



Conference on Gender & Trade

'Closing the Gender Gap – A Tool for Economic and Trade Development'

Pakistan's first conference on Gender and Trade co-hosted by the World Bank Group, Pakistan Women Entrepreneurs Network for Trade (WE-NET), Ministry of Commerce with the support of the Australian Government addressed issues regarding gender inclusiveness in Pakistan's trade policy. The conference highlighted the gains of closing the gender gap in terms of growth, exports and jobs in Pakistan and raising awareness within the area of women's economic empowerment. It provided a forum to discuss innovative empirical and theoretical research on gender and trade, with specific application to the challenges of women traders and entrepreneurs in Pakistan.

Over two days, almost 250 participants consisting of government officials, civil society implementors, academia, women's organizations and others involved in practical or theoretical work in this field, engaged in discussions to provide suggestions for trade policy formulation and to explore challenges and bottlenecks faced by women entrepreneurs.

Day one featured Zoubida Allaoua, Director, World Bank Group, Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director, International Trade Centre, Geneva, Mohammad Ashraf, Director General Trade Policy, Ministry of Commerce Pakistan and H.E Margaret Adamson, High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan and Her Excellency Ingrid Johansson, Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan. Panel discussions with Dr. Farrukh Iqbal, Dean & Director, IBA, Karachi, and Dr. Shahida Wizarat, Head of Economics, IoBM, Karachi, deliberated on Labour Participation and Trade Patterns for Women in Pakistan and Gender Sensitive Trade Policies in Pakistan. The heads of Nestle Pakistan and Unilever emphasized the importance of showcasing success stories for promoting the Business Case for Gender Diversity in Pakistan.

Dr. Mohammad Ashraf, DG, Trade Policy, Ministry of Commerce, in a panel discussion on Gender-Sensitive Trade Policies in Pakistan, described initiatives already taken for gender inclusiveness in Government of Pakistan's trade policy and welcomed suggestions for the STPF 2018-2023.

In a panel discussion on Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy – Global Best Practices, Her Excellency Ingrid Johansson highlighted the best practices adopted in Sweden to promote gender equality.

The second day featured Dr. Ishrat Husain, Former Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, Ingrid Christenson, Country Head, International Labour Organisation, Anne Marchal, Minister/Deputy Head of Mission, Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Robert Skidmore, ITC, Geneva, and Dr. Gulden Turktan, Founding Chair, W20. Shahid Mustafa, CEO, Telenor Bank, Aamir Niazi, Chairperson, Advisory Council, Pakistan WE-NET, spoke about Cultivating Male Champions for Gender Diversity. Taghrid Nafeisi, CEO, Al-Mutaqaa Brokerage Co., Jordan, Danysh Hashmi, HBL

Nisa Women's Banking, and Naureen Hayat, CEO, Tez Financial Services reflected on Access to Finance – Challenges & Opportunities for Women.

Sanem Oktar, President, KAGIDER (Turkish Women Entrepreneurs Association) spoke about The Transformational Power of Women Entrepreneurs and shared international success stories from KAGIDER members. She invited Yasmin Hyder, President, Pakistan WE-NET to lead a delegation to Istanbul in 2018 for B2B trade networking with women entrepreneurs in Turkey. She referred to the successful hosting of SheTrades B2B value chain conference last year in Istanbul to emphasise the importance of such networking events.

Ingrid Christenson, Country Head, International Labour Organisation, highlighted the importance of social protection in trade policy and identified gender as a key concern.

“Strong women are the driving force behind social and economic change,” noted Zoubida while Yoonyoung Cho, Senior Economic, World Bank Group, revealed “Female labour force participation in Pakistan is 11% in urban areas and 33% in rural areas.”

H.E Margaret Adamson addressed the audience appreciating Pakistan WE-NET's achievements such as the network becoming the first representative body of women entrepreneurs from Pakistan to join Femmes Chefs d'Enterprises Mondiales (FCEM). She expressed a need for WE-NET to reach out all over the country.

Yasmin Hyder, President, WE-NET revealed that “Gender disparities are stark in Pakistan – only 1 percent of women are entrepreneurs compared to 21 percent of men,” and so we require robust and impactful policy and legislative support to bring about change. She further explained, “Since its launch, WE-NET's aim has been to create an inclusive and collaborative community of women entrepreneurs that will foster women economic empowerment for the betterment of Pakistan, by developing global linkages as well as engaging in advocacy, knowledge sharing and mentoring activities.”

Dr. Gulden Turktan, Founding Chair, W20, stated “It is in the best interest of Pakistan, as a country, to support and encourage women entrepreneurs' for trade and inclusion in the economy if the expectation is growth for all.”

Entrepreneurs engaged in an interactive panel discussion on “Marketing Your Business: The Digital Roadmap” where panelists described e-commerce opportunities for global trade and digital platforms that can increase consumer volume.

Through collaboration between Pakistan WE-NET and RLCC, income was generated for 300 women in RLCC's livelihood department, through handicrafts distributed at the conference.

The two-day power packed conference not only featured leading international entrepreneurs, policy advocates, implementers and high-level corporate figures who discussed steps to close the gender gap; it provided B2B opportunities for women entrepreneurs interested in trading with 3 countries – Italy, Jordan and Turkey.