

Leave No Woman Behind

Gender and Trade Policy in CARICOM SIDS

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ABSTRACT

The Caribbean women's rights agenda has been framed by the broader agenda of international platforms for action 'adapted to national and regional priorities'. Yet the Caribbean feminist agenda is hardly present in international trade discussions and negotiations. The chapter will examine the development of gender equality/feminism in the Caribbean and its intersections with trade; highlight and examine the current feminist agenda in the Caribbean; and ultimately consider whether and if so how that agenda manifests itself in domestic and regional policy and practice in the Caribbean. It will do so against the backdrop of broader efforts internationally to mainstream gender and will make recommendations about how the Caribbean should approach trade and gender in the future.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Trade policy remains a critical development strategy and is increasingly used to promote gender equality. However, within feminist economist circles, many efforts to engage in gender-responsive trade policies are considered merely decorative. This is because, while trade has increased opportunities for some women, many others find it difficult to participate in trade because of structural gender-based inequalities. Moreover, trade policies and strategies are too often gender-neutral, assuming that if the tide rises and trade opportunities increase, men and women will benefit equally.

As countries which are among the most open, trade-dependent, and vulnerable (both economically and geographically) in the world, the Caribbean region

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presents a fascinating case to explore the history of women in trade, the gender considerations within the existing trade framework, and the implications of these for sustainable development broadly, and gender equality specifically. Among the Americas, the Caribbean sub-region is unique because, unlike other case studies in North and South America featured in this book, this sub-region has not embraced gender mainstreaming in its trade negotiations and agreements. This is the case even though the region still encounters stubborn obstacles to gender equality which negatively impact women's economic empowerment.

Using the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) – a sub-grouping of fifteen Caribbean countries that aim towards economic and social cooperation and integration – as a case study, this chapter assesses the impact of CARICOM's current trade policies on women, considers whether and how gender is mainstreamed in CARICOM trade and development policy, and briefly concludes with recommendations on how gender can be better integrated into CARICOM trade policy.

The chapter is organized as follows: Section 11.2 begins by framing the gender and trade issue by providing a snapshot of CARICOM's trade environment and women's participation in trade and the economy. In Section 11.3, we assess CARICOM's approach to gender equality and women's economic empowerment, including the extent to which gender has been mainstreamed in CARICOM's trade policy and negotiations. We argue that CARICOM Member States must begin to use trade policy to deliver on the promises enshrined under instruments such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Finally, Section 11.4 concludes with some recommendations for achieving gender-responsive and gender-transformative trade policy to spur gender equality and sustainable development in the region.

11.2 BACKGROUND TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CARICOM TRADE

11.2.1 CARICOM Trade Profile

The group of countries of the CARICOM¹ comprises small island developing states (SIDS)² which geographically surround the Caribbean Sea. As they are

¹ The members of CARICOM are Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. See CARICOM – Caribbean Community, 'Member States and Associate Members' <<https://caricom.org/member-states-and-associate-members/>> accessed 29 September 2022.

² This is so even though some CARICOM countries, such as Guyana and Belize, are not islands.

among the most trade-dependent, vulnerable, and open economies of the world, trade constitutes a major cornerstone of their economies, critical to their economic growth and development. For the CARICOM region, two sets of international obligations dominate the trade agenda: those arising under their membership of CARICOM, established in 1973 and revised in 2001, whose aim is to integrate their economies towards a single market and economy through a policy of open regionalism; and those arising from membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO),³ which binds them to a neo-liberal agenda that seeks to liberalize multilateral trade through the gradual dismantling of barriers in the trade of goods and services. Beyond these obligations, CARICOM has also concluded formal trading arrangements with other countries, ranging from partial scope agreements to free trade agreements (FTAs).⁴

Extra-regional trade is dominated by relations with traditional trade partners such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), Canada, and, increasingly, China.⁵ The region is also a net foreign direct investment (FDI) importer, recording an estimated USD 2,794 million in FDI inflows in 2019 compared to USD 763 million in FDI outflows.⁶ Intra-regional trade is poor compared to other regional groupings and accounted for 12.5 per cent of CARICOM's total exports in 2016.⁷

Although most countries in the region have evolved out of agriculture-based economies,⁸ today, most CARICOM economies rely on the services sector. Services account for about 60 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), with tradable services focused predominantly on the tourism and financial services

³ Currently, except Montserrat and the Bahamas, all other CARICOM Member States are members of the WTO. The Bahamas is currently under process to accede to the WTO.

⁴ The FTAs include: the CARIFORUM–EU EPA (2008) and the CARIFORUM–UK EPA (2019); and the partial scope agreements include: CARICOM–Venezuela Trade, Economic, and Technical Cooperation Agreement (1992), CARICOM–Colombia Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (1994), CARICOM–Dominican Republic FTA (1998), CARICOM–Cuba Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (2000), CARICOM–Costa Rica FTA (2004).

⁵ See generally, Daniel Rune, 'Reimagining the U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean' (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2021) <www.csis.org/analysis/reimagining-us-strategy-caribbean> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁶ Chelcee Brathwaite, Alicia Nicholls, and Jan Yves Remy, 'Trading Our Way to Recovery during COVID-19: Recommendations for CARICOM Countries' (SRC 2020) 15 <https://shridathramphalcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SRC-COVID-19-Policy-Document-October-2020_FINAL.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021 (SRC Policy Document).

⁷ CARICOM Secretariat, 'Snapshot of CARICOM's Trade Series 1: CARICOM's Intra-Regional Trade 2011–2016' (CARICOM 2018) <https://statistics.caricom.org/Files/Publications/Snapshot/Series_1_2011–2016.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁸ SRC Policy Document (n 6) 14.

sectors. According to some estimates, CARICOM service exports in 2018 amounted to USD 14.36 billion, of which 80 per cent or USD 11.55 billion was from travel services.⁹ However, countries such as Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago also depend on the oil and gas and mining sectors. Also due to their larger land masses, such countries depend on agriculture. For the majority of CARICOM countries where agricultural export trade remains stagnant, imports account for 80 per cent of food in the region, and the food import bill was valued in excess of USD 5 billion in 2019.¹⁰ Manufacturing for export remains a small proportion of the traded sectors, although energy-rich Trinidad and Tobago is something of an outlier for the region, with manufacturing accounting for 19 per cent of GDP.¹¹

CARICOM's trade performance over the past four decades has declined or stagnated, and it is generally considered one of the least competitive regions in the world. Intra-regional CARICOM trade, predominantly in merchandise, amounted to 2 per cent of GDP in the mid-1980s, 4 per cent of GDP in the 1990s, and then plateaued in the 2000s. Additionally, the region's most prominent service industry, tourism, records a mere 5 to 10 per cent receipts from intra-regional tourism. This trade performance compares poorly with that of regions such as the EU, with trade amounting to 13 to 20 per cent of GDP.¹² The region's susceptibility to natural disasters as well as its chronic indebtedness means that governments are constantly struggling to meet public expenditure on basic social systems like health and education, which impacts marginalized and low-income groups. Most recently, the economic shutdowns and global supply disruptions occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic have also wreaked havoc on fragile economies, and according to the UN World Travel Organization (UN WTO), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 71 per cent decline in international arrivals globally by the end of 2020.¹³ In comparison, the Caribbean recorded a 60 per cent decline in tourist arrivals and 60 per cent reduction in receipts from tourism.¹⁴

⁹ CARICOM Secretariat, 'CARICOM's Statistics on International Trade in Services 2012–2018' (CARICOM 2021) <http://statistics.caricom.org/Files/Publications/Trade%20in%20Services/TIS_2012–2018.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

¹⁰ SRC Policy Document (n 6) 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 14.

¹² See OECD, 'Special Feature: The Caribbean Small States' <www.oecd.org/dev/americas/LEO-2019-Chapter-6.pdf> accessed 13 September 2022.

¹³ UN WTO, 'Global and Regional Tourism Performance' <www.unwto.org/tourism-data/international-tourism-and-covid-19>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

CARICOM's economic and climatic vulnerabilities have serious repercussions for vulnerable groups, especially women. To paraphrase the UN Women COVID-19 Impact Summary Report, these intersecting vulnerabilities mean women are more exposed than men to negative shocks like COVID-19.¹⁵

11.2.2 A Snapshot of CARICOM Women's Participation in Trade

The Caribbean trade liberalization policy has not been sensitive to the differentiated impact on men and women and has failed to take into account the historical and current profile of women as producers, traders, and consumers. Although statistics are hard to come by, women in the region were traditionally involved in agricultural production, especially during and after the colonial period.¹⁶ For instance, in many islands of the Eastern Caribbean, when banana production shifted from plantations to smaller scale farms, it was women who managed these smaller holdings while caring for families. The loss of preferential trading arrangements therefore resulted in a significant decline in the women's livelihoods, with a 1999 study by Caribbean Association Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) confirming that the living conditions of rural women in the Eastern Caribbean had worsened over the previous five years because of the decline in banana prices.¹⁷ Since the 1990s, most women in smallholdings participate in intra-regional trade, focusing on products such as onions and other cash crops. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this has impacted food security and nutrition on many islands, where women's subsistence farming has declined, and women often rely on cheaper processed imports to feed their families.

Another feature of women's participation in trade-related sectors across CARICOM has been their employment in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), especially in Jamaica in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as in Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti.¹⁸ Overall, these sectors did not result in sustainable economic growth or empowerment for

¹⁵ Tara Padmore, 'Summary Status of Women and Men Report – The Impacts of COVID-19' (UN Women 2021) <<https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2021/3/summary-report—status-of-women-and-men-in-covid-19>> accessed 16 December 2021.

¹⁶ Tessa Barry, Levi Gahman, Adaye Greenidge, and Atiyah Mohamed, 'Wrestling with Race and Colonialism in Caribbean Agriculture: Toward a (Food) Sovereign and (Gender) Just Future' (2020) 109 *Geoforum* 106–110.

¹⁷ CAFRA, *Gender and Trade in the Caribbean*, 15 November 2002 <www.cafra.org/article391.html> accessed 30 May 2023.

¹⁸ See IDB-CARICOM Report, 'Progress and Challenges of the Integration Agenda' (IDB/CARICOM 2020) 57 <<https://publications.iadb.org/en/caricom-report-progress-and-challenges-integration-agenda>> accessed 16 December 2021.

women, as companies exploited low wages without improving skill sets. In Jamaica, for example, with the closing of the EEZs, 40,000 people, mostly women, were left without employment. The tourism sector effectively absorbed many of these women and tourism has therefore served as a social safety net of a sort for employment and Caribbean exports, generally benefiting women in the lower socio-economic classes.¹⁹

A consequence of the demise of agriculture was an expansion in exportable services from the region since the beginning in the 1990s, a sector which is predominantly run by women today. Service exports of CARICOM Member States totalled USD 14.36 billion in 2018,²⁰ and an estimated 87 per cent of employed women in Caribbean small states are involved in the services industry.²¹ While difficult to measure in Caribbean SIDS, as noted in Section 11.2.1, the main sources of services exported in the Caribbean are from tourism and related sectors, more specifically travel.²² Travel comprised 80 per cent of CARICOM's total service exports in 2018,²³ with the largest regional service exporters being the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Barbados.²⁴ Women continue to occupy lower paid positions in that sector²⁵ and are particularly susceptible to external shocks. For instance, according to one study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,²⁶ on account of COVID-19, the first

¹⁹ ILO, 'ILO: Tourism Recovery Is Key to Overcoming COVID-19 Labour Crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean' (ILO Press Release 30 June 2021) <www.ilo.org/caribbean/newsroom/WCMS_809331/lang-en/index.htm> accessed 16 December 2021; George Gmelch, *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism* (Indiana University Press 2nd ed. 2012).

²⁰ CARICOM Secretariat, 'CARICOM's Statistics on International Trade in Services 2012–2018' (n 9).

²¹ See ILOSTAT Database <<https://ilostat.ilo.org/>> accessed 16 December 2021. Figures represent 2018 average across thirteen Caribbean small states.

²² CEDA, 'Caribbean Export Outlook 2016' (CEDA 2017) <https://issuu.com/caribbeanexport/docs/caribbean_export_outlook_2016> accessed 16 December 2021.

²³ CARICOM Secretariat, 'CARICOM's Statistics on International Trade in Services 2012–2018' (n 9).

²⁴ CEDA, 'Caribbean Export Outlook 2016' (n 22); CARICOM Secretariat, 'CARICOM's Statistics on International Trade in Services 2012–2018' (n 9).

²⁵ Annelle Bellony, Alejandro Hoyos, and Hugo Ñopo, 'Gender Earnings Gaps in the Caribbean: Evidence from Barbados and Jamaica' (IADB 2010) <<https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Gender-Earnings-Gaps-in-the-Caribbean-Evidence-from-Barbados-and-Jamaica.pdf>> accessed 16 December 2021.

²⁶ See UN ECLAC Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, 'International Trade: A Means to a Recovery with Gender Equality?' (ECLAC Notes No. 31, 24 February 2021), <https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/note_for_equality_gender_and_trade_n31.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

half of 2020 saw regional exports of services fall in value terms by 30 per cent, explained mainly by the halt in tourism from April 2020 onward, which resulted in a 53 per cent decrease in income on the region's travel account. The situation is particularly serious for Caribbean women, 17 per cent of who were employed in the tourism sector pre-pandemic, compared to 9.7 per cent of men.²⁷

Other sectors with export potential in the region, including agri-business, continue to be dominated by men. While there is some data that women-owned micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are increasingly creating a niche for themselves as entrepreneurs in small community-based or national markets, there are some worrying trends. As of 2015, only 8 per cent of women in the Caribbean were considered entrepreneurs, in comparison to 19 per cent of men. Most women entrepreneurs are managers of themselves only and are located within low growth sectors because they are predominantly in the hospitality sectors of restaurants, hotels, and retail. This can limit their ability to engage effectively in exports as they are outcompeted by larger and more agile firms producing cheaper products. Additionally, very few female entrepreneurs have been able to engage effectively in exports.²⁸ Some studies note that women do not have as much access to financing as men entrepreneurs do, one of the factors which is responsible for the slow growth of female entrepreneurs' enterprises.²⁹ For instance, it is estimated that angel investors, seed capital, and venture capital funds are available to 1 per cent of female entrepreneurs in comparison to 7 per cent of their male counterparts.³⁰ Recent anecdotal and empirical data has also demonstrated that many women entrepreneurs do not necessarily enter entrepreneurship because of their love for entrepreneurial endeavours, but rather out of necessity – when they no longer have steady employment and create a business to

²⁷ Authors' own calculations of average employment in the accommodation and food industry (used as a proxy for the tourism industry) across Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Data sourced from latest available year national Labour Force Surveys.

²⁸ InfoDev, 'Profiling Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs: Business Environment, Sectoral Constraints and Programming Lessons' (World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank 2017); Sylvia Dohnert, Gustavo Crespi, and Alessandro Maffioli (eds.), *Exploring Firm-Level Innovation and Productivity In Developing Countries: The Perspective of Caribbean Small States* (IADB 2017).

²⁹ InfoDev, 'Profiling Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs' (n 28); Dohnert et al., *Exploring Firm-Level Innovation and Productivity In Developing Countries* (n 28).

³⁰ Irene Arias Hofman, 'More Female Entrepreneurs Please' (Caribbean DEVtrends+ 5 December 2019) <<https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/more-female-entrepreneurs-please/>> accessed 16 December 2021.

secure a livelihood for themselves and their families. Enterprise Surveys showed that 32 per cent of women started businesses due to a lack of employment opportunities.³¹ Other women enter entrepreneurship for the flexibility it affords them to manage their care responsibilities, not because of market signals or because of a desire to grow their businesses and take on additional risk.³²

A final feature of women's participation in the labour market is its informality. Most women-owned businesses are not registered and such businesses constitute approximately 58.7 per cent of women's total employment in the region.³³ Informal employment refers to income-generating activities occurring outside of the formal and normative regulatory framework of the state (i.e., not formally registered, operating outside labour laws and regulations, often not paying income taxes, and often not contributing to, or covered by, the state's formal social protection framework). Common informal jobs include domestic workers, vendors, 'casual' labourers, construction workers, and hospitality staff. Operating outside of the state's social safety net, including labour regulations (such as protection from unfair dismissal) and social protection, informal workers are more vulnerable to economic precarity and instability.

For many women managing households on their own, informal care work has not only been integral to them and their families' livelihoods, but to Caribbean economies as a whole. Efforts to support the transition from women entrepreneurs in the informal sector to the formal sector have not been successful. Some reports indicate that women entrepreneurs in the formal economy prefer the autonomy of the informal space – for example, they can set their own working hours. Also, research from some countries demonstrates that there can be low trust in the taxes and regulatory burden of formalization³⁴ translating into the benefits of a well-resourced contributory social protection system for them individually.³⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² Carol Ferdinand (ed.), 'Jobs, Gender and Small Enterprises in the Caribbean: Lessons from Barbados, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago' (2001) SEED Working Paper No. 19 <www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_emp/-emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_113771.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

³³ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture* (ILO 3rd ed. 2018).

³⁴ IDB, 'Estimating the Size of the Informal Economy in Caribbean States' (IDB 2017) <<https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Estimating-the-Size-of-the-Informal-Economy-in-Caribbean-States.pdf>> accessed 16 December 2021.

³⁵ Carla Marques, Carmem Leal, João Ferreira, and Vanessa Ratten, 'The Formal–Informal Dilemma for Women Micro-Entrepreneurs: Evidence from Brazil' (2018) 14 *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy* 5.

Finally, women in the Caribbean experience trade policy as consumers and heads of single-parent households. In Jamaica, 37 per cent of children were reported as having no father figure in the home; and in 2018, 45.6 per cent of households were women-led.³⁶ In Barbados, 56 per cent of households with a young person are headed by a woman, compared to 44 per cent headed by a man.³⁷ In Trinidad and Tobago, 32 per cent of households are headed by women.³⁸ Women's roles as primary caregivers means they are often responsible for food, security, and nutrition.³⁹ With declining economic fortunes in many of the islands, cheaper imported food – often less nutritious than local produce – has provided the means for many women to feed their families. This has contributed to the region's high import food bill and translates into limited expenditure and fiscal space for governments to support robust social programmes such as subsidized care, health, and education that impact women and their families.

It is therefore evident that women in the labour force are not effectively participating in CARICOM's trade, or benefiting from the enhanced economic opportunities that access to external markets provide. Incentivizing and supporting women to participate in trade presents an opportunity to enhance women's economic empowerment, and leverage women's productive capabilities for regional development.

11.3 THE GENDER AND TRADE AGENDAS IN CARICOM

11.3.1 *Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment in CARICOM*

CARICOM countries have made significant gains in achieving some of the indicators of gender equality. For example, most gender-based discriminatory

³⁶ PIOJ and STATIN, 'Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2018' (PIOJ/STATIN 2018).

³⁷ UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean and Barbados Ministry of Youth and Community Empowerment, 'Generation Unlimited: The Wellbeing of Young People in Barbados Summary Findings' (UNICEF 2020) <www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/2171/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20Barbados%20factsheet.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

³⁸ Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Central Statistical Office and UNICEF, 'Trinidad and Tobago Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011, Key Findings & Tables' (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Central Statistical Office and UNICEF).

³⁹ Lotsmart Fonjong, 'The Role of Women's Nutrition Literacy in Food Security: The Case of Africa' (August 2022) Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief No. 572; Preety Gadhoke, "'We're Changing Our Ways": Women as Primary Caregivers and Adaptations of Food and Physical Activity Related Health Behaviors in Semi-Rural and Rural American Indian/Alaska Native Households', Conference: 141st APHA Annual Meeting and Exposition 2013, November 2013, November 2013, Project: OPREVENT Project.

legislation has been removed;⁴⁰ there are equal numbers of girls and boys in education; and women tend to be more likely to pursue tertiary education than men. Nonetheless, stubborn obstacles to gender equality remain which impact women's economic empowerment. These include high levels of gender-based violence,⁴¹ poor integration of women's leadership in organizations, unemployment⁴² and inadequate access to resources, lack of formal recognition of unpaid care work burdens,⁴³ lack of state-supported measures to address the burden of unpaid care such as robust parental leave policies or subsidized child-care,⁴⁴ and low numbers of women entrepreneurs.⁴⁵

The women's rights agenda in CARICOM has gone through a number of movements. Indeed, the early feminist agenda in the region was framed within the broader agenda of international platforms for voting rights and women's rights to public spheres within the context of independence and anti-racist movements for action 'adapted to national and regional priorities'.⁴⁶ The international community, including independent Caribbean states, recognized the need for a convention focused on the need to address women's substantive right to equality and, in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁴⁷ was signed into force. All CARICOM SIDS have ratified the CEDAW, which is a legally binding treaty.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, women's inequalities were addressed through efforts to integrate women into national economies and create equal opportunities for women. This was done successively under the 'Women in Development' approach, followed by a 'Women and Development' approach, and thereafter a 'Gender and Development' approach.⁴⁸ The Women in

⁴⁰ Notable exceptions include the countries where marital rape remains legal.

⁴¹ UN Women, CARICOM and CDB, 'Caribbean Women Count: Ending Violence against Women and Girls Data Hub' (UN Women, CARICOM, CDB n.d.) <<https://caribbeanwomenscount.unwomen.org/>> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁴² Padmore, 'Summary Status of Women and Men Report' (n 15).

⁴³ No country in CARICOM currently has data to measure SDG indicator 5.4.1 on unpaid domestic and care work.

⁴⁴ Deborah Budlender and Isiuwa Iyehen, 'Status of Women and Men Report: Productive Employment and Decent Work for All' (UN Women 2019) <<https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2019/10/status-of-women-and-men-report-productive-employment-and-decent-work-for-all#view>> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁴⁵ InfoDev, 'Profiling Caribbean Women Entrepreneurs' (n 28).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, 1249 UNTS 13 (Not reproduced in ILM).

⁴⁸ Gabriel Hosein, Trícia Basdeo-Gobin, and Lydia Gény, 'Gender Mainstreaming in National Sustainable Development Planning in the Caribbean' (ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for

Development approach prominent in the 1970s represents the groundbreaking recognition that women should be economically empowered through small-scale projects as their productive contributions support economic growth and development. While pivotal, this approach ignored the structural barriers that contributed to gender inequalities and therefore ushered in the Women and Development approach in the 1980s which better addressed these structural inequalities. Women and Development emphasized women's role in the development process more broadly, along with the intersectionality of vulnerabilities along the lines of class, ethnicity, gender, etc. The Gender and Development approach that followed in the 1990s shifted this thinking from being a women's issue to a gender issue, deconstructing gender-neutral development discourse and supporting a 'gender lens' and gender mainstreaming across all social, economic, and political work.

The Caribbean region participated in these movements, through the CAFRA – a non-governmental feminist umbrella organization advocating for gender equality and women's rights across the region. CAFRA, the Women and Development Unit (WAND), established in August 1978 in the context of the UN Decade for Women and Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), and a network of feminist scholars, researchers, and activists from the Global South working for economic and gender justice and sustainable and democratic development established in 1984, were significant in galvanizing CARICOM's participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where countries agreed to twelve critical areas of concern under the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), one of which involved Women and the Economy.⁴⁹

CAFRA's influence has waned somewhat since the 1980s and 1990s, and today the women's movement in CARICOM is not as cohesive as it once was. Many feminist activists now operate as individual activists or within informal groups, most focusing on gender-based violence prevention and response. The lack of funding to feminist and women's organizations has often been cited for

the Caribbean 2020), 14 <www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/publication/files/45086/S1901209_en.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁴⁹ Strategic Objective F2 speaks specifically to trade, noting that governments should take action 'to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade', and offering a clear roadmap to governments and private sector organizations to take the necessary steps to ensure equal access to trade, to 'create non-discriminatory support services, including investment funds for women's businesses, and to target women, particularly low-income women, in trade promotion programmes'.

the decline.⁵⁰ However, since 2018 there has been a significant increase in funding for feminist and women-led organizations, through the Government of Canada-supported Women's Voice and Leadership Program⁵¹ and the European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative.⁵² However, despite the increased funding to feminist and women's organizations generally, the civil society space has tended to focus more on issues such as gender-based violence, women's leadership, and political participation, while women's economic empowerment has been less prioritized by these organisations.

Today, beyond a general rejection of trade liberalization, the specifics regarding the gender and trade agenda amongst the network of Caribbean women's and gender equality organizations are focused on creating an enabling environment for women to equitably engage in trade. This includes the promotion of gender-responsive social protection measures such as subsidized childcare, paid parental leave, and equal pay for equal work. The private sector and international community have engaged in supporting women-owned businesses through skills strengthening and increased access to financing, as well as networking opportunities. The Compete Caribbean project by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the WeEmpower project by the Caribbean Export Development Agency are examples of this approach aimed at strengthening women-owned businesses' capacities for trade. Similarly, the SheTrades Outlook policy tool developed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) captures new trade and gender data to better inform policy and programme formulation to support women in business. Through this platform, countries can identify data gaps and areas for potential reform and discover good practices.⁵³ Coverage for SheTrades Outlook includes

⁵⁰ Alicia Wallace, 'Challenges in Activism to End Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean' (FAR 6 December 2020), <<https://feministallianceforrights.org/blog/2020/12/16/challenges-in-activism-to-end-gender-based-violence-in-the-caribbean/>> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁵¹ Announced in July 2017 under Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, it is designed to meet the needs of local women's organizations in developing countries. The Caribbean programme has a maximum contribution of CAD 4,800,000. See <www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/vvl_projects-projets_vlf.aspx?lang=eng> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁵² The €500 million EU and UN global Spotlight Initiative is being implemented through six Caribbean country programmes and one regional programme. Support to women's organizations is one of the six guiding pillars of the Spotlight Initiative. See Spotlight Initiative, 'Where We Work' <www.spotlightinitiative.org/where-we-work?region=153> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁵³ Story-editor, 'Trinidad Launches National SheTrades Hub' (*St. Kitts Observer* 21 September 2020) <www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com/trinidad-launches-national-shetrades-hub/> accessed 16 December 2021.

several Caribbean countries, such as Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago was the first country in the Caribbean to officially launch an ITC SheTrades Hub in October 2020.⁵⁴ The platform offers opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago's women-owned MSMEs to access global supply chains and trade which is in line with Trinidad's trade policy's commitment to remove obstacles to the full participation of women in the development of trade.

11.4 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN CARICOM TRADE POLICY AND NEGOTIATIONS

Although feminist economists have for a long time advocated for more gender-responsive approaches to trade,⁵⁵ gender has not traditionally been part of the official trade agenda at the WTO or in other trade-related fora. But the situation is changing. Since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda – an integral part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda – has explicitly made the connection between gender and international trade. In 2016, at the XIV United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, UNCTAD members called for a continuation of work on the link between gender equality and trade, and most recently at the XV UNCTAD Conference in Barbados, an inaugural Gender and Development Conference was hosted.⁵⁶ Although there is no formal committee on gender and trade at the WTO, some progress has been made in getting WTO members to begin discussion on the topic. At the 2017 WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, 118 WTO members signed a Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment,⁵⁷ which promotes the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data,⁵⁸ sharing

⁵⁴ MTL_WebAdmin, 'The SheTrades T&T Movement Is Here' (Ministry of Trade and Industry 29 October 2020) <<https://tradeind.gov.tt/shetrades-tt-launch-mr/>> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁵⁵ Drucilla Barker, 'Beyond Women and Economics: Rereading "Women's Work"' (2005) 30(4) *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2189–2209.

⁵⁶ UNCTAD, 'The Inaugural Gender and Development Forum at the Fifteenth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Bridgetown Declaration', TD/INF.71 (7 October 2021).

⁵⁷ WTO, 'Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade Outlines Actions to Empower Women' <www.wto.org/english/news_e/news17_e/mc11_12dec17_e.htm> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* para. 3.

of country experiences and good practices,⁵⁹ and promotion of collaboration to raise the profile of the link between trade and gender. In anticipation of the 12th Ministerial Conference in Geneva, WTO members prepared a Joint Ministerial Declaration on the Advancement of Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment within Trade,⁶⁰ in which they agreed to continue improving the collection of gender-segregated data,⁶¹ use research to inform trade policies,⁶² explore women's empowerment issues,⁶³ promote collaboration between gender and trade,⁶⁴ and discuss the impact of COVID-19 on women. However, this declaration was never adopted.

The global recognition that gender equality is an indispensable component of the achievement of the UN SDGs – Goal 5 is to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' – has no doubt also contributed to the mainstreaming of gender in international economic policy, including trade policy. While there is no specific reference to trade within SDG 5, a closer look at the targets and indicators associated with it illustrate how progressive gender-related policies can lead to economic empowerment, increase their outcomes as workers and owners, and increase access to technology, all of which are linked to topics of international trade. This particularly stands for the most vulnerable, including those who are subjects of economic exploitation, unpaid care workers, and beneficiaries of public service expenditure.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid para. 1.

⁶⁰ WTO, 'Joint Ministerial Declaration on the Advancement of Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment within Trade', WT/MIN(21)/4 (10 November 2021) <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/FE_Search/FE_S_S009-DP.aspx?language=E&CatalogueIdList=278631,278632,278621&CurrentCatalogueIdIndex=1&FullTextHash=371857150&HasEnglishRecord=True&HasFrenchRecord=True&HasSpanishRecord=False> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁶¹ Ibid para. 1.

⁶² Ibid para. 2.

⁶³ Ibid para. 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid para. 4.

⁶⁵ See for instance, Target 5.1: 'End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere'; Target 5.2: 'Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation'; Target 5.4: 'Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection'; Target 5.5: 'Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life'; Target 5.a: 'Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws'; Target 5.b: 'Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women'; Target 5.c: 'Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels'.

Despite the changes at the international levels, not all countries have adapted and streamlined gender policy into the development and trade agendas. Some countries, such as Sweden and Canada, explicitly acknowledge the role trade policy has in contributing to gender equality and have led the way through far-reaching agreements. For example, Canada's FTAs with Israel and Chile reaffirm its gender-related obligations under international agreements such as those recommended the CEDAW.⁶⁶ Additionally, Canada has committed to adopt policies, regulations, and best practices for gender equality nationally.⁶⁷ Sweden has created a national policy space which prioritizes gender mainstreaming and allows better articulation of the country's negotiating position on gender-related matters. For instance, Sweden has since 1994 required that all national statistics be disaggregated by sex, budgeting processes are informed by gender equality agendas, public sector agencies and officials are trained in gender equality, and various anti-discriminatory legislations are enacted.⁶⁸ Within CARICOM, by comparison, much work remains to be done in better streamlining gender into trade agreements and sustainable development policies, and in particular addressing some of the gender inequalities that persist in the region.

According to a 2020 study conducted by the UN ECLAC on the status of gender mainstreaming in the sustainable development policy frameworks of twenty-nine Caribbean States, as of 2019 the most frequent themes addressed in the national development plans have been: quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), climate action and peace (SDG 13), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 19). One of the weakest linkages to the SDG goals, however, includes gender equality (SDG 5).⁶⁹ Out of the twenty-nine Caribbean Member States reviewed, eight have national development plans that mainstream gender. These states include Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the

⁶⁶ Canada–Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) was modernized in 2014 to include provisions on gender in chapter 13. See Government of Canada, 'Canada–Israel Free Trade Agreement' <www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/israel/fta-ale/text-texte/toc-tdm.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=2.4276787.1009792136.1642363194-531467218.1642363194> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁶⁷ Jose-Antonio Monteiro, 'Gender Related Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements' (2018) WTO Staff Working Paper ERSD-2018-15, 20–22 <www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd201815_e.pdf> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁶⁸ EIGE, 'Sweden – Gender Mainstreaming' <<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/sweden>> accessed 29 September 2022.

⁶⁹ Hosein et al., 'Gender Mainstreaming in National Sustainable Development Planning in the Caribbean' (n 48) 14.

Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. However, as the UN ECLAC study demonstrates, the measures in the country's national development plans are limited to the areas of gender-based violence, education, and employment, and are not integrated in 'transformational ways', especially when addressing cross-cutting issues.⁷⁰ As highlighted by UN ECLAC, the trade sector especially continues to remain virtually gender-neutral despite its widely accepted gender dimensions. The study also highlighted the fact that eleven Caribbean states have existing gender equality policies or related action plans. Upon further analysis, out of these eleven states, gender equality policies or related action plans in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and especially Grenada have addressed trade in different ways. However, oftentimes these policies do not reference each other; nor are there robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the success of policy implementation.

CARICOM's incorporation of gender provisions into its trade agreements has also been underwhelming. Although some CARICOM Member States – Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines – have signed up to the 2017 Buenos Aires Declaration, as a region it is among the lowest performing in terms of the incorporation of gender provisions.

A 2021 Study by UN Women considered CARICOM's incorporation of gender in its trade agreements by reviewing all six free trade and partial scope agreements which are currently in force.⁷¹ The 'gender-inclusive lens' was applied to the agreements, using the ITC's gender-responsive trade agreement survey tool⁷² to determine the extent to which the agreements' texts were sensitive to informed or committed to gender equality. CARICOM's FTAs were analysed and found to be 'completely or close to gender-blind or gender-neutral' because they failed to mainstream gender concerns.⁷³ The reasons given by the authors of the UN Women study for the poor gender mainstreaming in trade agreements included that: trade officials were unsure of the protocols they needed to follow to allow their negotiations to advocate for gender-responsive trade agreements; there are limited meaningful

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Lebrechta N. O. Hesse Bayne and Robin Haarr (eds.), *Role of Gender in CARICOM and CARIFORUM Regional Trade Agreements* (UN Women 2021) <<https://caribbean.eclac.org/publications/role-gender-caricom-and-cariforum-regional-trade-agreements>> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁷² See ITC, 'Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements' (2020) <<https://intracen.org/media/file/2411>> accessed 13 September 2022.

⁷³ Hesse Bayne and Haarr, *Role of Gender in CARICOM and CARIFORUM Regional Trade Agreements* (n 71).

consultations with national or regional offices responsible for gender-related matters, which denies the opportunity to adequately understand as well as subsequently prioritize gender concerns in trade negotiations; and insufficient allocation of resources to properly monitor and evaluate the implementation of trade agreements and their provisions which may have gender implications.⁷⁴

The most expansive reference in existing agreements, the EU–CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement⁷⁵ (also UK–CEPA), includes two gender equality considerations in the agreement’s text. One such commitment is in Article 191, under which the parties reaffirm their commitment to the internationally recognized core labour standards, as defined by the relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, in particular under the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-Up (1998). The parties have also committed to promote the development of international trade in a way that is conducive to full and productive employment and decent work for all, including men, women, and young people. Another commitment is found in Article 5, wherein parties have undertaken to review the operation of the Agreement to ensure that it is implemented for the benefit of men as well as women. While the commitment for impact assessment might be considered a best practice provision, its utility is undervalued by the fact that the parties do not commit to any affirmative action in this respect, in the form of either cooperation or a binding commitment. They also do not identify how this review or impact assessment may be carried out and whether it would be an *ex ante* or *ex post* assessment.⁷⁶

A promising prospect for a more gender-responsive trade agreement has been provided in the recently concluded post-Cotonou EU/African–Caribbean–Pacific Partnership Agreement.⁷⁷ While not formally a trade agreement, it does provide the basis for future economic relations and a partnership between the EU and Caribbean. The pact does include more specific gender provisions than any of the existing agreements to which CARICOM states are party. The preamble, for instance, reaffirms that gender

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Economic Partnership Agreement between the CARIFORUM States, of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part (28 October 2008).

⁷⁶ Countries can use the UNCTAD’s toolbox on trade and gender for conducting these assessments. More details at UNCTAD, ‘UNCTAD Trade and Gender Tool Box’ (UNCTAD 2017) <<https://unctad.org/webflyer/unctad-trade-and-gender-tool-box>> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁷⁷ EU African–Caribbean–Pacific Partnership Agreement, 2021.

equality and empowerment of women and girls are essential to achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Moreover, a specific provision (Article 10) addresses gender equality and in the Caribbean Protocol, Article 48 specifically ‘reinforces women’s economic rights, including by facilitating their access to economic opportunities, financial services, enabling technology, employment and the control and use of land and other productive assets’.

Beyond CARICOM, other Caribbean states have demonstrated more expansive approaches to trade and gender. For instance, in the EU-Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT),⁷⁸ the parties have committed to non-discrimination based on sex as one of the main objectives of the agreement. In United States–Dominican Republic–Central America FTA (CAFTA-DR),⁷⁹ Parties have reserved a right to craft government procurement schemes that may be favourable for certain groups, including women.⁸⁰ Given that public procurement accounts for around one-fifth of global GDP⁸¹ and the relative underrepresentation of women entrepreneurs,⁸² it is a positive development that CARICOM states could well embrace.

At the institutional level, some work has been done by CARICOM to advance gender concerns, but this has focused on social and health-related themes and addressing sexual violence against women and girls. In particular, the 2005 CARICOM Plan of Action⁸³ for gender equity and equality has provided a regional framework to guide the process of gender mainstreaming in priority areas such as education with a focus on building human capital, and health with a focus on HIV/AIDS and poverty. The economy including trade was included as the third priority area, but it is unclear what has emerged from that effort.

⁷⁸ European Commission, ‘The Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT)’ (European Commission) <https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs-4/international-affairs/origin-goods/general-aspects-preferential-origin/overseas-countries-and-territories-oct_en> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁷⁹ CAFTA-DR (Dominican Republic-Central America FTA).

⁸⁰ Annex 9.1.2(b)(i) of Chapter 9 ‘Government Procurement’ of the CAFTA-DR (Dominican Republic–Central America FTA).

⁸¹ ITC, ‘Empowering Women through Public Procurement’ (2014) <www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/Women%20procurement%20guide-final-web.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

⁸² Ibid; Erin Kepler and Shane Scott, ‘Are Male and Female Entrepreneurs Really That Different?’ (2007) Office of Advocacy Small Business Working Papers 07ekss, US Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy.

⁸³ CARICOM Secretariat, ‘Plan of Action to 2005: Framework for Mainstreaming Gender into Key CARICOM Programmes’ (CARICOM 2005) <https://caricom.org/documents/11303-plan_of_action_to_2005.pdf> accessed 16 December 2021.

More recently, as of February 2019, consultations have been underway on a draft CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy with priority areas identified including equality and social inclusion, freedom from violence, access to health services, access to education, good governance, and economic empowerment.⁸⁴ At face value, it is unclear whether the link between trade and gender has been considered or will be addressed in this strategy. The draft strategy is being refined and should be finalized in 2023. This presents an opportunity to incorporate trade and gender considerations for the region. CARICOM markets especially should be explored for opportunities that would enable businesses owned by women to expand their operations.

11.5 FINAL THOUGHTS

In spite of the multiple vulnerabilities they face as SIDS, CARICOM states are among the most open and trade dependent in the world. Trade is therefore an indispensable tool for economic growth and development, which must be inclusive, sustainable, and leave no group behind, including women and girls. Despite increasing recognition globally of the interlinkages between trade and gender, and the role that trade can play in advancing women's empowerment, CARICOM Member States have not demonstrated a clear understanding of the differentiated impact on women who encounter the trade space as producers, traders, and consumers; nor have they sufficiently mainstreamed gender provisions into their trade agreements to date.

Trade represents a fertile, albeit unrealized, opportunity for CARICOM Member States to reduce and overcome these structural inequalities that stifle the economic, social, and cultural advancement of women and gender equality. If negotiated with a gender lens, trade can translate into more job opportunities, better business connections, enhanced market access, and fewer barriers to access finances and other productive resources for women, all of which present obstacles to women's advancement in CARICOM states.

The authors recommend a few simple but essential policies for the attention of gender and trade officials in CARICOM. First, reliable sex-disaggregated data must be collected so that a better understanding can be gained of how trade policies impact women and more targeted interventions can be made. Efforts by UN Women and CARICOM to create CARICOM

⁸⁴ CANA, 'CARICOM Hosting National Consultations on Draft Regional Gender Policy' (Caribbean Communications Network 8 February 2019), <www.tv6tnt.com/news/regional/caricom-hosting-national-consultations-on-draft-regional-gender-policy/article_e4df18a8-2baf-11e9-bdb7-b705294ad47a.html> accessed 16 December 2021.

Gender Equality Indicators, which are aligned to the SDGs, has been a good start. Caribbean SIDS should ensure the effective collection of this data, especially as it is related to women's economic engagement. A better understanding of time use, as measured by SDG 5.4.1 (Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work), will allow governments to reflect on the contribution of the unpaid care economy to GDP and inform equitable policies for women to engage more fully in the formal economy and trade sectors.

Another key recommendation is to break the silos between trade policy and gender, and mainstream gender into all significant national development strategies. In spite of the enormous impact of trade policy on women – whether as importers, producers, entrepreneurs, or consumers – consultations with gender departments, women's organizations and community groups have not been prioritized in the development of trade policy. Gender indicators should be developed for all trade policies, and trade negotiation teams should include gender and socio-economic specialists. Moreover, SIDS should ensure all that trade policy is inclusive of tourism policies, and that both are fully gender responsive. Gender policies should not be siloed from national development strategies.

Finally, CARICOM should utilize existing mechanisms in trade agreements to revisit and renegotiate provisions so that they focus on gender inequalities that persist in CARICOM, including women's lack of participation in commercial and entrepreneurial sectors, and lack of access to capital and finance. Trade agreements should explicitly reference provisions such as capacity development for women-owned businesses, as well as temporary special measures for export by women-owned businesses. Priority in the region should be on negotiating outcomes that focus on enhancing the participation of women in newer areas that hold promise, such as in the ecommerce and renewable energy sectors.