

# Economic Empowerment of Women:

Can International Trade find a solution  
in **Blockchain Technologies**?

Dr. Amrita Bahri  
Co-Chair, World Trade Organization (Mexico);  
Assistant Professor of Law, ITAM University

# Women as Leaders of International Trade



International Monetary Fund (IMF) appointed Gita Gopinath on Monday as Economic Counsellor and Director of the IMF's Research Department.

Arancha González is the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC), has previously held leading positions at the World Trade Organization and the European Commission.



# Women as Business Leaders



**Indra Nooyi** is an Indian American business executive, serving as chairman of PepsiCo, the second largest food and beverage business in the world by net revenue, and as CEO for 12 years from 2006-2018



# Women as Blockchain Experts

- [Manju Mohan](#) is the co-CEO and co-founder of Ionixx Technologies, a company that focuses on mobile and web technologies that help digitize businesses.



# Women as Designers





# Women in Agriculture



The proportion of migrant workers to total workers in the region has increased from 15.7% in 1998-99 to **25.5%** in 2009-10. (Bihar)

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by **20-30%**. This could raise total the agricultural output in developing countries by up to 4%, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17% - that's **100-150 million** people.



# Barriers to Trade for Women?



## ❏ Financial Barriers

### → Employment restrictions

More than 2.7 billion women in 104 economies can not, by law, perform specific jobs, while 59 economies do not have laws on sexual harassment in the workplace and, in 18 economies, the husband can legally prevent the wife from work. (World Bank Report)

Women face restrictions on employment in 100 of the 173 economies analyzed. In 41 economies, women prohibited from working in industrial premises; in 29 economies, they are prohibited from working at night. In 18 economies, they can not get a job without the permission of their husbands.

### → Land ownership, Bank account & Credit worthiness

The credit gap suffered by formal small and medium enterprises that belong to women is estimated at USD 300 billion. The gender gap in terms of bank account in developing economies has not changed since 2011 and remains at 9%.

(Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal )





## ❑ Legal and Regulatory Barriers

- Employment restrictions (Middle East has 15 most restrictive economies in terms of possibilities for women to work or start a business, as measured in the report.)
- Wage rates and working conditions
- Efforts: In China, IFC works closely with Bank of Deyang to help extend its services to SMEs and support women-owned businesses in areas affected by the 2008 earthquake. In 2009, IFC approved a US\$31 million equity investment to the bank.
- Mobility (Applying for their passports or obtaining employment with their husbands' permission have the effect of impeding business activity and formal employment. North Africa and Middle East)  
(Afghanistan, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, etc)
- Lack of sexual harassment laws
- Unfavourable inheritance laws

# Property inheritance Laws

Country	Inheritance Laws	Religious System	Rights of wives and daughters on succession
Afghanistan	Afghan Civil Code sections 289-342 and 1993-2267	Islamic Law	Women sharers (as wives, sisters, grandmothers or daughters) inherit but not equally to their male counterpart
Bangladesh	Hindu Inheritance (removal of disabilities) Act of 1928; Hindu law of inheritance (amendment) Act of 1929	Hindu dayabhaga system	Widow receives life estate; unmarried daughters and married daughters with sons inherit; married daughters with daughters and childless daughters do not.
India	Indian Succession Act of 1925 (portions)	Parsi custom	Widows and children (sons and daughters) inherit equal shares among them
Nepal	Country Code of Nepal (Muluki Ain) (1963) Eleventh Amendment (2002)	Hinduism	If daughter inherits and then marries she must return her share of ancestral property to the male heirs (brothers).

## ❑ Legal and Regulatory Barriers

→ Husband Consent for opening bank account, accepting employment, or signing contract

“In 2014, Madame Ngetsi wanted to formalize a small business that she was running in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo. To do so, she would need to register her company and open a bank account. Along the way, she might need a loan to grow her business. But legally, Madame Ngetsi needed her husband’s permission to do any of these activities under the family code that existed at the time.”



## → Cultural Barriers

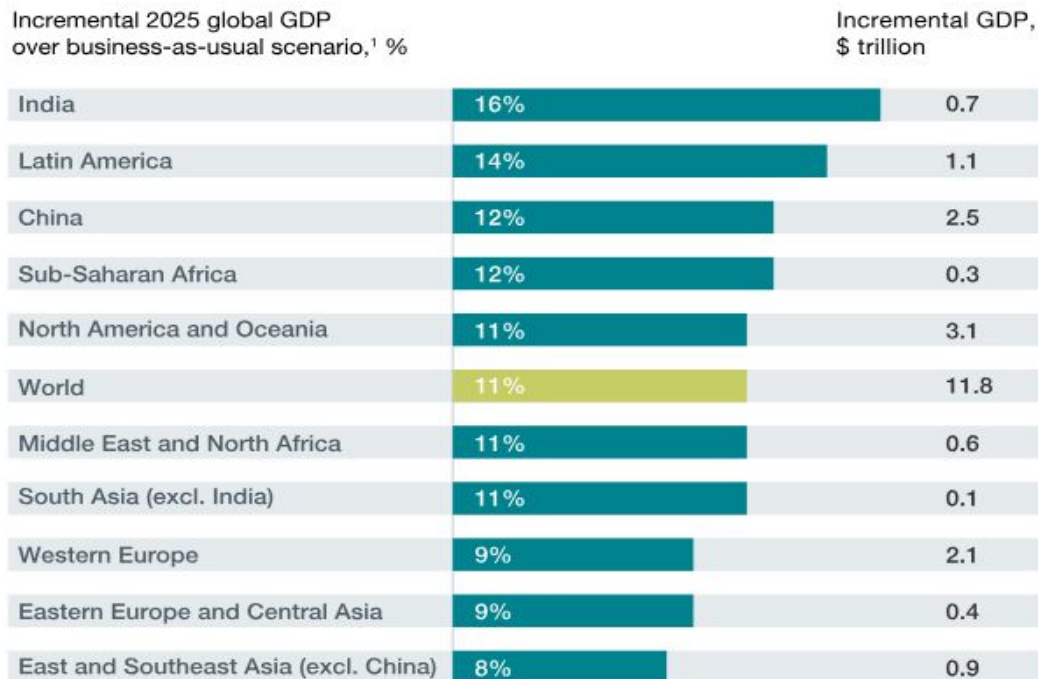
- Education and training (In the field of education, only 23% of low-income countries have achieved gender parity in primary school and 15% in secondary school.)
- Household responsibilities are prime (Laws prohibit married women from becoming heads of their households in Middle East)
- Patriarchal set up and Maternity needs (New Zealand PM makes history with 'first baby' at UN General Assembly)



## How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth



If every country matched the progress toward gender parity of its fastest-improving neighbor, global GDP could increase by up to \$12 trillion in 2025.



<sup>1</sup>Sample = 95 countries.



# Can International Trade Law help?

## 1. Trade agreements to promote SMEs

“Banks **reject** more than 50% of loan applications from SMEs. In developing economies, a 2017 report from the World Bank estimates that 70% of SMEs are unable to access the credit they need”

## 2. Using Blockchain technologies

Based on **blockchain**, **Debitum** has amassed an impressive community of 30,000 users who will benefit from its initial capital that they hope to swell to €10 million by the end of the year.

## 3. Awareness building, education and training programmes

Online education (**blockgeeks.com**), Digital Citizen Fund

## 4. WTO technical and capacity building support to female farmers

**Agriledger** provides farmers with benefits farmers and suppliers with efficiency and traceability

## 5. WTO rules on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Possibilities for IP protection and registration and as evidence, either at the registry stage or in court.

## 6. WTO rules on services (tourism, finance, health, education, distribution and environment)

## 7. WTO to include rules on gender justice

8. UN's initiative to use Blockchain for gender equality (Engaging private sector to empower women)

9. Bilateral trade agreements to have gender justice clause (**NAFTA** and **Israel-Canada** Agreement)

# Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement

Provides for a chapter on SMEs

Art 23.4: **Modest and non-binding**

shall **consider** undertaking cooperative activities aimed at enhancing the ability of women, including workers and business owners, to access and benefit from this agreement.

The activities include:

- Providing advice or training
- Launching programs to help women build skills and capacity
- women's access to markets, financing and technology
- developing women's leadership networks
- and identifying best practices relating to workplace flexibilities

# USMCA Provisions on Gender Justice

**Article 5.** The Parties **may** develop cooperative activities in the following areas:

(j) addressing gender-related issues in the field of **labor and employment**, including:

(iii) promotion of labor practices that **integrate and retain women in the job market**, and building the **capacity and skills of women workers**, including on **workplace challenges** and in collective bargaining

**Article 23.9: 'Discrimination in the Workplace.** The Parties recognize the goal of **eliminating discrimination** in employment and occupation, and support the goal of promoting equality of women in the workplace. Accordingly, **each Party shall implement policies** that it considers appropriate to protect workers against employment discrimination on the basis of sex (including with regard to **sexual harassment**), **pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and caregiving responsibilities; provide job protected leave for birth or adoption of a child and care of family members; and protect against wage discrimination.**'

# Canada-Chile Agreement

2. Accordingly, the Parties shall carry out cooperation activities designed to improve the capacity and conditions for women, including workers, businesswomen and entrepreneurs, to access and fully benefit from the opportunities created by this Agreement. These activities shall be carried out with inclusive participation of women.

4. The Parties hereby establish a Trade and Gender Committee composed of representatives from each Party's government institutions responsible for trade and gender.

6. A Party shall not avail itself of the dispute resolution mechanism provided for in Chapter N (Institutional Arrangements and Dispute Settlement Procedures) with respect to any matter arising under this Chapter.

5. The Parties shall make all possible efforts, through dialogue, consultations and cooperation, to resolve any matter that may arise in regard to the interpretation and application of this Chapter.

# Israel-Canada Free Trade Agreement

## Article 13.1: General Provisions

1. The Parties acknowledge the importance of incorporating a **gender perspective into the promotion of inclusive economic growth** and the key role that **gender-responsive policies** can play in achieving **sustainable economic development**...

6. The Parties **affirm their commitment** to promoting gender equality through, as appropriate, **laws, regulations, policies and practices**.

7. **Each Party shall domestically promote public knowledge of its gender equality laws**, regulations, policies and practices.

Art 13.6:

2. If the Parties cannot resolve the matter in accordance with paragraph 1, **they may consent to submit the matter to dispute settlement** in accordance with Chapter Nineteen (Dispute Settlement).

## Article 13.3: Cooperation Activities

4. Areas of cooperation **may include**:

- (a) encouraging **capacity-building and skills enhancement** of women at work and in business;
- (b) promoting **financial inclusion for women**, including financial training, access to finance, and financial assistance;
- (c) advancing **women's leadership** and developing women's **networks** in business and trade;
- (d) developing better practices to **promote gender equality within enterprises**;
- (e) fostering **women's representation in decision making and positions of authority in the public and private sectors**, including on corporate boards;
- (f) promoting **female entrepreneurship and women's participation in international trade**, including by improving women's access to, and participation and leadership in, science, technology and innovation;





# ITC SheTrades initiative: Connecting three million women to market by 2021

Women's economic empowerment is not a matter for government policy, the private sector, or social change alone. All have critical roles to play. This is why the International Trade Centre (ITC) has launched the SheTrades initiative, which seeks to connect three million women entrepreneurs to market by 2021.

> [JOIN SHETRADES](#)

> [EXPLORE MORE](#)

## Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade outlines actions to empower women

For the first time in the history of the World Trade Organization, WTO members and observers have endorsed a collective initiative to increase the participation of women in trade. In order to help women reach their full potential in the world economy, 118 WTO members and observers agreed to support the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade, which seeks to remove barriers to, and foster, women's economic empowerment.



## Empowering women through Aid for Trade

The final report of the Aid for Trade Task Force, created in 2006, provides a clear mandate for gender equality to be included in the Aid for Trade initiative: "Aid for trade should be rendered in a coherent manner taking full account ... of the gender perspective and of the overall goal of sustainable development.... Donors and partner countries jointly commit to the harmonization of efforts on cross-cutting issues, such as gender."

Subsequent Aid for Trade global reviews have highlighted a broad range of areas in which Aid for Trade has had a positive impact on women's economic empowerment.

Case stories have illustrated how the Aid for Trade initiative has helped to increase employment opportunities for women and has helped women to access finance and to participate in global supply chains.

Since 2011, there has been a growing focus on women's economic empowerment through the monitoring and evaluation of the Aid for Trade initiative, in Geneva-based workshops on Aid for Trade, in outreach activities and at the biennial global reviews of Aid for Trade.

[WOMEN AND TRADE](#)

# Conference on Trade and Gender

Closing the Gender Gaps

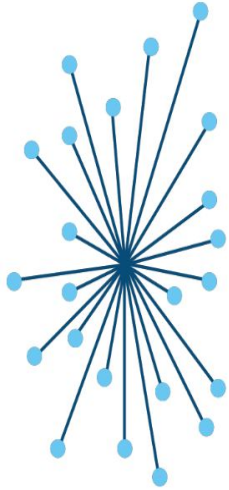
The Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade at Year One by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank Group

[Geneva, The Graduate Institute: Maison de la paix, Auditorium A1A](#) [6 DECEMBER 2018](#) 17:00-19:00

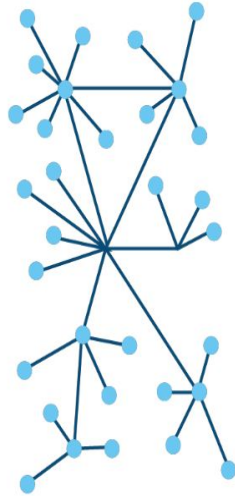
[Geneva, WTO Headquarters - Room D](#) [7 DECEMBER 2018](#) 09:00-17:00

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank Group hereby invites you to a one and a half-day conference in Geneva on 6 and 7 December 2018, in collaboration with the Centre for Trade and Economic Integration at the Graduate Institute, to discuss the impact of trade and

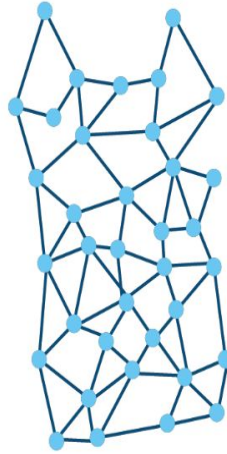
# Blockchain Explained! (DLT)



Centralized



Decentralized



Distributed

- Decentralized, distributed record:  
Permanent and inalterable
- Unlike traditional databases:  
No central entity -Peer to peer network
- Authentication of transactions:  
Mathematical consensus protocol that determines the rules
- Collaboration w/o a 3rd party
- Across border transparency and traceability of products and transactions (automate, resilient to cyber attacks)



# Blockchain's trade-related potential

- ❑ From trade finance, to customs and certification processes, transportation and logistics, insurance distribution, intellectual property and government procurement.
- ❑ Documents: ID, birth and IPR (art), property papers.
- ❑ Future infrastructure of the services industry
- ❑ Paperless trade (Maersk shipping company)

## 3.1 Unlocking Value in Logistics



**Figure 14:** The information flow in international trade is complex, involves many parties, and is documentation heavy; **Source:** Accenture

# Agriculture and Blockchain



## Digital Identity

Without official identification, a person can struggle to access: Financial services, Social benefits, Healthcare, Education, Political and legal rights, Gender equality and Migration



## Traceability

Lack of traceability means tracking and recalling specific contaminated products throughout the supply chain impossible. With the DLT solution, each item can be traced from seed to consumer



## Information

Most farmers are operating at just 40% of their potential capacity access to information, farmers can now plan and harvest more effectively and gain access to market.



## Financial Services

Without financial access, many agricultural providers lose up to 50% of potential income. Farmers can prove their identity and income to gain access to financial institutions



## Immutable Data

The DLT solution provides immutable information providing trust and transparency throughout the supply chain



## Record Keeping

Farmers can use DLT for record keeping and proof of production

Record keeping of the quality, price and sustainability of rice production of 10,000 Malawian farmers.



# MSMEs

BC lowers barriers of entry to access trade finance, it facilitates trade procedures and reduces trade costs.



- The **We.trade platform** aims to **publish the financial procedures of small companies** that includes the handling, tracking and assurance of domestic and international transactions.
- This creates a credit history increasing their access to finance.
- It opens the possibility of doing peer-to-peer business without the need to go through banks opening the possibility of a greater export of products and services internationally.
- **FastTrackTrade** - digital trade network for Singapore

# IPR and Blockchain

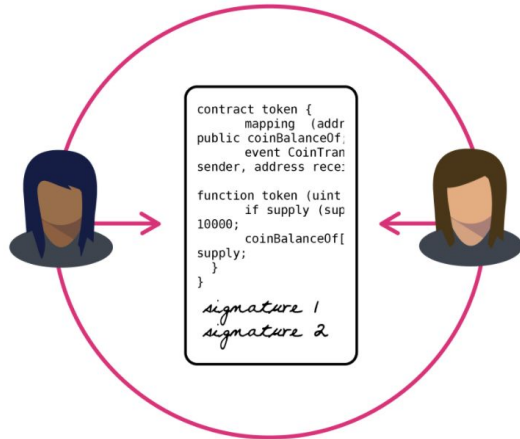
Potential use cases include:

1. The administration and enforcement of IP rights
2. Evidence of creatorship and provenance authentication
3. Registering IP rights;
4. Providing evidence of genuine first use in trade
5. Digital rights management (e.g., online music)
6. Transmitting payments in real-time to IP owners.



# Smart Contracts

- Self executing benefits and penalties according to obligations coded
- If the goods are unloaded at port X -> transfer funds
- Outside information as inputs, IoT



# CryptoCurrency

- Women can directly access finance through cryptocurrency (and hence overcome regulatory or cultural impediments)







# Mid Term Exam: 25th March (7 PM)

## Question 1

1. How can **smart contracts** impact the conduct of international trade in the future?
2. Can it empower women by engaging them in international trade?
3. Give a practical example to illustrate your point

## Question 4

1. Has the text of USMCA accommodated the gender justice concerns?
2. Identify and explain the provisions of USMCA that discuss gender justice concerns
3. Are these provisions effective enough to empower women in North America?

## Question 2

1. How can **Blockchain** impact the conduct of international trade in the future?
2. Can it empower women by engaging them in international trade?
3. Give a practical example to illustrate your point

## Question 3

1. How can **crypto currency** impact the conduct of international trade in the future?
2. Can it empower women by engaging them in international trade?
3. Give a practical example to illustrate your point

## Question 5

1. Has the text of CPTPP accommodated the gender justice concerns?
2. Identify and explain the provisions of CPTPP that discuss gender justice concerns
3. Are these provisions effective enough to empower women in North America?