

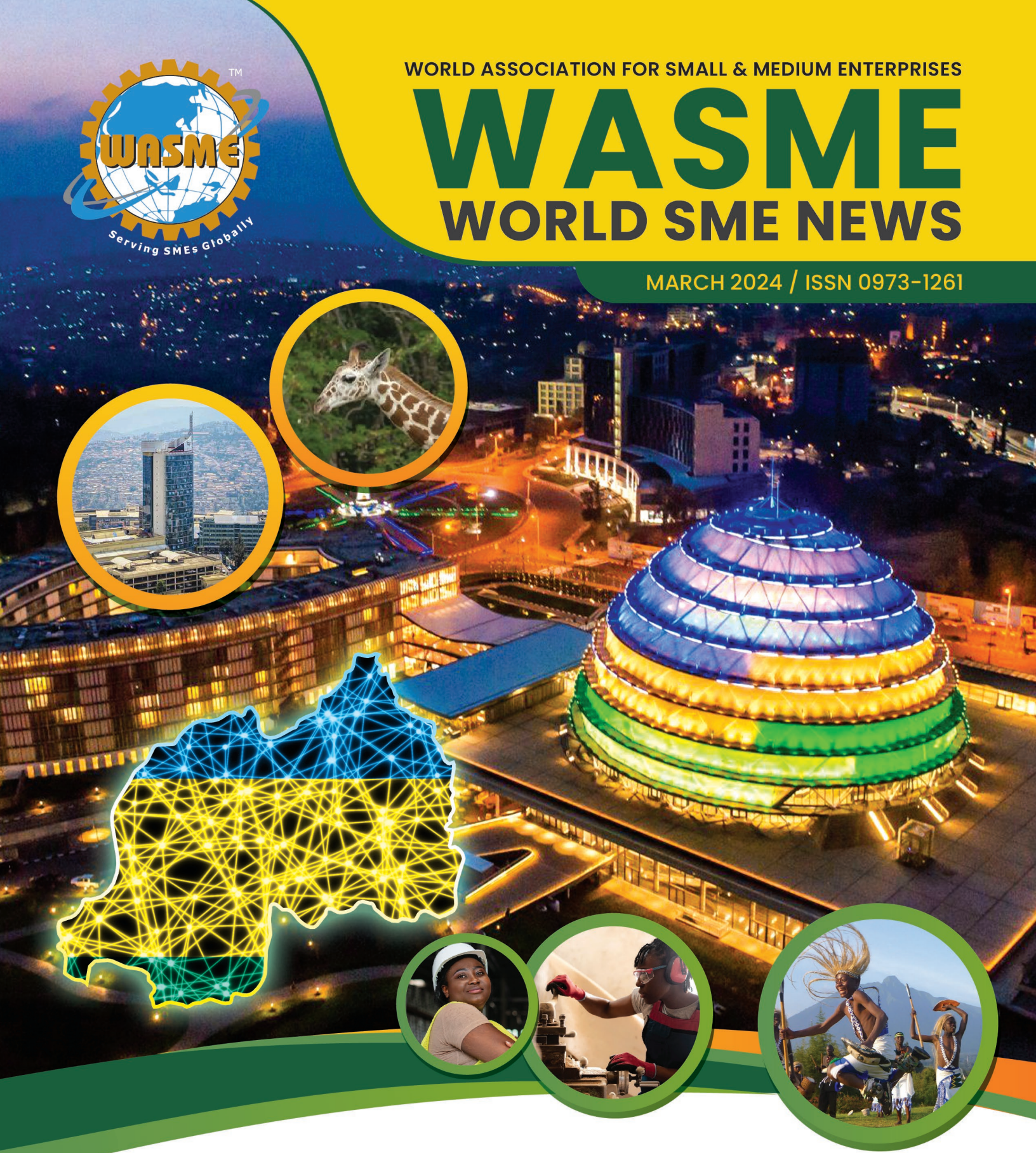


WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

# WASME

## WORLD SME NEWS

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# READERS' REVIEW



“ I found the editorial on prioritising quality for SMEs very helpful! It provided valuable insights and practical tips for enhancing business standards, making it a must-read for entrepreneurs aiming to boost their ventures. ”

**Amaba Samuel**  
Abuja, Nigeria

“ The policy brief on intellectual property rights talked about a very pertinent issue! It shed light on the importance of protecting SMEs' innovations and ideas, offering valuable guidance on navigating the complex world of IP. ”

**Stephen Uriri**  
Paris, France

“ I found the country focus on Angola fascinating! It offered a compelling glimpse into the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in Angola's dynamic economy, making it an engaging and informative read. ”

**Hilda George**  
Dubai, UAE

“ The global industry scan on SMEs in the sports industry was really insightful! It showcased innovative ventures and trends in sports entrepreneurship, inspiring entrepreneurs to explore new opportunities in this exciting sector. ”

**Fatima Khan**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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# FROM THE DESK OF SECRETARY GENERAL



**Dr. Gyan Prakash Agarwal**

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the March 2024 edition of the WASME newsletter!

At WASME, we remain committed to promoting the growth and development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) on a global scale. We are thrilled to present a diverse range of articles that delve into gendered aspects of the SME sector. In the backdrop of the world celebrating International Women's Day (March 8), in this issue, we commemorate the role of women in the SME sector. We explore and take stock of various issues affecting women entrepreneurship, offering recommendations to enhance the SME ecosystem and encourage greater participation of women.

In this edition, we take a comprehensive look at various regions and industries, providing valuable insights tailored to SMEs. Our "Country Focus" segment turns its focus to Rwanda, offering readers a deep dive into the business landscape where women entrepreneurs have been on a rise. Meanwhile, our "Industry Scan" section examines the potential opportunities for innovation and expansion for women entrepreneurs in the domain of rural enterprises.

In our "Editorial", we delve into the issue of addressing obstacles faced by female entrepreneurs operating in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Furthermore, in our "Policy Brief," we discuss the issue of promoting the empowerment of women entrepreneurs. In our "Guest Article," Nikita Singla, an International Trade, Logistics, and Inclusion Specialist, presents a compelling argument on Inspiring Inclusion in India's Trade Ecosystem: A Data-Driven Approach.

Through our "UN Update," we keep readers informed about global initiatives impacting the SME community, while our "WASME Updates" section provides highlights of our recent activities and achievements.

We invite you to join us on this enriching journey as we delve into these dynamic topics and navigate the ever-changing landscape of SMEs worldwide.

Happy reading!

# WASME EDITORIAL

## Breaking Barriers: Women Entrepreneurs in Male-Dominated Business Landscapes

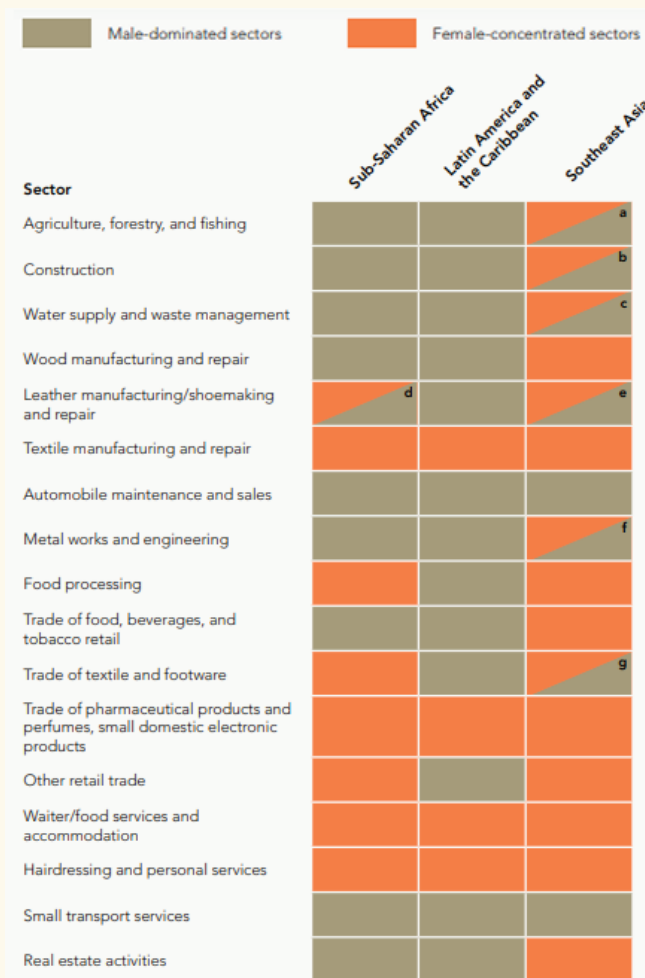


### Introduction

Women's participation in entrepreneurship has surged globally, with shrinking gender gaps observed in several countries, where women are now as likely as men, if not more, to own businesses. Despite this progress, female entrepreneurs still face significant challenges. On average, their businesses generate lower profits, experience higher closure rates, and have limited growth potential compared to those owned by men. One contributing factor to the profit gap is the prevalence of smaller firms among women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the sectors in which male and female entrepreneurs operate play a role. Women entering male-dominated sectors tend to earn 67% higher profits than those in traditionally female-concentrated sectors. Even among microentrepreneurs, where firm size is similar, gender differences in profits persist. For example, in Benin, microenterprises owned by men earn 12% more than those owned by women, and the gap widens to 80% in Mexico.

Female-owned businesses often specialise in trade and retail, particularly in sectors like textiles, footwear, pharmaceuticals, and perfumes. Conversely, male-owned enterprises typically dominate manufacturing industries, as well as agriculture, forestry, and fishing. While certain service sectors, such as hairdressing, personal services, hospitality, and food, exhibit a concentration of female entrepreneurs, others like automobile maintenance, sales, and small-scale transportation services are

predominantly male-dominated. Despite these general trends observed across countries, there is no universally agreed-upon classification of sectors as male-dominated or not. Therefore, policies aimed at supporting female entrepreneurs looking to enter



Source: Breaking Barriers: Female Entrepreneurs Who Cross Over to Male-Dominated Sectors

traditionally male-dominated fields must account for the specific economic contexts of individual countries to effectively target relevant sectors<sup>1</sup>.

### **Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs Upon Entering Male-Dominated Sectors**

Transitioning into male-dominated sectors poses numerous hurdles for female entrepreneurs, as they grapple with discrimination and obstacles even after establishing themselves. In South Africa, qualitative research reveals the struggles of female entrepreneurs operating in the male-dominated construction sector, facing barriers such as dealing with male counterparts, difficulty in securing loans due to collateral constraints, and challenges in recruiting quality employees. Similar qualitative data from Guinea and Uganda shed light on issues like harassment, including sexual advances and threats, faced by women entrepreneurs. In Guinea, women reported harassment from colleagues and societal expectations of failure due to perceived incompatibility with the physical demands of male-dominated sectors.

Moreover, women owners in sectors requiring higher education highlighted discrimination from clients and suppliers, facing scepticism about their capabilities. Operating in male-dominated sectors also results in reduced social capital, affecting trust, networking opportunities, and community involvement, contributing to increased depressive symptoms among women. The persisting discrimination may lead to self-doubt and a lack of confidence in their abilities, as evidenced by reports of low self-esteem and self-efficacy among female entrepreneurs. Despite potential gaps in skills, societal gender roles may play a significant role in fostering scepticism about professional competence, underscoring the need to challenge and address these ingrained biases<sup>2</sup>.

### **Navigating the Path to Male-Dominated Sectors: Unravelling Influential Factors**

In exploring the journey of female entrepreneurs entering male-dominated sectors (MDS), it becomes apparent that several context-specific elements play a pivotal role, albeit with variability across different countries and datasets. While few factors consistently emerge across all settings, education levels and prior exposure to MDS through work experience or influential male figures such as fathers, spouses, or mentors appear to be significant catalysts for crossing over. The crucial role of spousal support, particularly among married women, underscores the importance of familial dynamics in shaping career trajectories. Such support not only challenges traditional social norms but also provides tangible resources and guidance necessary for success in unfamiliar sectors. It's plausible that these factors both motivate and facilitate the decision to cross over, with individuals seeking out role models and experiences aligned with their aspirations. However, the correlational nature of these findings prompts further investigation into whether these factors precede entrepreneurial endeavours or are strategic adaptations to the challenges encountered post-crossing over.

Strategies like forming partnerships with established figures in MDS, participating in business networks, and seeking mentorship underscore the resourcefulness of female entrepreneurs in navigating male-dominated spaces. These insights highlight the need for tailored support systems and mentorship programs to bolster the success of women in MDS, acknowledging their distinct journey and contributing factors. Ultimately, while the origins of these factors remain subject to scrutiny, their significance in shaping the success of female entrepreneurs in MDS cannot be understated, warranting continued exploration and reinforcement<sup>3</sup>.

1. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/7031b50b-f682-52f5-9a3a-24dc46c77942/content>

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

## Empowering Women in Male-Dominated Industries: Breaking Barriers and Driving Progress

In the past, industries like finance, manufacturing, and automotive have predominantly been male-dominated, posing challenges for women seeking to establish themselves. Gender disparities in leadership roles, funding opportunities, and networking access have perpetuated this cycle of underrepresentation and inequality. However, thanks to the collective efforts of pioneering women and supportive ecosystems, the landscape is gradually changing. Despite persistent challenges, several factors have contributed to the increased presence and success of women in these traditionally male-dominated sectors. Here are some critical factors to consider:

**Changing Attitudes and Cultural Shifts:** Societal attitudes towards gender roles have evolved, fostering a more inclusive environment. Increased awareness and advocacy for gender equality have led to a cultural shift, challenging stereotypes and biases. Despite these strides, marketers in male-dominated industries still face obstacles like gender bias, access to capital, and work-life balance. Addressing these systemic challenges requires a multifaceted approach involving policy reforms, cultural changes, and collective mobilisation from various sectors.

**Supportive Networks and Mentorship:** The establishment of support networks and mentorship programs has been instrumental in assisting female entrepreneurs in navigating challenges. Organisations and initiatives dedicated to promoting women in business offer valuable resources, guidance, and networking opportunities.

**Access to Education and Training:** Improved access to education and training programs has

equipped women with the skills and knowledge needed to compete in male-dominated industries. Entrepreneurship-focused educational initiatives have contributed to a more level playing field.

**Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Companies are increasingly recognizing the benefits of diversity and inclusion, leading to the implementation of policies supporting women in leadership roles. Acknowledging diverse perspectives as valuable assets has encouraged more women to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities.

**Government Initiatives and Policies:** Governments worldwide have introduced policies and initiatives to promote gender equality and support female entrepreneurs. Financial incentives, grants, and programs addressing gender-based barriers have facilitated women's business establishment and growth in male-dominated fields.

**Technological Advancements:** The rise of technology has provided female entrepreneurs with new avenues to access markets, funding, and resources. Online platforms, digital marketing, and e-commerce have democratized business opportunities, enabling women to compete globally.

**Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives promoting gender diversity and inclusiveness have sparked crucial conversations and accelerated exchange



3. Ibid.

within and between groups. Through conferences, workshops, and mentoring programs, women are increasingly empowered to defy stereotypes and succeed in business.

Market Trends and Consumer Preferences: Changing consumer preferences and market trends have created opportunities for female entrepreneurs to thrive in historically male-dominated industries. With a growing demand for environmentally friendly and inclusive products and services, women are driving innovation and reshaping the future of business.

Ultimately, the success of female entrepreneurs in traditionally male-dominated sectors demonstrates their determination, perseverance, and innovation. By breaking down barriers and defying stereotypes, women inspire future generations of entrepreneurs. Continued support, advocacy, and efforts to dismantle barriers are essential for sustained progress towards gender equality and inclusivity in the business world<sup>4</sup>.

### **Promoting Gender Diversity in Male-Dominated Industries: Driving Sustainable Development**

Increasing gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated industries serves as a potent strategy to address pressing challenges and expedite progress towards global sustainable development. Despite comprising half of the global labour force and accounting for half of new graduates with higher education annually, women's talent often remains underutilised and undervalued. However, evidence suggests that enhancing women's participation not only enriches companies' human resources but also enhances their innovation and organisational performance.

Amidst growing global advocacy for gender equality and diversity, it's become evident

that increasing women's participation yields significant business, economic, and social benefits. Nevertheless, a significant knowledge gap persists regarding how women drive organisational and industrial transformation, and how their potential as change-makers can be fully unleashed. Without a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, efforts to promote gender diversity risk remaining superficial, merely focusing on numerical representation rather than tapping into women's talent to effect meaningful change at scale. Despite this underrepresentation, women across various occupations and seniority levels are catalysing significant positive changes within organisations and industries:

**Enhancing Profitability and Competitiveness:** Companies with higher percentages of women in management exhibit, on average, 47 percent higher profitability than those with lower representation. Women are leading their organisations towards new revenue streams, driving innovation, advocating for sustainable practices, and enhancing transparency to bolster stakeholder trust.

**Improving Environmental Practices:** Greater gender diversity on corporate boards correlates with better environmental performance. Companies with increased gender diversity over time are more likely to demonstrate improvement in areas such as energy consumption reduction. Mission-driven women are driving environmentally sustainable practices and innovations within their organisations.

**Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility:** Gender-diverse corporate boards are associated with better performance in social responsibility. Women are championing socially responsible practices, safeguarding safety and labour rights, integrating community development into business strategies, and empowering local communities.

4. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/the-progress-of-female-entrepreneurs-in-industries-predominated-by-men/3419602/>



Moreover, women are striving to create inclusive corporate cultures, combatting workforce homogeneity and gender-based discrimination. However, they continue to face barriers to entry and advancement, particularly pronounced in male-dominated industries. Leading companies and stakeholders are working to dismantle these barriers and support women's contributions to business growth and transformation by:

**Building the Talent Pipeline:** Addressing the persistent gender gap in STEM education and industry reputations to attract more female talent. Non-profit organisations and grassroots networks are offering education, training, and job opportunities to women, while companies are adopting inclusive hiring practices.

**Fostering Inclusive Workplaces:** Implementing practices to combat gender-based discrimination and harassment and providing supportive policies

and facilities. Companies committed to diversity are removing gender-based pay gaps and offering mentorship and sponsorship programs for women.

**Supporting Female Entrepreneurship:** Enhancing support for female entrepreneurs in male-dominated industries, particularly in accessing funding and building business capacity, through initiatives like gender-lens investing and business incubator programs.

Failure to increase women's representation across male-dominated industries not only limits innovation and transformative potential but also hampers the financial and organisational benefits of a gender-diverse workforce. Meaningful progress necessitates concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including policymakers, companies, investors, industry associations, and NGOs. By collaboratively working towards gender equality, these stakeholders can harness the associated benefits and accelerate positive change. This study offers actionable insights for each stakeholder group to meaningfully contribute to advancing gender diversity and equality in male-dominated industries<sup>5</sup>.

## Conclusion

Moving forward, continued efforts from policymakers, companies, investors, and other stakeholders are crucial to advancing gender equality in the business world. By addressing systemic challenges, promoting inclusive workplaces, and supporting female entrepreneurship, we can unlock the full potential of women in male-dominated sectors. Ultimately, embracing diversity and inclusivity not only benefits individual businesses but also contributes to broader economic growth and social progress. Therefore, sustained collaboration and commitment are needed to build a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

5. <https://womensleversofchange.com/static/pdf/Women-As-Levers-Of-Change.pdf>



# POLICY BRIEF

## Fostering the Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs: Driving Positive Change



### Introduction

Amidst the ongoing economic challenges, there is a growing call for a new industrial revolution that prioritizes sustainability and inclusivity. This entails fostering growth while respecting the limitations of the planet's resources and placing people at the forefront of development. At the heart of inclusive and sustainable industrial development lies the imperative to unlock the economic potential of women, who represent half of the world's population. By 2020, approximately 870 million women who have previously operated at subsistence levels entered the economic mainstream as producers, consumers, employees, and entrepreneurs. This shift is poised to have profound ramifications for global development.

The significance of women as catalysts for development is increasingly evident. Gender equality not only fuels economic growth but also reduces poverty and enhances overall well-being. Studies indicate that aligning female employment with male levels can substantially boost GDP growth rates, with potential increases of up to 34% in certain countries. Furthermore, removing discriminatory barriers against women can augment countries' productivity by as much as 25%. However, the impact of women's economic empowerment extends beyond economic metrics. Research underscores that women are more inclined than men to invest a significant portion of their household income in the education and welfare of their children. By empowering women to generate income, accrue

assets, and bolster their economic security, industrial capacity improves, economic growth is stimulated, and new job opportunities emerge.

Moreover, women tend to have a smaller ecological footprint than men, exhibiting more resource-efficient production and consumption patterns. Their propensity for recycling and sustainable decision-making within households and businesses contributes positively to sustainable economic development. Recognizing women entrepreneurs as pivotal drivers of inclusive and sustainable industrial growth, there has been a surge in acknowledgment of their potential as key players in developing economies. Despite this recognition, women entrepreneurs still encounter hurdles in fully asserting their presence in economic spheres. Despite the increasing number of women launching businesses globally, they continue to manage fewer businesses than men, often in less lucrative sectors, with slower growth trajectories and higher rates of failure.

These persistent gender disparities exact tangible costs on society. When women are not afforded equal opportunities in entrepreneurship, economies forfeit the benefits of innovative products and services, additional revenues, and job creation. Furthermore, the long-term repercussions on workforce skills and education, stemming from the underutilization of half the labor pool, underscore the urgency of advancing gender equality and the economic empowerment of women<sup>6</sup>.

6. [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-01/Brochure\\_low\\_resolution\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2014-01/Brochure_low_resolution_0.pdf)

## Policies implemented by different nations to enhance women's entrepreneurship

**Saudi Arabia** has recognized the pivotal role of women's economic empowerment in driving national economic growth, as evidenced by its inclusion of advancing women's economic participation in its Vision 2030 initiative. In alignment with this vision, the country has undertaken significant reforms aimed at empowering women, including granting women the right to full ownership of their businesses, expanding funding opportunities for women entrepreneurs, fostering more networking opportunities, and implementing skill development programs. Consequently, there has been a notable surge in women's entrepreneurship in the Kingdom, with the proportion of businesses owned by women doubling to 45% from 2017 to 2022. Moreover, commercial registrations issued to women entrepreneurs witnessed a remarkable increase of 112% between 2015 and 2022<sup>7</sup>.

**Canada's** Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) represents a pioneering effort by the government to cultivate an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs, addressing gaps in finance, resources, and information within the ecosystem. This strategy encompasses a range of investments and commitments across various funding programs and initiatives aimed at bolstering the capacity of the ecosystem to support women entrepreneurs. One such initiative is the WES Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative, which supports projects led by non-profit organizations to cultivate an inclusive venture capital landscape for women entrepreneurs. Additionally, the Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund serves as a national microloans fund tailored to support start-ups, underrepresented groups, and sole proprietorships, with disbursements targeted towards women through selected delivery organizations. Furthermore, the WES Ecosystem fund provides financing for projects that offer support services specifically tailored to women entrepreneurs<sup>8</sup>.

Germany has established the National Agency for Women Start-ups Activities and Services (bga), which receives sponsorship from the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. This initiative represents a noteworthy endeavor to institutionalize support for women's entrepreneurship by creating a dedicated government agency focused on this objective. The bga serves as a centralized platform where women-specific information, advice, and training services are consolidated, facilitating access for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Moreover, the agency fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among key stakeholders within the start-up ecosystem<sup>9</sup>.

In the UK, HM Treasury made significant strides in 2019 by appointing Alison Rose, CEO of NatWest Group, to conduct a comprehensive study on the barriers faced by women in entrepreneurship. The resulting "Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship" prompted the government to set a target of increasing the number of women entrepreneurs by 50% to 600,000 by 2030. Subsequently, the government introduced the voluntary Investing in Women Code, aimed at enhancing transparency in funding allocation for female entrepreneurs and addressing the gender gap in investment. Under this code, member financial institutions commit to sharing data on lending to women and report annually, thereby streamlining access to finance for women. The Investing in Women Code has garnered 134 signatories, including mainstream banks and venture capital firms like the UK Business Angels Association, which are now offering increased funding opportunities and support services such as event programs, mentoring, and access to markets and networks<sup>10</sup>.

7. <https://icrier.org/epwd/pdf/practices.pdf>

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

In **Australia**, the government has implemented the Boosting Female Founders Initiative, a distinctive support program designed to incentivize private sector investments in innovative women-led startups. This initiative operates on a co-contribution basis, encouraging investments from the private sector by providing government grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$480,000 to successful recipients. Additionally, recipients receive opportunities for business mentoring to support their growth and expansion. The program specifically targets female founders of startups, aiming to assist them in scaling into both domestic and global markets<sup>11</sup>.

In **Russia**, efforts to empower mothers to become successful entrepreneurs are part of the broader Development of Women's Entrepreneurship project, which falls under the National Strategy for Women 2017-2022. This initiative aims to facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to essential resources such as information, education, finance, and market opportunities. Additionally, it seeks to implement international projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing women's entrepreneurship activities and fostering their empowerment in the socio-economic development of the country. A specific sub-project within this overarching initiative is led by the Ministry of Economic Development, focusing on the development of entrepreneurship among women with children or those on maternity leave. The Mom-Entrepreneurs program, a component of this sub-project, is designed to provide comprehensive support over five full days. The program covers basic business skills and offers practical immersion in the business environment facilitated by experienced experts and representatives of regional entities involved in the development of small and medium enterprises<sup>12</sup>.

## Korea and the United States

Government policies play a crucial role in encouraging female entrepreneurship, as evidenced by initiatives in both the United States and Korea. Since the 1970s, the US government has actively promoted female entrepreneurship through the Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) within the Small Business Administration (SBA). Similarly, the Small and Medium Business Administration (SMBA) in Korea has developed policies to support female entrepreneurship, mirroring some aspects of US initiatives.

### Key policy measures in both countries include:

1. **Public Procurement and Simplified Procedures:** Both the US and Korea have implemented programs to support women-owned businesses in accessing government contracts. In the US, the Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Federal Contract Program allocates 5% of federal contracts to eligible women-owned small businesses. Similarly, Korea mandates public institutions to purchase a portion of products or services from female entrepreneurs and has simplified contract procedures for them.
2. **Business/Enterprise Centers and Local Offices:** The SBA and SMBA operate local offices and centers that provide support to female entrepreneurs, offering training, counseling, and mentoring. For instance, the US Women's Business Center Program focuses on educating women to compete fairly with male-owned businesses, while Korea's Women Enterprise Supporting Centers assist women in starting new businesses and provide advice and mentoring.
3. **Financial Resources:** Both countries offer loan programs to help women entrepreneurs access the credit and capital needed to start and grow their businesses. The SBA administers several loan programs in the

11. Ibid.

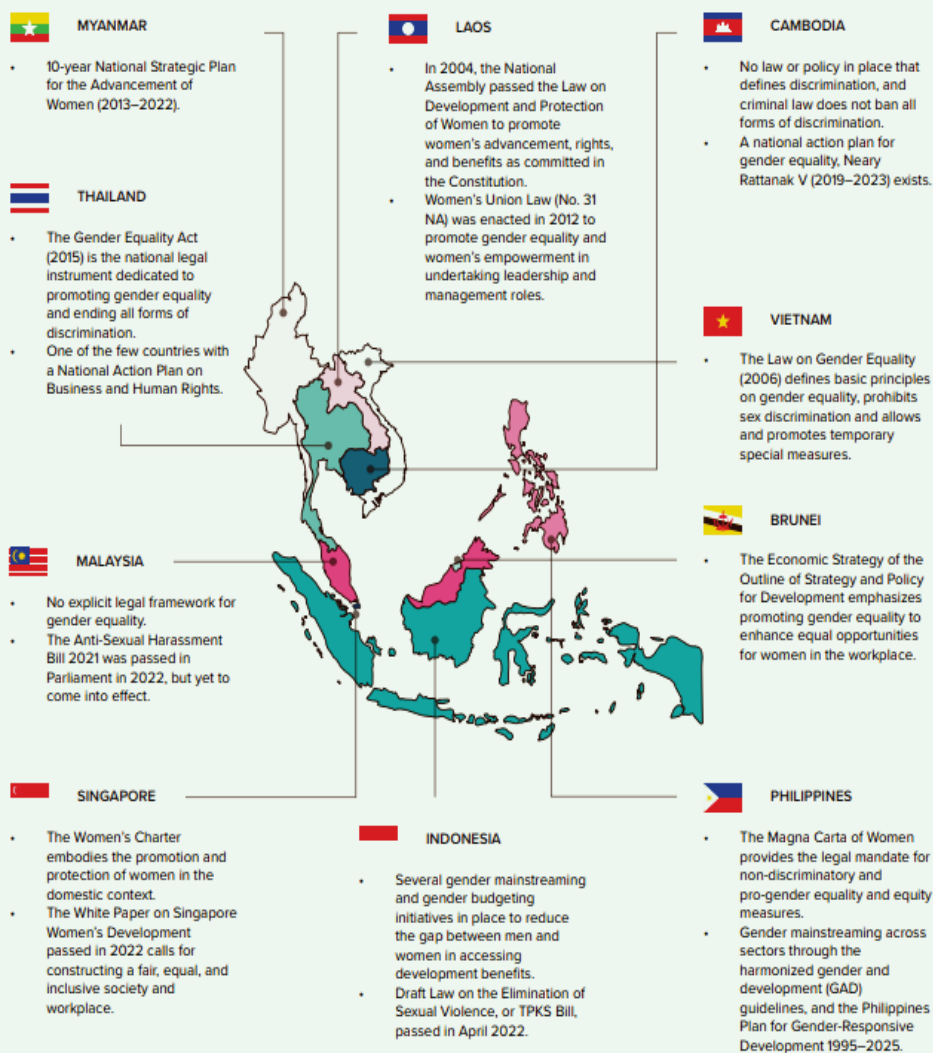
12. Ibid.

US, while Korea designates special funds for women entrepreneurs facing difficulty in accessing credit.

4. Advisory Councils: The US has the National Women’s Business Council (NWBC), advising on policies to promote female entrepreneurship, while Korea has a Committee of Promotion of Balanced Growth within the SMBA, consisting of government officials, female CEOs, and experts to support women entrepreneurs.

While these initiatives aim to support female entrepreneurs, rigorous evaluations and data collection are essential to assess their cost-effectiveness and outcomes accurately. Evaluation methods such as randomized control trials can help determine the impact of these programs on business survival rates, access to financing, hiring rates, and business size and profits. Additionally, addressing underutilization and missed targets in procurement programs can further enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives<sup>13</sup>.

## Promotion of Gender equality and the workplace in the ASEAN region



- Streamline Business Registration:** Establish one-stop shops for public services to simplify business registration, particularly beneficial for women entrepreneurs balancing unpaid care work. Additionally, promote online registration and e-transactions to reduce corruption risks.
- Provide Ombuds Services:** Create ombuds services specifically targeting women entrepreneurs to facilitate reporting of corruption, harassment, and abuse.
- Address Sexual Extortion:** Recognize sexual extortion as a form of corruption and undertake public campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage reporting.
- Collect Gender-Disaggregated Data:** Gather data to inform gender-smart

Source: Promoting Women Entrepreneurs As Drivers Of Business Integrity: A Practical Approach

13. [https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment\\_Fin\\_1\\_Oct\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment_Fin_1_Oct_2014.pdf)

policies, particularly in procurement processes, identifying gaps and opportunities for women-led businesses.

#### 5. Incorporate Gender in Open Contracting

**Strategies:** Utilize Open Contracting Data Standards (OCDS) and include indicators monitoring women's participation in public procurement.

#### 6. Adopt Gender Equality Perspective in Anti-Corruption

**Strategies:** Analyze corruption's impact on men and women differently to inform policy-making effectively.

#### 7. Break Policy Silos:

Foster synergies across policies and institutions to support women's leadership in fair business and achieve broader development goals.

#### 8. Build Women's Capacity in Procurement

**Governance:** Cultivate expertise among women in governing suppliers and ensuring their equitable engagement in procurement processes<sup>14</sup>.

### Enhancing Policy Support for Female-Owned Enterprises in OECD countries

Women's entrepreneurship policies should not be viewed solely as subsets of start-up or small firm policies. Many female business owners aspire for growth, necessitating a stronger focus on instruments to support their growth ambitions. Initiatives like Ireland's Going for Growth Initiative, where female entrepreneurs exchange experiences and develop business plans under the guidance of successful mentors, exemplify growth-focused approaches. Other examples include tax credit schemes, lending support, and facilitating access to public procurement for small, female-owned firms. To qualify for such support programs, companies must meet specific criteria defining them as "female-owned enterprises," a practice prevalent in the United States but less common elsewhere.

1. **Subsidized Loans and Loan Guarantees:** Governments often employ subsidized loans and loan guarantee programs to support small and new businesses. For instance, in France, the Fonds de Garantie à l'Initiative des Femmes (FGIF) guarantees a significant portion of bank loans for women entrepreneurs. Similarly, in Turkey, KOSGEB provides financial support and applies positive discrimination by offering higher grant amounts to women entrepreneurs.
2. **Credit Mediators and Codes of Conduct:** OECD countries have established credit mediators and enacted binding codes of conduct for SME lending to facilitate the flow of credit to small and medium enterprises. These measures aim to alleviate challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in accessing bank credit.
3. **Training and Consultancy Programs:** National and regional business support centers can bolster the self-confidence of women entrepreneurs by providing training programs to enhance their skills in designing and presenting financing plans. These programs should supplement financing instruments with services such as training and consultancy to address the unique challenges faced by female entrepreneurs.
4. **Structured Courses and Simplified Regulations:** Structured courses that teach women entrepreneurs how to interact with informal investors and present investment projects effectively can be beneficial. Simplified regulations for accessing public equity can also facilitate capital raising for women-owned firms, promoting growth and expansion.
5. **Improving Credit Registries:** Enhancing the quality and coverage of public and private credit registries can help reduce discriminatory practices against female borrowers. Tight supervision by banks and public support policies is essential to prevent discrimination. For instance, the Consumer Financial Protection

14. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-02/UNDP-RBAP-Promoting-Women-Entrepreneurs-as-Drivers-of-Business-Integrity-2023.pdf>

Agency (CFPA) in the United States collects data on small business credit availability by gender, race, and ethnicity to enforce lending laws and ensure fair treatment of small business owners<sup>15</sup>.

Public policies aimed at advancing the involvement of women in business leadership are crucial for fostering broader societal and economic benefits. While individual companies may take steps to promote gender equality, government intervention can support these efforts and address systemic barriers through changes in education, employment, and social policies:

1. **Education Policy:** Gender stereotypes often influence career choices from an early age. Therefore, education policies should raise awareness among students, parents, teachers, and employers about gender stereotypes and their impact on academic and career opportunities. Curriculum and teaching practices should be reviewed and adjusted to eliminate gender discrimination and promote inclusivity in subjects like STEM and entrepreneurship.
2. **Family-Friendly Policies:** Public policies, particularly in Nordic countries, provide comprehensive support for families, including maternity, paternity, and parental leaves, along with accessible childcare services. Such policies help to change societal perceptions by demonstrating that parenthood is compatible with career advancement, thereby promoting gender equality in the workforce.
3. **Employment Policy:** Governments should ensure equal financial incentives for both men and women to work, provide support for employment through measures like apprenticeships and counseling, and strengthen anti-discrimination legislation. Additionally, promoting pay transparency and enforcing equal pay principles are essential steps in combating gender disparities in the workplace.

4. **Corporate Practices:** Governments can collaborate with businesses, NGOs, academia, and the media to address cultural barriers and stereotypes through awareness campaigns. Recognizing and celebrating successful women in business, implementing awards programs, and showcasing diverse role models can help change public perceptions and encourage gender diversity in leadership positions.
5. **Gender Diversity on Boards:** Policymakers can promote gender diversity on corporate boards through various approaches, including self-regulatory corporate governance codes, mandatory disclosure requirements, and legislative quotas. These measures aim to improve corporate governance and performance by leveraging the diverse perspectives and skills of women in leadership roles<sup>16</sup>.

## Conclusion

The promotion of women's entrepreneurship and gender equality is vital for fostering sustainable economic development and inclusive growth. Governments worldwide are implementing policies and initiatives to support female entrepreneurs, address systemic barriers, and create conducive environments for women to thrive in leadership roles. From streamlining business registration to providing access to finance and mentorship programs, these efforts aim to unlock women's full potential as drivers of innovation and job creation. Additionally, promoting gender diversity on corporate boards and enacting family-friendly policies can further enhance opportunities for women in business. Sustained commitment and collaboration across sectors are essential to advancing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs and achieving meaningful progress towards gender equality in business leadership globally.

15. [https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment\\_Fin\\_1\\_Oct\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment_Fin_1_Oct_2014.pdf)

16. [https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment\\_Fin\\_1\\_Oct\\_2014.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/gender/Enhancing%20Women%20Economic%20Empowerment_Fin_1_Oct_2014.pdf)

# GUEST ARTICLE

## Inspiring Inclusion in India's Trade Ecosystem: A Data-Driven Approach


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"By increasing the accuracy and accessibility of gender-based trade statistics, India's state and national governments can create better policy."

As the world celebrates International Women's Day, it is crucial to recognize the strides made in women's inclusion in trade while acknowledging the work that remains. India has taken steps to improve the economic opportunities available for women. Yet, significant progress toward achieving transformative impact remains elusive. By increasing the accuracy and accessibility of trade statistics disaggregated by gender, India's state and national governments can use this information to more effectively implement trade policy reforms, including women's empowerment through international trade, trade up-skilling, and remodelling trade institutions to address gender financing gaps. As the adage goes, "What gets measured, gets done."

### Gender Disaggregated Data: An Undervalued Barrier to Progress

Globally, advocates' ability to outline the link between gender equality and trade has been hindered by limited data and a lack of research regarding the connections between women's roles as workers, consumers, and decision-makers. The 2020 joint World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO) report<sup>17</sup> on the role of trade in promoting women's



equality made an initial effort to quantify the impact of improved trade on women in the workforce by utilising gender-disaggregated labour datasets. The findings revealed that firms that engage in international trade tend to employ more women, and women are more prominently represented and receive relatively higher wages in firms participating in global value chains. Among other international reports<sup>18</sup>, ample research supports<sup>19</sup> the argument that international trade tends to benefit women in developing economies, but the benefits often depend on effective policy implementation.

To further advance the extent to which India's trade facilitation initiatives benefit women and enhance their participation in the economy, additional funding and effort must be directed to gathering national gender-disaggregated data at the firm level and ensuring its accessibility to third-party research organisations.

India has undertaken various initiatives in trade policy and capacity-building to address digital access, financial literacy, and trade up-skilling for women. The country's strong commitment to gender inclusive trade is evident in the government's National Trade Facilitation Action Plan<sup>20</sup> (NTFAP) 2020-23, where under Action Point 27, policymakers, business chambers, and private sector representatives are dedicated to promoting gender inclusiveness in trade. In the 2023 UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, which covers 160 economies and over 60 digital and sustainable trade measures that include inclusive participation in trade, India achieved<sup>21</sup> an overall score of 93.55 percent, a significant increase from 63.44 percent in 2015. Within this survey, India's

17. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/women-and-trade-the-role-of-trade-in-promoting-womens-equality>

18. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2023/06/trade-drives-gender-equality-and-development-rochapiermartini#:~:text=Trade%20creates%20better%20jobs%20for,integrated%20into%20global%20value%20chains.>

19. <https://www.oecd.org/trade/topics/trade-and-gender/>

20. <https://old.cbic.gov.in/resources/htdocs-cbec/implmntn-trade-facilitation/NTFAP2020-23jk.pdf>

21. <https://www.untsurvey.org/report>

score for “Women in Trade Facilitation” reached 77.8 percent, marking a notable improvement from 66.7 percent in 2021. The UN survey attributed this increase to India’s trade facilitation efforts, which in turn improved women’s participation in trade and women’s representation in the National Trade Facilitation Committee and similar governing bodies.

The ongoing shift from physical to digital interactions holds the potential to create a more level playing field for women in trade. Amid the pandemic, India implemented the Turant Customs Programme<sup>22</sup>, which modernised the customs clearance process at ports, making it faceless, contactless, and paperless. While these reforms are noteworthy, more needs to be done to bridge the gender gap in the labour force, which stands at 37 percent<sup>23</sup> female participation against 78.5%<sup>24</sup> male participation in the total labour force as per 2022–23 estimates. While the labour force participation is known and measured, the participation rate for women in India’s trade ecosystem is unknown and expected to be even lower.

To further advance the extent to which India’s trade facilitation initiatives benefit women and enhance their participation in the economy, additional funding and effort must be directed to gathering national gender-disaggregated data at the firm level and ensuring its accessibility to third-party research organisations. More accurate and granular gender disaggregated data would facilitate the development of more targeted and effective policy interventions and reforms aimed at promoting gender equality in trade. Data gaps<sup>25</sup> pose a greater challenge in recognizing prevailing gender disparities and formulating policies aimed at narrowing them.

In India, the benefit of apportioning specific funding for improving gender equality is gaining traction alongside increasing recognition that “gender blind” policy is not an effective approach to improving women’s economic conditions. In the 2022–23 fiscal

year, 41 ministries, departments, and union territories reported allocating a total of USD \$20 billion<sup>26</sup> to the Gender Budget Statement<sup>27</sup>, a reporting mechanism for the government to review state programs from a gender perspective, marking an 11.5 percent increase over the previous year. Nation-wide budget reports on women’s economic empowerment programs and accessible gender-disaggregated data on women’s involvement in India’s trade ecosystem are two essential initiatives that must occur in parallel in order for effective legislation to be possible.

### Improved Data Advances Broader Trade Objectives

Greater availability and accessibility of trade statistics disaggregated by gender can enable authorities at different levels – such as the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Customs at the national level and port authorities at the local level – to more effectively measure the gaps and implement suitable gender specific provisions in the trade ecosystem. Working on high-level trade policy reforms, funding up-skilling programs geared toward women, implementing institutional reforms in trade, and encouraging holistic empowerment are some ways that India’s trade ecosystem can become more inclusive.

High-level trade policy in India cannot afford to be gender neutral, especially considering the pre-existing disadvantages women face in trade due to various social, institutional, and structural factors. Drafting guidelines for new trade agreements ought to consider incorporating gender-specific provisions. Further, enabling women to effectively participate in trade goes beyond the scope of general trade policy alone. It necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates trade policy with domestic reforms and capacity-building initiatives, encompassing digital literacy, financial literacy, and other trade related skills. These policy interventions can only be carried out with improved trade statistics disaggregated by gender.

22. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1633525>

23. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1966154#:~:text=In%20rural%20areas%2C%20LFPR%20increased%20from%2050.7%25%20in,LFPR%20for%20female%20was%20from%202023.3%25%20to%2037.0%25.>

24. Ibid.

25. <https://scroll.in/article/980520/indias-official-data-sources-fall-short-in-addressing-critical-issues-of-women-and-girls>

26. <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1811397>

27. Ibid



Research conducted<sup>28</sup> by the World Bank Group on agriculture and spice value chains in the northeast region of India indicates that women's participation is particularly prominent in lower levels of the value chain, such as on-farm activities including cultivation, harvesting, sorting, grading, packaging, and labelling. However, greater focus on capacity-building initiatives has the potential to enable women to transition into higher levels of the value chain, including roles in research and development, quality assurance, marketing, and distribution. The gap in education, skills, and training significantly undermines women's ability to participate and assume leadership positions in trade-related sectors.

High-level trade policy in India cannot afford to be gender neutral, especially considering the pre-existing disadvantages women face in trade due to various social, institutional, and structural factors.

In addition, internal institutional reforms are crucial to real progress. India's financial institutions must prioritise gender balance in their staff to help address the societal bias and scepticism toward women-owned enterprises. At the local level, port authorities need to promote women's participation in decision-making processes. This necessarily includes ensuring women's representation in the Permanent Trade Facilitation Committee (PTFC) and Customs Clearance Facility Committee (CCFC), and regular interactions conducted at the port level in India.

Further, the disproportionate burden of care on women adversely impacts their participation in the workforce. India allocates less than 1 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the care economy. Yet, investing in public-sector care infrastructure, even at just 2% of India's GDP, has the potential to create 11 million jobs and improve women's economic and social welfare as they transition into formal employment. Therefore, it is imperative to develop an action plan geared toward

women's holistic empowerment. This plan should include enhancing care policies and expanding care service provisions, which could include mandating gender tagging<sup>29</sup> for all projects undertaken in India, irrespective of the implementing agency, to ensure that they address the specific needs and priorities of women.

One metric used to assess the empowerment of women in India's care economy is maternity leave, where India stands out by offering<sup>30</sup> 26 weeks of maternity leave, surpassing the International Labour Organization's (ILO) standard mandate of 14 weeks, which is followed by 120 other countries. It is crucial to transform maternity leave into parental leave to foster a more supportive environment for working parents. However, this coverage only applies to a small fraction of women who are employed in formal sectors<sup>31</sup> in India.

Each of these reforms is essential for promoting gender equality in trade and advancing the pillars of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework<sup>32</sup> (IPEF). The four pillars of the IPEF aim to advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, growth, fairness, and competition in trade; the centrality of women's empowerment to all of these cannot be overstated. Given the significant gender disparity levels around the globe, India has the opportunity to take a leadership role by integrating a gender-inclusive approach into its global trade partnerships. Moreover, India's growing integration<sup>33</sup> into global trade presents an opportunity for India to address its own skill and capacity gaps by advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The first step in this journey is to provide Indian decision-makers with accurate and inclusive data that enables gender-conscious trade policy.

This article is based on the findings of the Policy Paper titled "Women's Inclusion in India's Trade Ecosystem<sup>34</sup>," authored by Nikita Singla. This article was originally published in the South Asian Voices, Stimson Centre.

28. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/13aee4bf-6543-5250-bc6b-c8fb191b9aa6/content>

29. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/20748148988852225/pdf/Strategy-Update-to-the-Board-2-17-17Final-02172017.pdf>

30. [https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/public/fs/WCMS\\_843937/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=India%20spends%20less%20than%201,workers%20and%20the%20overall%20economy.](https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/public/fs/WCMS_843937/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=India%20spends%20less%20than%201,workers%20and%20the%20overall%20economy.)

31. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095829139>

32. <https://www.commerce.gov/ipef>

33. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/interview/india-will-play-an-important-role-in-trade-realignment-globally-former-us-assistant-commerce-secretary/article67259169.ece>

34. <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/policy-brief-womens-inclusion-in-indias-trade-ecosystem-from-talk-to-action/>

# GLOBAL INDUSTRY SECTOR



## Rural Enterprises: Sector Catalysed by Women Entrepreneurs

### Introduction

In Africa, there has been a remarkable surge in female entrepreneurship, with experts noting that the continent boasts the highest proportion of female entrepreneurs globally. According to the 2021 Mastercard Index for Women Entrepreneurship (MIWE), countries like Botswana, South Africa, Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Ethiopia showcased some of the highest scores for women's entrepreneurship. The World Bank highlights that Africa stands out as the only region where more women than men opt for entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurs account for approximately 45.5% of entrepreneurial activities in developing nations, with certain sectors like the food industry witnessing even higher female participation rates. For instance, in West Africa, women dominate street food businesses, underscoring the significant presence and influence of female entrepreneurs in the region<sup>35</sup>.

Micro and small enterprises present distinct advantages for rural women, such as flexible working hours, proximity to their homes, easy entry, and connections to local markets. However, rural female entrepreneurs encounter specific challenges when trying to access new and profitable markets and expand their businesses. Cooperatives emerge as a significant and sustainable form of enterprise

for women in rural areas. When these cooperatives embrace gender-sensitive practices, they can boost women's empowerment, amplify their voice and representation in decision-making processes, establish vital business networks, improve access to markets and services, and facilitate economies of scale. Aside from generating income, entrepreneurship can empower rural women by granting them greater control over resources. This is significant as women tend to allocate more resources towards providing food, healthcare, and education for their families and children.

Research from developing countries underscores the importance of non-farm activities in the income-generating portfolio of rural households, with these

### Women entrepreneurs in Africa: the diversity of experiences

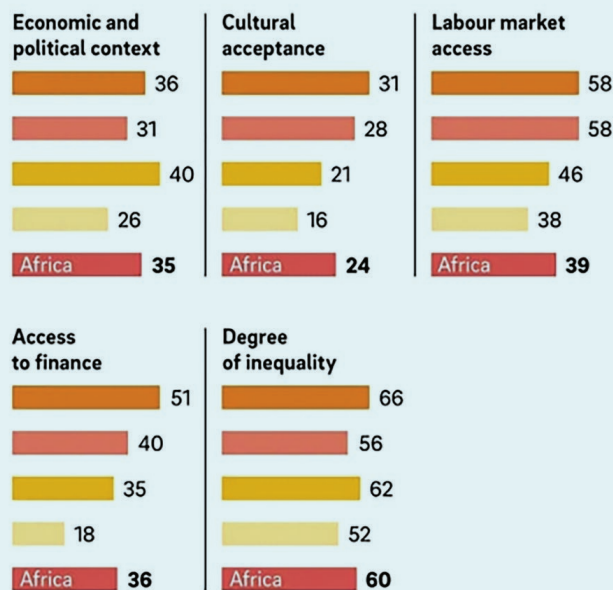


Source World Bank, CIA World Factbook, Roland Berger

35. Elie Virgile Chrysostome, Helena Barnard & Lavagnon Ika (2024) Examining Underexplored Aspects of Female Entrepreneurship in the African Context, Journal of African Business, 25:1, 1-8, DOI: 10.1080/15228916.2023.2278009

activities contributing 42% of income in Africa, 40% in Latin America, and 32% in Asia<sup>36</sup>.

**Differences in preconditions for entrepreneurship among country groups [2019 socio-economic data]**



**Contribution of female owned rural enterprises to the global economies**

In 2016, female entrepreneurs in Africa made a significant monetary contribution ranging between US\$250 billion and US\$300 billion to the continent's economic advancement, equivalent to approximately 13% of the overall GDP (Berger 2018). The World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2022 highlighted the potential for even greater economic expansion by fostering further growth in female-owned businesses and narrowing the gender gap in business opportunities<sup>37</sup>.

**Challenges faced by female owned rural enterprises**

**Why Action is Required:**

**1. Systemic Barriers and Discrimination:**

◆ Discriminatory laws, regulations, and social norms hinder women from establishing viable

businesses. Gender-blind policies perpetuate systemic barriers and fail to address women entrepreneurs' needs.

◆ Inequalities in economic, civil, and family rights limit women's access to resources necessary for business sustainability, exacerbated by discriminatory property and inheritance laws.

**2. Education, Training, and Information Barriers:**

◆ Limited education, training, and business experience restrict rural women entrepreneurs' capacity to develop sustainable enterprises.

◆ Underdeveloped rural infrastructure and services impede access to resources, markets, and public services, further constrained by time commitments to household & agricultural work.

**3. Limited Access to Financial and Business Services:**

◆ Few banks operate in rural areas, and microfinance loans are often insufficient for significant enterprise growth.

◆ Women entrepreneurs face challenges accessing relevant financial products and services due to a lack of understanding of their needs and collateral, compounded by limited access to business development services.

**4. Informal Businesses and Decent Work Requirements:**

◆ Women-led businesses primarily operate in the informal economy, lacking legal registration, regular workforces, and social protection.

◆ Obstacles in accessing domestic and export markets, coupled with limited decision-making power, impede business growth and innovation.

◆ Women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural areas, lack voice and representation in employers' associations, hindering advocacy for their needs<sup>38</sup>.

36. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_150832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_150832.pdf)

37. <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/webdossiers/african-women-entrepreneurs>

38. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_150832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_150832.pdf)

## How to create supportive entrepreneurial environment for rural women

### 1. Building an Enabling Environment for Women's Entrepreneurship:

- ◆ Ensure non-discriminatory business and contractual laws, including land and property titles.
- ◆ Simplify and consolidate the business regulatory process, disseminating regulatory information through accessible channels.
- ◆ Develop social security and childcare schemes to support women entrepreneurs.
- ◆ Integrate gender-sensitive entrepreneurship education into school curricula.
- ◆ Collaborate with stakeholders to dismantle gender stereotypes and foster gender equality.

### 2. Strengthening Networking and Advocacy:

- ◆ Support rural women entrepreneurs' associations to advocate for members' needs and disseminate best practices.
- ◆ Promote mechanisms for building social capital among women entrepreneurs, such as cooperatives and mentorship programs.
- ◆ Encourage governments and employers' organisations to include rural women entrepreneurs in decision-making processes.

### 3. Improving Entrepreneurial Skills and Financial Services:

- ◆ Provide gender-sensitive business development services and training to strengthen women entrepreneurs' skills.
- ◆ Promote basic education focusing on numeracy, literacy, and business management.
- ◆ Encourage financial institutions to offer accessible and flexible financial products tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs.
- ◆ Foster coordination among local service providers and financial institutions to improve rural women's access to information and services.

### 4. Integration of Women's Businesses into the Formal Economy:

- ◆ Identify lucrative markets and upgrade sectors to support the transition of women-led enterprises from informal to formal status.
- ◆ Promote green technologies and sustainable practices among women entrepreneurs.
- ◆ Build capacity for market assessment and quality standards adherence.
- ◆ Facilitate linkages between urban and rural women entrepreneurs to enhance market connectivity.
- ◆ Advocate for recognition and support of informal sector workers, gradually transitioning into the formal economy.
- ◆ Develop social security schemes to support informal entrepreneurs, including maternity leave benefits and childcare arrangements<sup>39</sup>.

## Recent trends in women-owned rural enterprises

**1. Digital Transformation:** Women-led rural enterprises are increasingly leveraging digital technologies to access markets, manage finances, and connect with suppliers and customers. Mobile money services, e-commerce platforms, and digital marketing tools are empowering women entrepreneurs to overcome geographical barriers and expand their businesses beyond local markets.

**2. Agribusiness Innovation:** Women in rural areas are embracing innovative agricultural practices and value-added processing techniques to enhance productivity and profitability. From organic farming and precision agriculture to agro-processing and food preservation, women-owned enterprises are diversifying agricultural activities and tapping into high-value markets both locally and internationally.

**3. Social and Environmental Entrepreneurship:** There is a growing emphasis on social and environmental entrepreneurship among women

39. <https://medium.com/qara/sports-industry-report-3244bd253b8>

in rural Africa. Enterprises focusing on renewable energy, waste management, eco-tourism, and sustainable forestry are emerging as drivers of inclusive growth and environmental conservation in rural communities.

- 4. Access to Finance:** Efforts to improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs in rural areas are gaining momentum. Initiatives such as women-focused microfinance programs, village savings and loan associations, and impact investment funds are providing much-needed capital and financial services to support the growth and sustainability of women-owned enterprises.
- 5. Capacity Building and Networking:** Women-led rural enterprises are benefiting from

increased support in terms of capacity building, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Entrepreneurship training programs, business incubators, and women's business networks are equipping women with the skills, knowledge, and connections needed to succeed in business and overcome gender-specific challenges.

- 6. Policy Support and Advocacy:** Governments and development organisations are recognizing the importance of creating an enabling policy environment for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas. Policy reforms aimed at promoting gender equality, land rights, access to markets, and supportive business regulations are creating more favourable conditions for women-owned enterprises to thrive.

## Examples of some of the innovative rural enterprises owned by women in African continent

### Safi Sana Soap (Tanzania)

Founded by entrepreneur Aisha Msemu, Safi Sana Soap is a social enterprise based in rural Tanzania. The company produces handmade soaps using locally-sourced natural ingredients, such as coconut oil and shea butter. Safi Sana Soap not

only provides employment opportunities for women in the community but also promotes hygiene and sanitation through its range of eco-friendly and affordable skincare products.

### Mushroom Magic (Zimbabwe)

Owned and operated by entrepreneur Grace Murevesi, Mushroom Magic is a successful mushroom farming enterprise located in rural Zimbabwe. The farm specialises in the cultivation of gourmet mushrooms, such as oyster and

shiitake varieties, using organic farming methods. Mushroom Magic supplies fresh mushrooms to local restaurants, markets, and supermarkets, offering a sustainable alternative to traditional agricultural crops.

### Green Gold Farms (Ghana)

Founded by entrepreneur Fatima Ali, Green Gold Farms is an innovative agricultural enterprise based in rural Ghana. The farm specialises in the cultivation of moringa trees, which are known for their nutritional

and medicinal properties. Green Gold Farms produces a range of moringa-based products, including supplements, teas, and skincare items, catering to both domestic and international markets.

### Mama's Brew Pub (Kenya)

Started by entrepreneur Mama K, Mama's Brew Pub is a unique rural enterprise located in Kenya. Mama's Brew Pub produces and sells traditional African beverages, including homemade beers and fruit wines, using locally-

sourced ingredients. The pub has become a popular destination for both locals and tourists, offering a taste of authentic African brewing traditions while supporting local farmers and producers.

### Maggie's Organics (Uganda)

Founded by Maggie Kigozi, Maggie's Organics is a successful organic farming enterprise located in rural Uganda. The farm specialises in cultivating a variety of organic fruits and vegetables using sustainable

farming practices. Maggie's Organics not only contributes to local food security but also supplies organic produce to urban markets, promoting healthy eating and environmental sustainability.

### Moringa Connect (Ghana)

Founded by Emily Cunningham and Kwami Williams, Moringa Connect empowers rural farmers, particularly women, by cultivating moringa trees. They process moringa leaves into nutritious powder

and oils, which are sold locally and internationally. This enterprise provides sustainable livelihoods for rural women while promoting environmental conservation.

### Rural Women's Bees (Uganda)

Led by Sarah Nalumansi, Rural Women's Bees is a cooperative of women beekeepers in rural Uganda. They harvest honey and beeswax sustainably, promoting biodiversity and

pollination while generating income for their families. The cooperative also trains other women in beekeeping techniques, empowering them economically.

### Tintsaba (Swaziland)

Founded by Sheila Freemantle, Tintsaba is a social enterprise that empowers rural Swazi women by training them in the art of sisal weaving. These women produce high-quality sisal products,

including baskets and jewellery, which are marketed internationally. Tintsaba provides fair wages and fosters economic independence for rural women.

**Conclusion:** Rural women are increasingly engaging in entrepreneurship, but their significant socio-economic impact and potential often go unnoticed and underutilised. They primarily operate in informal, small-scale businesses with limited productivity and profitability. Implementing supportive policies, services, and business environments tailored to gender needs is essential to encourage the establishment and enhancement of women-led enterprises. This approach can foster the creation of sustainable and productive employment opportunities, promote gender equality, alleviate poverty, and bolster overall economic and social development.

# COUNTRY FOCUS

## RWANDA

### Population

Total – 13,776,698; Urban – 18%, Rural – 82%; (2022)  
(World Bank)

### Ethnic groups

Hutu – 85%, Tutsi – 14%, Twa – 1%, (2002)  
(Encyclopedia Britannica)

### Youth unemployment rate (ages 15–24)

Total – 22%; Male – 20.9%, Female – 23.5%; (2022)  
(World Bank)

### GDP – composition, by sector of origin

- ◆ Agriculture – 24.9%
- ◆ Industry – 21.24%
- ◆ Services – 46.49%

(2022) (Statista)

### Industries

- ◆ Agriculture (coffee, tea, and pyrethrum)
- ◆ Tourism (national parks, gorilla trekking, and cultural tourism)
- ◆ Mining (tin, tungsten, and tantalum)
- ◆ Construction

(2023) (Arise Integrated Industrial Platforms)

Rwanda, situated in east-central Africa below the Equator, is renowned for its stunning landscapes, earning it the moniker "land of a thousand hills." Its capital, Kigali, lies at the heart of the nation along the Rugezi River. Rwanda stands out as a geographically compact nation with one of the densest populations in sub-Saharan Africa, akin to its southern neighbour, Burundi. Rwanda shares

borders with Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) and Lake Kivu to the west<sup>40</sup>.

Although Rwanda has a high population density, the prevailing trend is characterised by significant dispersion. Approximately seventy-five percent of the population resides in rural areas, dwelling in small family clusters spread across hillsides. Initially a small settlement, Kigali, the capital, has expanded over time to become the largest urban centre in the country<sup>41</sup>.

### Economic profile of Rwanda

Rwanda is aiming to attain Middle Income Country status by 2035 and High-Income Country status by 2050. This goal is to be accomplished through a succession of seven-year National Strategies for Transformation (NST1), supported by sectoral strategies aimed at fulfilling the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>42</sup>. Rwanda, with a population of nearly 13 million people and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$10.354 billion, experienced robust economic growth prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, averaging over seven percent annually for the past two decades. However, the outbreak led to the country's first recession since 1994, resulting in a 3.4% GDP contraction in 2020. Despite this setback, Rwanda's economic recovery has shown signs of progress, with the International

40. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Rwanda>

41. Ibid.

42. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>

Monetary Fund (IMF) projecting a rebound to 5.1 percent GDP growth by the end of 2021. The pandemic also contributed to an increase in Rwanda's public debt, which rose from 61% of GDP in 2019 to 71.4% in 2020, with projections indicating a further rise to 81 percent by 2023. This escalation was attributed to reduced revenue, support provided to the private sector and households affected by lockdowns, inflation, and general government expenditures.

Rwanda's strategic initiatives aim to position the country as a regional trade, logistics, and conference hub. These efforts include infrastructure developments such as new international business class hotels, a convention centre, an inland container terminal, and a national carrier, RwandAir. The country's principal exports, including coffee, tea, minerals, and agricultural products, have faced challenges due to reduced global demand during the pandemic. However, Rwanda continues to explore opportunities to diversify its export base and enhance bilateral trade relations, including with the United States.

Rwanda's membership in regional economic blocs such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as well as its participation in agreements like the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), underscore its commitment to regional integration and trade cooperation. Additionally, Rwanda has engaged in bilateral agreements, including a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States. These partnerships play a crucial role in advancing Rwanda's economic objectives and facilitating cross-border trade and investment. The Northern and Central Corridor initiatives, which Rwanda is actively involved in, hold the potential to improve

business operations and transport logistics within the region. While some challenges persist, Rwanda's efforts towards economic recovery and regional cooperation demonstrate its resilience and commitment to sustainable development<sup>43</sup>.

### Women Labour Force Participation in Rwanda

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey, Thematic Report on Gender, July 2020, the labour force participation rate in Rwanda exhibits a notable gender disparity, with female participation lagging behind males by 17.7% points nationally. This gap is more pronounced in rural areas, where female participation is 18.6% points lower than males', compared to a 13.1% point difference in urban areas. Furthermore, data indicates a slight discrepancy between female and male employment in dependent jobs as employees, with a higher percentage of males holding such positions. However, a noteworthy observation is the higher proportion of females engaged in dependent jobs as contributing family workers, exceeding male participation by 5.4% points.

In terms of economic activity, agriculture remains the dominant sector, employing a higher proportion of females compared to males, albeit to a lesser extent among the latter. Female engagement is particularly significant in elementary occupations and services and sales roles. Informal employment is prevalent, with a higher percentage of females in informal jobs, predominantly on daily wage contracts. Despite a higher unemployment rate among females, young females aged 16–30 are disproportionately affected, with an unemployment rate of 22.4% compared to 16.9% among their male counterparts. Labour underutilisation rates are also notably higher among females, reaching 63.7% compared to 47.4% among males. Moreover,

43. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/rwanda-market-overview>



there exists a gender disparity in income from employment, with male employees earning approximately 1.5 times more than their female counterparts.

Regarding gender representation in managerial positions, females remain underrepresented, constituting only 0.9% of employed persons in managerial roles. However, after controlling for differences in job characteristics, the data indicates no significant gender wage gap at the national level, suggesting that observed income disparities result from differences in individual characteristics or job attributes rather than gender discrimination<sup>44</sup>.

### SME sector in Rwanda

The SME Development Policy of 2010 outlines criteria for defining SMEs based on indicators such as net capital investments, annual turnover, and number of employees. According to this policy:

- ◆ A Micro Enterprise is characterised by a maximum of three employees, an annual sales turnover not exceeding 0.3 million, and a net capital investment not surpassing 0.5 million.
- ◆ A Small Enterprise is identified by employing between four to thirty individuals, generating annual sales revenue ranging from 0.3 to 12 million, and net capital investments falling within the range of 0.5 to 15 million.
- ◆ A Medium Enterprise is described as having a workforce of thirty-one to one hundred employees, an annual sales turnover ranging from 12 to 50 million, and net capital investments between 15 to 75 million<sup>45</sup>.

### Definition of SMEs

Category	NET Capital Investment (Million RWF)	Annual Turnover (Million RWF)	Number of Employees
Micro-enterprises	Less than 0.5	Less than 0.3	1 to 3
Small-enterprises	0.5 to 15	0.3 to 12	4 to 30
Medium enterprises	15 to 75	12 to 50	31 to 100
Large Enterprises	More than 75	More than 50	More than 100

Source: SME Development Policy 2010

### Contribution of SME sector to Rwanda's economy

The Ministry of Trade and Industry's (Rwanda) data reveals that MSMEs constitute 98 percent of all businesses in Rwanda, contributing 41% of all private-sector jobs, employing over 2.5 million individuals and contributing around 33% to the country's GDP, underscoring their significant economic value<sup>46</sup>. The Rwandan government has actively fostered an enabling environment for SME growth, implementing measures such as streamlined online business registration within 4 hours, robust investor protection, online payment systems, infrastructure development, reliable energy access, and a corruption-free educated workforce<sup>47</sup>. Moreover, women have played a crucial role in Rwanda's post-genocide recovery, with many widowed women turning to SME entrepreneurship as a means of providing for themselves and their families. This concerted effort has not only facilitated sustainable income generation but has also significantly contributed to employment creation and economic development in Rwanda.<sup>48</sup>

44. <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/file/9087/download?token=lr1l1LKI>

45. [https://kamagram.com/projects/ignite/sme\\_business.pdf](https://kamagram.com/projects/ignite/sme_business.pdf)

46. <https://www.minicom.gov.rw/news-detail/trade-ministry-hails-smes-contribution-to-development#:~:text=Data%20provided%20by%20the%20ministry,it%20worth%20to%20be%20celebrated.>

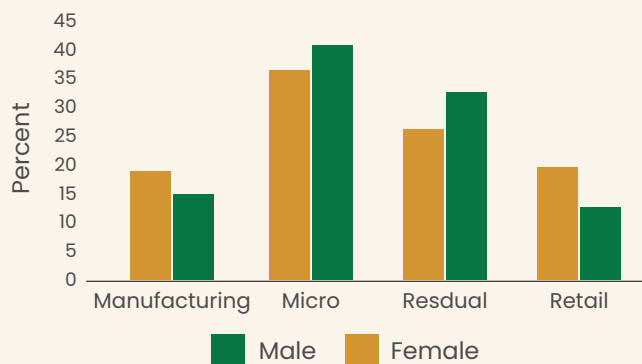
47. Leedom, S. (2016). A look at four promising SMEs in Rwanda (Online Database). Retrieved 20 June, 2019, from <https://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/look-four-promising-smes-rwanda/54362/>

48. Contribution of Small and Medium Enterprises Run by Women in Generating Employment Opportunity in Rwanda Rachel Bayisenge, Hu Shengede, Yves Harimana, Jean Bosco Karega, Margret Lukileni, Muhammad Nasrullah, Hu Xinrui & Beneyo Emmerance Nteziyaremye

## Women representation in SME sector in Rwanda

According to the 2020 FinScope Gender Report, women lead about 52% of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Rwanda (or about 420,000 businesses)<sup>49</sup> with a majority of 58 percent operating within the informal sector, which contributes around 30 percent to the country's GDP. Most of these enterprises, approximately 82 percent, are concentrated in the retail sector, while the remaining portion is divided between services (16 to 17 percent) and manufacturing (1 to 2 percent) sectors. Notably, many women-owned businesses exhibit significant success and scale, and there is a growing trend of Rwandan women venturing into non-traditional sectors like information and communication technologies (ICTs) and fuel trading<sup>50</sup>.

### Enterprise Distribution by Sector and Gender



Source: World Bank, n.d.

## Challenges faced by women in SME sector in Rwanda

1. While women's entrepreneurship flourishes, employment disparities persist. Men are transitioning out of agricultural roles faster than women, with 86.3% of women still employed in agriculture and fisheries, compared to 71.2% of men. Furthermore, women remain underrepresented in

managerial roles, holding only 17% of management positions in manufacturing firms.

2. Women-owned businesses typically earn less on average compared to those owned by men. Data shows that male proprietors earn about 7,000 RWF (approximately US\$ 12.75) more per month than their female counterparts. This earnings gap is even wider in the general labour force, where women workers earn an average of 22,239 Rwf weekly, compared to 42,956 Rwf for men.
3. Rwanda has achieved significant strides in girls' education, meeting MDG#2 concerning parity in primary education with a gender parity rate of 100 percent. However, there is a need for more focus on providing appropriate skills, particularly at higher education levels and in the business sector. Although girls used to have a slight enrollment advantage at the secondary level, the current data indicates a slightly higher enrollment rate for boys, standing at 10.6% compared to 9.5% for girls.
4. Women entrepreneurs cite insufficient management and technical skills, along with limited access to training resources, as barriers to their business success.
5. The modest scale of women-led enterprises could contribute to their reluctance to register formally. Many women manage micro or small businesses, often operating from home to balance work and domestic duties effectively. Registering a business requires time, which may be limited due to women's longer work hours and domestic responsibilities. Additionally, tax considerations associated with registration serve as another disincentive for women entrepreneurs.
6. Female entrepreneurs in Rwanda identify tax rates as a significant business challenge,

49. <https://consumercentrix.com/2022/03/16/celebrating-women-entrepreneurs-in-rwanda/>

50. VOICES of Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda (2008)

despite Rwanda's relatively favourable ranking of 56 in the Paying Taxes indicator of the Doing Business 2009 report. Both male and female entrepreneurs emphasise taxation as a major hurdle. Studies indicate that a complex tax system disproportionately affects small businesses, with women entrepreneurs being especially impacted.

7. Access to finance is a major challenge for both men and women entrepreneurs in Rwanda. Despite the presence of six commercial banks and 200 microfinance institutions in the country, over 30 percent of households have accounts with financial institutions. However, the majority of Rwandans, particularly those in the informal sector where many women's businesses operate, rely on informal sources for credit, with only 27.2 percent accessing credit from formal sources. This highlights a significant barrier to business operation and growth for entrepreneurs, especially women.
8. Rwanda faces significant challenges in trading across borders, ranking 168<sup>th</sup> in the Trading across Borders indicator of the 2009 Doing Business report. Being landlocked, Rwandan producers encounter substantial logistical expenses for both exports and imports. Export processes typically take around 42 days and cost approximately US\$3,275 per container. While poor infrastructure contributes to some delays and costs, about 60 percent of the time is attributed to procedural delays arising from document assembly, customs clearance, and regulatory requirements from technical control agencies<sup>51</sup>.

### Government initiatives to bolster women's participation in SME sector in Rwanda

- 1. Gender mainstreaming in the national strategic planning and development frameworks:** The Rwandan government prioritises gender mainstreaming in its national development

frameworks, including Vision 2050, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS II), Seven-Years Government Program (2010/2017), and the National Strategy for Transformation (NSTI) (2018/19-2023/24). These frameworks provide strategic guidance to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into development efforts. Sector Strategic Plans (SSPs) and District Development Strategies (DDSs) further translate these national strategies into implementable programs at sector and decentralised levels, ensuring a comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming in development initiatives.

- 2. Financing for Gender Equality:** The Rwandan government, in collaboration with partners, has established a Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) program to promote financing for gender equality. This initiative is supported by the Organic Law N° 12/2013/OL, which mandates GRB implementation. A key component of GRB is the Gender Budget Statement (GBS), which integrates gender considerations into planning, budgeting, implementation, and reporting processes. The GBS is a required annex to the budget framework paper submitted annually by all budget agencies to the Ministry of Finance and Planning and parliament for budget negotiations and approval. This mechanism ensures that public resources are utilised to benefit both men and women, as well as boys and girls, across various sectors and initiatives.
- 3. Laws and administrative practices for equal rights and access to economic resources:** The 2013 land law in Rwanda ensures equal rights to land access, ownership, management, and utilisation for both men and women. Additionally, law N° 27/2016 of 08/07/2016 concerning Matrimonial Regimes, Donations, and Successions grants women equal inheritance rights with men.

51. VOICES of Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda (2008)

These legal provisions have significantly expanded women's access and ownership of productive resources, particularly land, empowering them to utilise it for investment purposes. By granting women equal rights to economic resources and access to land and other assets, these laws contribute to achieving SDG 5.5.a's goal of promoting gender equality in resource access and control.





**4. Financial inclusion for women and girls:**

Initiatives include establishing savings and credit cooperatives, known as Umurenge SACCO, at the sector level, as well as intermediary support services provided by institutions such as the Business Guarantee Fund (BDF) and Duterimbere Cooperative (COPEDU). Women's membership in Umurenge SACCO has increased by 5 percentage points, from 61% in 2014 to 66.1% in 2018. Moreover, the Youth and Women Access to Finance Strategy (2012) specifically targets increasing financial capacity among women and youth while promoting entrepreneurship and business skills. These efforts have significantly contributed to enhancing women's financial inclusion, rising from 39% in 2013 to 86% in 2016. Currently, approximately 39.7% of women have savings accounts, and the number of women borrowing from the banking sector has more than tripled, from 10,254 in June 2011 to 38,282 in June 2016. Additionally, women are increasingly benefiting from various guarantee funds to facilitate their access to finance, as illustrated in the accompanying table.

**Percentage share of women and men for the guarantee fund products by BDF:**

**5. Education and training of women:** Rwanda has intensified efforts to enhance women's employment opportunities and skill diversity by strengthening demand-driven Technical and

Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs, aligning with HeForShe Rwanda's commitment to impact. Female enrollment in TVET programs has risen from 41.8% in 2015 to 43.8% in 2018.

Products	Cum. # of projects		Cum. Loan (%)		Cum. Guarantee Amount		
	Total Projects	% Share of Women	% Share of Men	% Share of Women	% Share of Men	% Share of Women	% Share of Men
 Agricultural Guarantee Fund (AGF)	1272	32.1	67.9	20.6	79.4	28.1	78.1
 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	5578	42.3	57.7	42.4	57.6	79.3	55.8
 Rural Investment Facility (RIF)	11257	31.2	68.8	29.6	70.4	43.3	69.8
 Post-Harvest Grant	54	27.8	72.2	10.1	89.9	12.1	89.2

BDF, Administrative Data, 2017<sup>52</sup>

Collaborating with partners, the government mobilises women and girls to join TVET through mentorship, peer-to-peer approaches, and social media engagement, including specialised radio programs like Ni Nyampinga and "Kazi ni Kazi" targeting young girls and women. Furthermore, the National Employment Program (NEP) equips young graduates with start-up kits to facilitate job creation<sup>52</sup>.

52. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Rwanda.pdf>

## Useful resources for SMEs operating in Rwanda

MSME finance providers	Details
<b>Incubators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Kigali Innovation City (KIC) Women Entrepreneurship Hub, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Rwanda Women's Entrepreneurship Development (RWED) Incubation Centre, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Akilah Institute's Entrepreneurship Incubation Centre, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Women's Opportunity Center (WOC), headquarters - Kayonza, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ SheCan! Incubator, headquarters - Kayonza, Rwanda</li> </ul>
<b>Banks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD), headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Equity Bank, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Urwego Bank, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ I&amp;M Bank, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ BPR Atlas Mara, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Bank of Kigali (BK), headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> </ul>
<b>MFI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Vision Fund Rwanda, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Duterimbere IMF, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Umutanguha Finance Company, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ COOPEC Gacuriro, headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> </ul>
<b>PE/VC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ GroFin Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Inkomoko</li> </ul>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Business Development Fund (BDF), headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Umurenge SACCOS</li> <li>◆ Rwanda Development Board (RDB), headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> <li>◆ Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), headquarters - Kigali, Rwanda</li> </ul>

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Please write to us at  
[wasme@wasmeinfo.org](mailto:wasme@wasmeinfo.org)



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Making



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Skill  
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Startup Support



Women  
Entrepreneurship



Incubation



Research &  
Development



Conference/Seminar/  
Trainings/ workshops



Policy Advocacy

# WASME CORNER

From global to local, unleashing potential of SMEs in Africa and other countries by nominating **WASME Permanent Representatives**

WASME is extending its extensive experience and expertise in the key areas such as technology transfer, skill development, quality control, packaging, market access, export, research and development to enhance the sustainability, competitiveness, and growth of SMEs in different countries in technical trades like aerospace, mechanical, electrical, electronics, chemical, textile, food processing, ceramic, and wooden industries etc.

With special focus on SME development in African Sub-continent along with other countries across the globe, WASME has identified and nominated Permanent Representative (PR) that will partner with WASME in implementing SME development and promotion activities. It includes:



Skill Development & EDP programmes, end to end support for business/ enterprise development by facilitating through consultancy, technology transfer, trade facilitation, incubation support, market, export development and research & development activities to SMEs.



Training of the Trainers (TOT) programme for Skill Development project in all technical trades.



Extending support to SMEs in the area of Digital Infrastructure, E-Commerce, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Robotics, Electric Vehicle (EV), Renewable Energy (RE), Software Development & Hardware etc.



GAP study in various fields and expert consultations for incubation including programmes on enhancing export and marketing.



Access to credit and market by preparing sample Detailed Project Report (DPR) by including cost effective & right technology.



Exposure of the global expertise and experience of WASME to SMEs, through B2B meetings, exhibitions/trade fairs, outreach programmes, buyer-seller meetings and activities with other member countries of WASME.



Advising, formulating and implementing schemes and programmes for enterprises at regional and national level.

WASME is open for collaborating with organizations in different countries and work closely to identify critical issues and problems faced by SMEs and draft an action plan to empower and nurture the growth of SMEs in respective country. Please send your interest or query at [dg@wasmeinfo.org](mailto:dg@wasmeinfo.org) and [directorpnd@wasmeinfo.org](mailto:directorpnd@wasmeinfo.org).

# WASME CORNER



The World Association for Small and Medium Enterprises (WASME) recently organised a significant event "Empowering Women through Sports and Enterprise" at the WASME House in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, to celebrate International Women's Day 2024. The event, supported by PIXPO Media, MotoGP BHARAT, Agribid, Athletic Drive, Seva, OSEL, and Svayam, aimed to acknowledge the remarkable achievements of women in sports and entrepreneurship while highlighting the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The inaugural session commenced with a lamp lighting ceremony, symbolising the

illumination of pathways for women's progress and success. Dr. Sanjiv Layek, Executive Secretary of WASME, welcomed the attendees and reiterated WASME's commitment to promoting gender equality in sports and entrepreneurship. Mr. Pushkar Srivastava, CEO of MotoGP Bharat, delivered a keynote speech emphasising the transformative role of sports in empowering women and fostering social change. The Chief Guest, Smt. Laxmi Singh, Commissioner of Police, Gautam Budh Nagar, emphasised the importance of empowering women and creating opportunities for their advancement.



The event also featured esteemed Guests of Honour, including Ms. Anuradha Prasad, CEO of News24, Mr. Shantanu Gupta, Founder of Ramayana School, Dr. R.K. Bharti, Joint Director, MSME-DFO, Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India, Mr. Gebru Teklay, Third Secretary at the Embassy of Ethiopia, New Delhi, and Mr. Madan Mohit Bhardwaj, Founder

of SheWings, who shared valuable insights on women's empowerment.

Two panel discussions were held during the event. The first panel, moderated by Ms. Meha Bhardwaj, focused on the "**State of Women in Sports in India**" and included accomplished

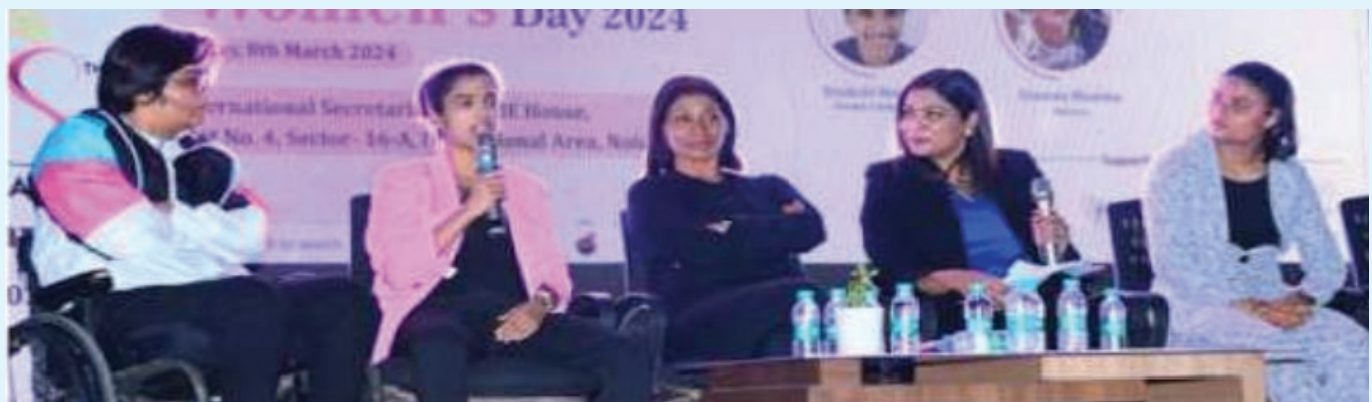
athletes who shared their personal experiences and highlighted the need for greater recognition and support for women athletes. The second panel, moderated by Ms. Meenaxi Singh, explored

**"Initiatives and Programs Supporting Women Sports Entrepreneurs"** and discussed innovative approaches to empowering women in sports entrepreneurship.



The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony honouring ten exemplary women entrepreneurs for their outstanding contributions to society and

the economy. The awardees were recognized for their resilience, innovation, and leadership in their respective fields.



Overall, the event served as a platform for meaningful discussions, networking, and collaboration, reaffirming WASME's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The insightful panel discussions,

keynote speeches, and felicitation ceremony highlighted the remarkable achievements of women in sports and entrepreneurship while inspiring action towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.



# UN SCAN



## WTO

### Canada gives CAD 250,000 to boost safe food exports from developing economies

The Government of Canada is contributing CAD 250,000 (approximately CHF 160,000) to the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) to help developing economies and least developed countries (LDCs) meet international food safety, animal and plant health standards for trade.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said: “We deeply appreciate Canada's support to the STDF, which underscores a shared commitment to assisting developing and least developed countries in meeting crucial international standards for food safety, animal, and plant health. The donation not only bolsters the STDF's vital work but also plays a pivotal role in fostering global trade by ensuring a level playing field. Such collaboration enhances trade opportunities, fosters economic growth, and ensures a safer, more resilient global food system.”

Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay said: “We will continue to work with our partners around the world to support international food safety, animal and plant health, while promoting a fair, transparent and competitive global marketplace. This investment will allow more countries to meet international standards that will help them access trading markets and build a stronger, more resilient future.”

Canada's contribution will help to pilot innovative sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity development projects across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and to build SPS expertise that contributes to safeguarding local public health and facilitating safe trade.

Overall, Canada has contributed close to CHF 7.5 million to the STDF since 2005, including this latest contribution.

Developing economies and least developed countries are encouraged to apply to the STDF for SPS project and project preparation grants. The next deadline for submission of funding proposals is 2 August 2024. Information on how to apply is available [here](#).

To date, the STDF has funded more than 250 projects benefiting LDCs and other developing economies.

The STDF is a global multi-stakeholder partnership to facilitate safe and inclusive trade, established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the WTO, which houses and manages the partnership.

**Source:** [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/pres24\\_e/pr958\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres24_e/pr958_e.htm)

# ABOUT WASME

WASME is an International Non-Governmental Organization that has observer and consultative status with many UN agencies, such as UNIDO, UNCTAD, UNICITRAL, WIPO, ILO, ECOSOC, UNESCAP, ITC, and UNESCO. Additionally, WASME has several inter-governmental and international organization affiliations. It has been striving to stimulate, foster, promote, and coordinate international cooperation for the growth & development of MSMEs.

WASME was founded in 1980 with the goal of supporting MSMEs in member countries. We have achieved this through our strong association with local government bodies, regional authorities, international linkages, civil societies, SMEs, etc. We are continuously working to improve our innovative and sustainable framework so that we can better serve MSMEs around the world.

WASME's vision is further realized and advanced with the consistent support of its large base of member representatives in over 100 countries.



WASME's focus is on MSMEs by providing technology transfer and trade promotion through international/regional conferences/workshops/seminars. WASME also organizes programs on various important issues for the growth of MSMEs such as IPRs, Skill Development, Certification & Accreditation, ICT, Marketing, Global Supply Chain, Technology Transfer, Entrepreneurship development, quality control, AI, Machine learning, robotics, etc.

WASME also publishes monthly "World SME News" which features developments in the MSME sector from around the world, as well as a fortnightly e-newsletter called the "SME e-Bulletin". These two organs act as a way to disseminate information among members and advocate for sustainable and regenerative MSME development and growth.

## CORE ACTIVITIES



Articulating concerns and interests of MSMEs at various national and international level.



Developing relationship between MSMEs in developed and developing countries by encouraging enterprise-to-enterprise cooperation in the area of skill development, technology transfer and export;



International cooperation by networking with MSME promotion organisation at national and international level.



Enlarging collaboration with UN agencies and international organisations.



Capacity building of MSMEs through seminar, EDP and skill development programmes.



Information dissemination on technology, export, marketing, match making etc. in MSME sector.



Carrying out research and studies on national/international issues confronting MSMEs.

# MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

WASME has members in different countries across the world. Member constituents represent industrial promotional organizations of various types and come from highly industrialized, developing and transition economies, as well as least developed countries. WASME has a broad membership spectrum that includes:

## Categories

### General Members

- ◆ Ministries/ Government Departments
- ◆ Public Sector Undertakings/Semi Government Organization
- ◆ Export Promotion Councils/ Trade Councils
- ◆ Financial Institutions/ Banks/ NBFCs
- ◆ SME Promotion Organization/Enterprise Development Organization

**Chambers/ Industry Associations/ SME Associations**

**International & Regional Federations/ Associations**

### Associate Members

- ◆ Corporations, Consulting Firms
- ◆ Partnership/ Proprietorship/ LLP etc
- ◆ Research Institutes/ Technical Institutes/ Universities
- ◆ Individual Consultants/ Experts/ Students
- ◆ NGOs/ SMEs etc.

### Associate Membership-Indian Chapter

Any General Member or Associate Member who is willing to be Permanent Member of WASME

## Benefits to Members

**Collaborating with other members on issues of common interest to enable local SMEs gain access to a variety of advantages, such as:**

- ◆ Making advantage of a vast network of WASME to create new alliances
- ◆ Building a global network and making your voice heard
- ◆ Globally promoting your company using WASME marketing platforms
- ◆ Possessing the chance to organise or present at WASME Global Conferences, Seminars, Exhibitions, events, and programmes
- ◆ Having your interests represented at multilateral organizations including UN organizations, national and international forums etc.
- ◆ Sharing your opinions and ideas in WASME publications
- ◆ Get access to WASME Resource Centre of Knowledge, Experts, Technology, Trade Facilitation, Financial Assistance, Market Linkage etc.
- ◆ Get tailor made services and support

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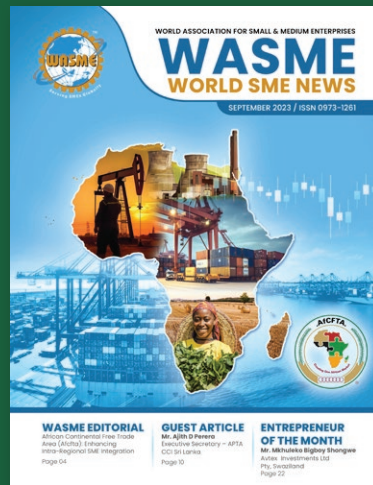
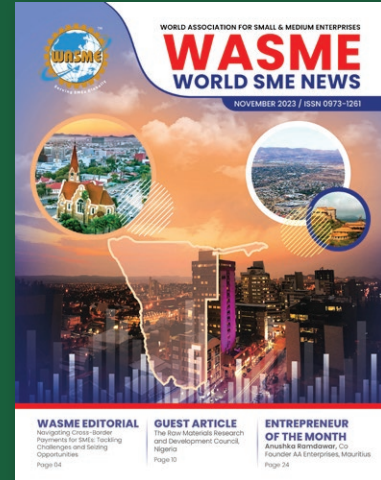
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