasing privatisation of genetic resources and agricultural knowledge. Protection of plant varieties (PPV), essentially articulated in terms of the rights of commercial breeders, will impact access of women farmers' to germ plasm and scientific knowledge. Further, with an increased emphasis on monoculture,

PPV would undermine conservation of biodiversity and sustainability concerns with negative consequences for local food security, including decreased nutrition.

It is well known that women have been at the forefront of preservation of biodiversity in many communities for centuries. The international community has recognised the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities on biological resources, notably in the preamble to the Convention on Biological Diversity, (CBD), which has been ratified by 178 countries since 1992.

CBD also recognises the contribution that traditional knowledge can make to both the conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity, two fundamental objectives of the Convention. It addresses the role of both women and local communities in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The TRIPS Agreement does not accord recognition of, and compensation for, traditional and local knowledge among women and men farmers.

■ *K.M. Gopakumar and  
Biplove Choudhary*  
Gopa.kumar@centad.org

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## Message from Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Ransford Smith

addressing the risks. Integral to this effort is the need to recognise the impact of trade liberalisation on different segments of society, particularly women. We are actively working on how best to mitigate negative aspects and promote a more equitable trading environment that will benefit both men and women.

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA) 2005- 2015 issued by Ministers at their 7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in 2004 recognised that if poverty is to be effectively tackled, gender equality must remain a cornerstone of that battle. Within the critical areas of Gender, Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment, Ministers acknowledged the need for engendering the multilateral trade process and improving women's access to competitive markets. As part of the Commonwealth Secretariat's

commitment to gender mainstreaming at all levels and in support of the Plan of Action, the Secretariat seeks to also (a) promote the development and implementation of gender-aware national, regional and international trade policies; and (b) provide advice to Ministries of Trade on gender-aware issues in trade policy development.

In response to this commitment, the Commonwealth Secretariat has recently expanded its capacity building efforts in gender, trade and export promotion especially with the valuable support of Britain's Department for International Development (DFID). Already, we have had a series of national and regional programmes aimed at building capacity in addressing gender and trade issues, and through an advocacy panel at the WTO we have sought to raise awareness of gender and trade issues as well. Other channels for

raising awareness and sharing knowledge on this important area of development work are being pursued of which this Newsletter is one such example.

I am delighted that this Newsletter on Gender and Trade is being launched by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in collaboration with Gender and Trade Initiatives (GATI). It is an exciting, important and informative initiative not only for us at the Secretariat but for all Commonwealth countries and beyond.

Finally, I would like to say that this is your Newsletter. For it to be effective it will require your news, views and responses. Please do send them to us and make this Newsletter an effective channel of communication on gender and trade.

■ *Ransford Smith*  
Deputy Secretary-General

# Capacity Building in Gender and Trade

## A Commonwealth Initiative

The relationship between gender and trade is a growing area of exploration at the national, regional and international levels in terms of trade policy formation and negotiation. However, the gender impacts of trade decisions and modalities, particularly on women (and often those from the poorest quintiles) still have significant strides to make if gender analysis is ever to be effectively mainstreamed in trade issues.

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat, gender and trade fall primarily within the broader portfolio of Gender, Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment, which is the third critical area in the 2005-2015 Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA). This programme is led by Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Acting Head and Adviser, Gender Section.<sup>1</sup>

The PoA noted that gender inequality causes and exacerbates the impact of poverty on women, who globally account for about 70 percent of those living in poverty. It also noted that new opportunities for economic growth from globalisation and trade liberalisation can also pose critical challenges related to loss of livelihoods and employment for both women and men, but with many women shouldering the primary responsibility for household and community management through their paid and



Regional Workshop for Capacity Building on Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion, New Delhi, India

unpaid work, and with existence of gender-based occupational segregation, the impacts of trade policies on men and women are often different.

In order to effectively address the processes of the feminisation of both labour and poverty, the PoA recognised the need for the Commonwealth to broaden its approach to gender and economic empowerment to encompass the macro-, meso-, and micro-level. Within the Gender Section's remit of activities, this has included:

- promoting the mainstreaming of gender analysis in trade negotiations and the

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formulation of trade policy and implementation at national regional and international levels;

- promoting the application, extension and institutionalisation of gender responsive budget processes at national level;
- mainstreaming gender into poverty reduction strategies – MDGs, PRSPs, aid modalities and other poverty reduction policies;
- support to women's entrepreneurship by providing an enabling environment for business development and through securing market access (networking, linking to global markets, access to finance);
- promoting enhanced participation of women in economic processes, including trade agreements, poverty reduction strategies, and national budgets, and ensure 30

<sup>1</sup> The portfolio is currently co-managed by Fatimah Kelleher, Programme Officer, during Sarojini Thakur's tenure as Acting Head of the Gender Section.

percent representation of women in business, banking, and financial boards;

- promoting recognition of the informal economy and equitable social protection systems to deal with risk and vulnerability caused by poverty, loss of employment, sickness, HIV/AIDS and maternity.

The Gender Section's work in trade issues has specifically received a significant boost last year with the successful application for additional funds of approx £500,000 from DFID in July 2006 for Phase 1 of a multi-faceted Capacity Building in Gender and Trade project that includes regional capacity building, advocacy, resource development and embedding in selected countries.

Following the success of the Commonwealth Secretariat's 2005 Regional Capacity Building Workshop in Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion in Arusha, Tanzania, for the East Africa Region, the area of Gender and Trade has since been taken forward with another two regional workshops in the Caribbean and South Asia respectively. Teams of participants from 13 countries have attended these workshops, comprising

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representatives from Ministries of Trade, Commerce Bureaus, National Women's Machineries, and civil society. Objectives of the workshops were: to build capacity; to integrate gender analysis in trade policy formulation and implementation; to analyse impacts of trade policy on women's employment and entrepreneurship; to focus on region specific issues and trends and impacts on women; and to build capacity of public and private institutions to enable women to respond to changes in trade policy.

In September 2006, an advocacy event – "Equitable Trade: creating a level playing field for men and women" – was organised by the Gender Section at the WTO Public Forum, What WTO holds for the 21st Century? Panelists included Ambassadorial representatives to

the WTO from Sweden, Sri Lanka and Rwanda.

Future plans within the project include:

- Preparations for the next regional workshop – for the Southern Africa region – in Namibia, 2-6 July 2007. This will cover at least six selected countries and will be done in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC).
- A Gender and Trade Website, within which this newsletter will be housed. Managed by GATI in consultation with the Commonwealth Secretariat, this site will have interactive features for both past and future participants of the regional capacity building workshops, as well as for a broader audience interested in the issues. A platform for case studies, latest news and regularly moderated discussion forums, the website will be launched at the Commonwealth's 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) in Uganda, June 2007.
- The Gender Section has also commissioned a Training Module in Gender and Trade. In the final stages of Development, this tool will also be available by 8th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in June 2007 and is targeted for use by a spectrum of professionals.
- Embedding processes in two selected countries – India and Uganda – will be fully activated by the end of 2007.

■ **Fatimah Kelleher and Sarojini Ganju Thakur**, Commonwealth Secretariat



Participants at the Regional Workshop for Capacity Building on Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion, New Delhi, India

# Quick Impact Initiatives for Gender Equality

A Menu of Options by Caren Grown, Levy Economics Institute,  
Bard College



Woman trader, Zambia

As we know, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight goals set by the United Nations for all the countries of world. MDGs are a response to the world's main development challenges and have to be achieved by 2015. Among the eight goals of MDGs, the third MDG specifically targets gender issues and calls for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. For achieving the targets within the MDGs, the UN Millennium Project has identified a set of Quick Impact Initiatives (QIIs).

The QIIs are interventions which are to be implemented in the early years of an MDG scale-up strategy that generate rapid results. These initiatives can be implemented quickly (such as within three years)

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without large investments in infrastructure or capacity.

In this paper titled "Quick Impact Initiatives For Gender Equality: A Menu of Options" Caren Grown of Levy Economics Institute has discussed and analysed the QIIs that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. These QIIs are a potentially effective vehicle for operationalising seven strategic priorities for achievement of

gender equality and women's empowerment. These priorities relate to post primary education for girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, investment in infrastructure aimed at reduction of women's and girls' time burdens, securing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights, addressing gender inequities in employment, focus on increasing the representation of women in electoral bodies and reduction of violence against girls and women.

This paper proposes six criteria for identifying QIIs which are relevant and linked to a long-term strategy to achieve the MDGs. The QIIs should be a) successful in multiple contexts, locations, and environments, b) capable of being implemented and scaled up to a majority of target population within 3-5 years, c) likely to demonstrate measurable impact within 3 years of implementation, d) integrates gender-sensitive design features, and e) likely to show financial sustainability and potential cost recovery.

The paper discusses a number of innovative programmes implemented across countries and contexts, which meet these criteria of QIIs. With the help of specific examples, the author has brought out how these initiatives can bring significant improvement in the lives of the targeted group of the population. For example, as the paper highlights, microfinance and

microcredit has the potential to be an effective strategy to assist poor and landless women. The paper cites the State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign 2001 Report, to point out that 14.2 million of the world's poorest women have been served by microfinance. However, as the author notes, a number of gender sensitive features have to be integrated into microfinance programmes in order that these schemes lead to women's empowerment. Similarly, public employment guarantee schemes have been successful in generating high participation from women. Again, the author highlights instances of gender biases and exploitation of women in employment guarantee schemes and suggests ways to enhance the effectiveness of these programmes for women.

Regarding QIIs on women's health, the study makes some interesting observations. It finds out that countries that have been successful in reducing maternal mortality have used facilities beyond public hospitals and clinics. Examples from Honduras, Egypt, Sri Lanka and Cuba show that nursing homes and maternity waiting centres, along with emphasis on training of local health workers have improved access to emergency obstetric care for populations residing in remote and rural areas. These factors have helped these countries to reduce

Box 1

### Quick Impact Initiatives: A Menu of Options for Gender Equality

- Eliminating User Fees for Primary School
- Provide Secondary School Scholarships for Girls
- Improving Safety and Infrastructure
- Low-cost Energy Technologies that Enable Women to Earn Income
- Financial and Business Services to Strengthen and Expand Women's Enterprises
- Public Employment Guarantee Schemes
- Providing Family Planning Information and Services
- Reducing Maternal Mortality
- Political Quotas and Reservations
- Health System Interventions to Mitigate the Consequences of Violence
- Female Police Stations or Cells
- Community-Based Awareness and Training Programs

maternal mortality rate by a significant percent. For example, since the 1950s, Sri Lanka has cut in half its maternal mortality ratio at least in every 12 years.



Based on these country experiences with various QIIs, juxtaposed with the guidelines suggested in the paper, the author has prepared a menu of twelve Quick Impact Initiatives that a developing or least developed country can pick from to address various gender related issues [See Box 1]. The coverage of these issues is quite comprehensive and range from health and education related issues for women to their economic and political empowerment. Policymakers from developing countries will find this menu very useful for choosing the right QII for their country.

Overall the paper covers a wide terrain and throws up key pointers on how QII can be operationalised in a developing country given adequate resources and political will. However, policy makers will also be interested to know about the financial viability of the QIIs and the sustainability of gains over a period of time. It will also be important to address how the various QIIs can be up-scaled and integrated with the more long term gender empowerment goals set by developing and least developed countries. The author has indeed referred to some of these issues in the paper and underlined the need for improved programme and impact evaluations.

■ **Parthapratim Pal**  
email: parthapal@gmail.com

# The State of Engendering

## The Invisible Contribution of Women to National Income

Did you know that most countries do not incorporate women's and men's unpaid labour into their national income calculation? Since more women than men are engaged in unpaid labour, this leads to according of low status and low allocation of resources dedicated to the development of women in countries. In South Asia alone, six out of ten women are classified as unpaid contributing family members compared to two out of ten men. This implies that nearly 60 percent of women are not accounted as working in spite of contributing productively at household level. In Bangladesh, non market production both subsistence production and housework

contributes 23 percent to the revised GDP, second only to the agriculture sector which contributes 33 percent. The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, called for developing 'suitable statistical means to recognise and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy including in their unremunerated and domestic sectors' and stressed the need to "develop a more comprehensive knowledge of work and employment through efforts to measure and better understand the type, extent and distribution of unremunerated work particularly in caring for dependents."

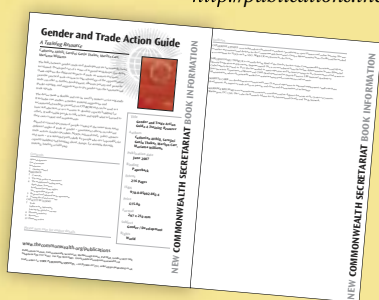
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### Select Publications of the Commonwealth Secretariat

- Gender and Trade Action Guide: A Training Resource
- Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System: A Handbook for policy makers and other stakeholders
- Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets  
Engendering Budgets: An Integrated Resource for Implementing the Gender Management System Series
- Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction: A Handbook for policy makers and other stakeholders
- Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals- A Handbook for Policy Makers and other Stakeholders

For more information please visit:

<http://publications.thecommonwealth.org/publications/default.asp>



### Forthcoming Events

Gender and Trade ([www.genderandtrade.org](http://www.genderandtrade.org)), is a new web based resource platform interlinking research, advocacy and action across the commonwealth countries with the objective of facilitating and promoting gender sensitive trade policies at the national, regional and multilateral levels. It is being launched on June 11 2007 at Uganda. An initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat in partnership with Gender and Trade Initiative and Department of International Development, G&T was launched on June 8, 2007 at Uganda.

The Fourth Commonwealth Workshop on Regional Capacity Building in Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion would be held in Namibia, from 2-6 July 2007. The workshop would cover at least six countries in the South African region and would be held in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

For more information please contact: [info@genderandtrade.org](mailto:info@genderandtrade.org)

The Editors invite any relevant information, analysis, feedback and comment on the newsletter for enhancing its utility. If you have any questions please contact / write in:

**Sona Mitra**  
Research Officer  
Gender and Trade Initiative  
160, South Avenue  
New Delhi-110001  
India  
Telefax: +91-11-23792862  
Email: [sona.mitra@gationline.org](mailto:sona.mitra@gationline.org)  
Web: [www.gationline.org](http://www.gationline.org)

**Editors:**  
Biplove Choudhary  
Parthapratim Pal  
Sarojini Ganju Thakur  
Fatimah Kelleher

**Cartoons:**  
Sharad Sharma, World Comics with  
Parashar Kulkarni

**Layout & Design:**  
New Concept Information Systems  
Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi  
email: [nc.communication@gmail.com](mailto:nc.communication@gmail.com)

The Commonwealth Secretariat, established in 1965 is the main intergovernmental agency of the Commonwealth, facilitating consultation and co-operation among member governments and countries.

Gender and Trade Initiative (GATI) a programme of SOFCAR, seeks to address gender and trade related issues across South Asia and beyond through research and advocacy. It seeks to strengthen efforts at mainstreaming gender in trade, understand impact of trade on gender and build capacities.