



# Caribbean

SHETRADES OUTLOOK | 2023



International  
Trade  
Centre

SheTrades





TIMEFRAME

March  
2018

March  
2025

**OBJECTIVE**

To increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by enabling the increased participation of women-owned businesses in international trade. The project is funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by ITC under the framework of the SheTrades Initiative.

# Table of Contents

**INTRODUCTION 04**

**THE RESULTS 07**

Trade Policy 08

Legal & Regulatory Framework 12

Business Environment 16

Access to Skills 20

Access to Finance 24

Work & Society 28

**CONCLUSION 32**

**ACTIVITIES**

- Provide governments with the tools, information and capacity to implement gender-responsive policies. Also offer a platform for governments to work collectively and share best practices, including through SheTrades Outlook and in-country technical assistance on policy reform.
- Provide direct support to women-owned businesses. Build their competitiveness and their capacity to participate in trade through intensive training, mentoring and coaching.
- Work with business support organizations to improve the service offering for women entrepreneurs.
- Engage private sector partners to adopt business practices that create economic opportunities for women-owned businesses.



## SHE TRADES OUTLOOK

# Creating Trade Opportunities for Women in the Caribbean

This policy brief presents analysis and recommendations for the Caribbean region to unlock women's participation in trade by improving the policy ecosystem. It is based on the results of the SheTrades Outlook tool in the seven Caribbean countries: Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. In total, data was collected and analysed from 137 public and private sector institutions in these countries (19 in Barbados, 21 in the Dominican Republic, 21 in Guyana, 20 in Jamaica, 21 in Saint Lucia, 20 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and 15 in Trinidad and Tobago).

## WHY DOES WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT MATTER?

In the Caribbean, women are predominantly engaged in the tourism sector. However, the sector is vulnerable to climate and economic shocks. In 2020, gross domestic product in the seven Caribbean countries analysed in this policy brief contracted by 3.2% on average. In 2021, the average growth rate recovered to 6.9% owing to the return of tourism. In 2022, it rose further to 14%. However, this is projected to decline in 2023, in part due to inflation and its negative impact on the consumption of tourism services.

Promoting women's greater participation in labour, business and trade can help drive inclusive growth. Women, on average, account for 50.5% of the population in the seven Caribbean countries analysed under SheTrades Outlook. In 2022, average labour-force participation rates among women in these countries was only 44.4%. This shows a missed opportunity for women to contribute to a productive society. To tap into women's potential, it is important to understand and address the barriers that they face to engage in productive economic activities. In this regard, policies play a crucial role in advancing women's economic empowerment.

At the regional level, the [Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\) Regional Gender Equality Strategy](#) aims to achieve gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and to support Member States<sup>1</sup> in complying with international conventions and commitments. The Strategy also aims to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the work of CARICOM. Thematic areas for action include equality and social inclusion, freedom from violence, economic empowerment, good governance, access to health services, and inclusive quality education.

SheTrades Outlook provides critical data to help policymakers prioritize areas for improvement to better promote women's economic empowerment and achieve the goals of the Regional Strategy. It also offers practical insights to ensure that national policies affecting business and trade are gender-responsive.



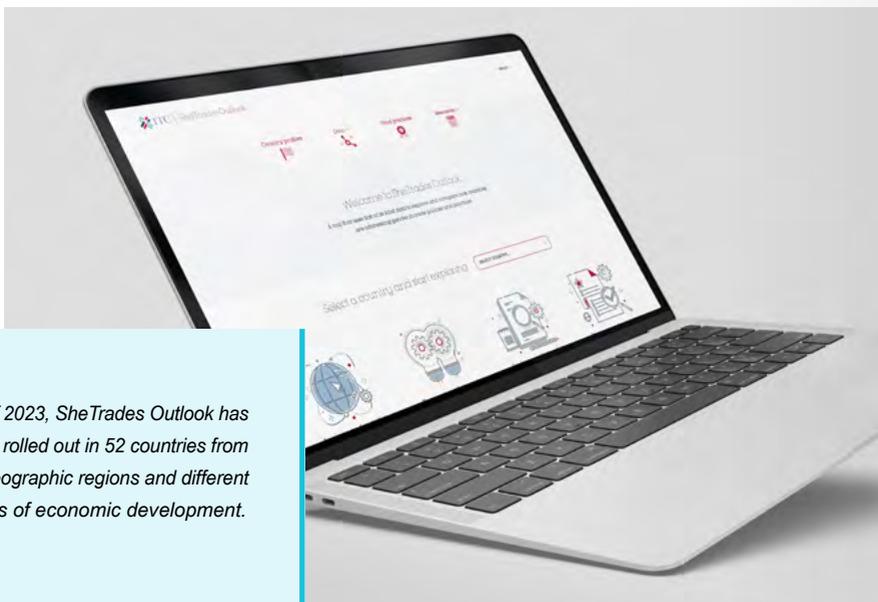
1. CARICOM Member States are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

## WHAT IS SHETRADES OUTLOOK?

SheTrades Outlook is an innovative, evidence-based policy tool designed by the International Trade Centre (ITC). It identifies policies, laws or programmes that contribute to or prevent women’s participation in the economy and trade. This first-of-its-kind tool is based on 55 indicators. These are grouped under six interlinked pillars – Trade Policy, Business Environment, Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Skills, Access to Finance and Work and Society.

SheTrades Outlook is based on data collected by national consultants from an average of 20 national institutions and organizations per country. Data is collected through interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires. Examples of institutions surveyed include ministries of trade, education, finance, technology and women’s affairs; public procurement authorities; Customs authorities; central banks; national statistics offices; business associations; chambers of commerce; and other trade support institutions.

SheTrades Outlook also makes use of reliable, publicly available and recently updated databases from the Inter-Parliamentary Union; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Statistics Division; the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. Additionally, an average of three good practices are identified per country by national experts.



As of 2023, SheTrades Outlook has been rolled out in 52 countries from all geographic regions and different levels of economic development.

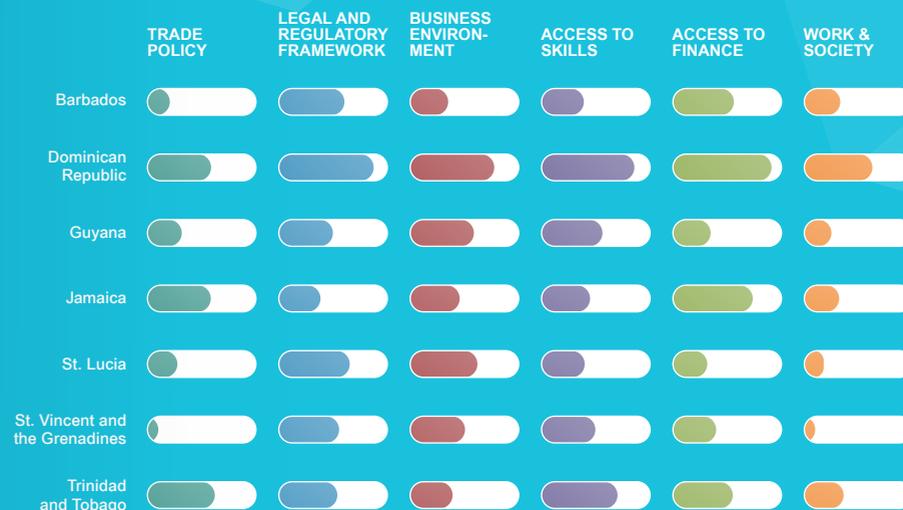
## RESULTS

# The results from the Outlook data

In total, 137 institutions were interviewed in the seven countries to collect data. Institutions were chosen based on their strategic objectives and relevance in relation to the six pillars of SheTrades Outlook. The institutional survey was conducted between 2019 and 2023. This policy brief presents the latest available data.

The SheTrades Outlook scores range from zero to one. On average, the seven Caribbean countries exhibit medium performance in the six policy dimensions. They performed the highest in Legal and Regulatory Framework, followed by Access to Finance, Access to Skills and Business Environment. The Caribbean region performed the lowest in Trade Policy and Work and Society.

Detailed information on the scores under each pillar is presented below. This includes strengths and bottlenecks, as well as gaps identified in the data.



## TRADE POLICY

Barbados

Dominican Republic

Guyana

Jamaica

St. Lucia

St. Vincent and  
the Grenadines

Trinidad and Tobago

### Consultation process

Initiatives or mechanisms are in place to include women's associations/organizations in consultation processes

Women's associations/organizations participate in consultation processes

### Trade and gender-related concerns are included in policies and agreements

Policy or action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment includes trade-related concerns

Trade agreements or regional economic integration agreements include gender provisions

### Assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of trade agreements are carried out

Trade policy uses gender indicators

### Gender-disaggregated data

Law or regulation mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data

Gender-disaggregated data is collected on companies

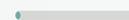
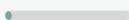
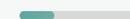
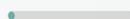
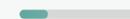
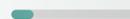
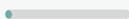
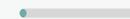
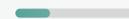
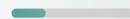
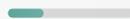
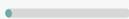
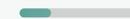
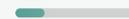
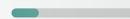
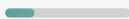
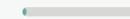
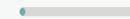
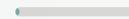
### Women's participation in strategic roles

Women are represented in ministerial and parliamentary positions

### Capacity building on gender issues

Trade Ministry staff receive training on gender issues

A gender focal point focusing on trade and gender issues has been established





The Trade Policy pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of trade policies, agreements and practices. It also includes the adoption of gender-sensitive practices in trade and trade-related institutions.

On average, the seven Caribbean countries had a low performance in this pillar. This is mainly attributed to the lack of inclusion of women's business associations in consultations, gender provisions in trade agreements, gender impact assessments of trade policy, gender indicators in projects and programmes, and trade and gender focal points.

## WHAT WORKS?

In the Caribbean region, countries such as the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago mandate the collection of gender-disaggregated data across all agencies and departments of the government.

## WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

At the regional level, the Caribbean has the CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy, which includes provisions on women's economic empowerment. To support benefits from trade for women, the Regional Strategy could include trade concerns. At the national level, only Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have included trade concerns in their national gender equality strategies. Jamaica has adopted a [National Policy for Gender Equality](#) that emphasizes that international agreements and trade policies should facilitate gender equality. It also outlines a strategy to study the impact of trade liberalization and poverty reduction policies on rural women, the data from which is used to inform the creation of initiatives that improve women's economic autonomy. Trinidad and Tobago has implemented a [National Policy on Gender and Development](#) that includes measures on incorporating gender concerns in trade agreements.



On average, more progress can be made to improve gender mainstreaming in trade policy. For instance, countries can ensure that women are consulted in trade policymaking. This will ensure that trade policy addresses the issues and challenges women face to participate in trade. Nevertheless, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Jamaica have mechanisms to include women's business associations in consultation processes.

Governments can also consider including gender provisions in trade agreements. In SheTrades Outlook, trade agreements can receive three ratings: 'limited', 'evolving' or 'advanced' levels of gender responsiveness. All seven Caribbean countries are party to one Free Trade Agreement that has an evolving level of gender responsiveness, i.e. the European Union–Caribbean Forum States Economic Partnership Agreement. The ITC policy guide [Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements](#) presents recommendations and model clauses to improve women's participation in trade through trade agreements. In addition to the European Union–Caribbean Forum States Economic Partnership Agreement, only the Dominican Republic has other free trade agreements that include gender considerations.

Improving monitoring and evaluation is also crucial to track whether trade policies and programmes benefit both women and men. In this regard, institutions can collect gender-disaggregated data and use gender indicators in policies and programmes. Further, gender impact assessments may be carried out before and after signing a trade agreement. Among the seven Caribbean countries, only the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Saint Lucia carry out ex-ante gender impact assessments of trade agreements. Meanwhile, only Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago use gender indicators in projects and policies. Countries can also encourage gender-disaggregated data collection on exporting companies to map women's participation in international trade.

Governments could also adopt internationally recognized definitions of a women-led and/or women-owned business as prescribed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) [International Workshop Agreement 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria](#). This can improve the targeting of beneficiaries of women's economic empowerment programmes and monitoring of the impacts of programmes and policies on women-led businesses. In the Dominican Republic, a clear definition of women-owned businesses exists at the national level. However, aligning the national definition with the ISO definitions can contribute to the collection of comparable data at the international level.

To build institutional capacity, it is important to provide training on trade and gender issues to the staff of national ministries working on trade. Further, appointing trade and gender focal points can help streamline and institutionalize work on mainstreaming gender into trade policies and programmes.

## LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

	Barbados	Dominican Republic	Guyana		Jamaica	St. Lucia	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Trinidad and Tobago
<b>Signing, ratification and enforcement of key international conventions</b>								
Country has ratified the CEDAW and CEDAW optional protocol								
Country has ratified and enforced ILO Conventions 100, 111, and 183								
<b>Gender-responsive budgeting approach</b>								
Government uses gender-responsive budgeting approach								
<b>Laws that facilitate access to productive resources</b>								
Law provides women and men with equal rights to property and access to financial services								
<b>Laws that facilitate access to the labour market</b>								
Law mandates non-discrimination in employment based on gender, protection from sexual harassment and equal remuneration for work of equal value								
<b>Paid parental leave policies</b>								
Maternity leave benefit is mandated								
Parental leave is available for both parents								
<b>Childcare and education support and facilities</b>								
Parents receive childcare and education support								



This pillar assesses a country's adoption of laws and regulations that protect and promote women's rights. It also covers laws and policies that encourage women's entry into, and continuity and advancement in, labour markets. An example would be laws that support women to combine work with childcare responsibilities. More than 50% of the data for this pillar was sourced from World Bank

Women, Business and the Law; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Information System on International Labour Standards.

The seven Caribbean countries have the highest performance in this pillar. This is linked to the ratification of international conventions; the establishment of national laws that address gender issues in inheritance and ownership, employment and at the workplace; and provisions on childcare benefits.



## WHAT WORKS?

Internationally, the seven Caribbean countries have demonstrated their commitment to gender equality by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration) and 111 (non-discrimination in employment and occupation).

In addition, the seven Caribbean countries have legislated to ensure women and men have equal inheritance and ownership rights, and to prohibit gender-based discrimination in opening a bank account. Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and Saint Lucia also have laws on non-discrimination in employment based on gender, and protection against sexual harassment in the workplace.

In Barbados, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic, parents receive childcare and education support.

## WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Governments can consider signing the CEDAW Optional Protocol. Currently only the Dominican Republic is party to this Convention. They can also consider ratifying ILO Convention 183 (maternity protection) and providing maternity leave benefits of at least 14 weeks with full pay as well as paternity leave benefits. Only Trinidad and Tobago provides 14 weeks of maternity leave benefits. Meanwhile, only Guyana, Barbados and the Dominican Republic cover 100% of wages during maternity leave, but provide maternity leave benefits for only 12 weeks. The Dominican Republic provides paternity leave benefits.

In addition, governments can establish laws to ensure equal remuneration for work of equal value and to prohibit gender-based discrimination in access to credit. Equal access to credit can help ensure that women are able to access various financial instruments to support the growth of their businesses and their participation in trade.

Finally, governments can also consider applying a gender-responsive approach to planning and budgeting. This can improve transparency in government programmes and ensure that resources are allocated for women's economic empowerment programmes.

## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Barbados  
MISSING DATA

Dominican Republic

Guyana

Jamaica  
MISSING DATA

St. Lucia

St. Vincent and  
the Grenadines

Trinidad and Tobago  
MISSING DATA

### Representation of women business associations

Women's business associations are represented at the national level

Women-led businesses participate in activities conducted by chambers of commerce

### Business start-ups

Support services are available when establishing a company

National institutions implement incubator/accelerator programmes

### Access to trade and customs information

Help and information desks are available at government offices to assist companies in complying with national regulations and export/import requirements

Information on changes in customs procedures and trade regulations are announced in a timely manner

### Public procurement

Information on public procurement process, vendors and transactions are available

Preferential scheme on public procurement for women-led businesses is implemented

### Reporting and monitoring unfair practices in trade

Means exist for women and men to report complaints on wrongdoing on trade regulations or procedures

### Trade facilitation and gender-responsive framework in customs

Single-window electronic interface is available

Gender-sensitive guidelines by the World Customs Organization or other national monitoring framework is implemented

Border-level customs agents and officials receive training on gender-sensitive practices

Pillar score shows "Missing data" if more than 20% of the indicators have missing data.



A conducive business ecosystem is essential to achieve resilient growth through the business cycle. This pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of the business ecosystem and covers industry bodies that support women's entrepreneurship. It also includes the ease and costs of establishing and running a business, trading across borders, and accessing information and public procurement markets.

On average, the seven Caribbean countries have a medium score in this pillar. This is related to the existence of women's business associations in each country, the availability of business support services and incubator programmes, and the establishment of help and information desks and grievance mechanisms in the countries. However, areas for improvement remain.

## WHAT WORKS?

There are several women's business associations at the national level in the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Women-led businesses in the seven Caribbean countries are also members of national chambers of commerce and participate in training and events organized by these bodies.

Business support services when establishing a company are widely available in the Caribbean countries. The Dominican Republic, Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines collect gender-disaggregated data on clients of support services.

Incubator programmes are also available for start-ups in Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. At the regional level, the [Caribbean Regional Infrastructure Programme](#) has a Business Incubation Grants programme that benefits Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

In addition to national institutions, the [Caribbean Export Development Agency](#) (CEDA) has help and information desks, both physical and online, to help traders comply with export and import requirements. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in Jamaica also has a specific department that assists traders to access the CARICOM single market.

Traders can report trade malpractices in some Caribbean countries. For example, in Barbados this can be done at the Customs Authority and the Ministry of Foreign Trade; in Guyana at the Guyana Revenue Authority through a hotline as well as at the Ministry of Finance; in Jamaica through the [Jamaica Customs Agency's website](#); in Saint Lucia at Export Saint Lucia and at the Ministry of Commerce; and in Trinidad and Tobago at the National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation and the Ministry of Trade and Investment. Complaints on wrongdoings on trade regulations and procedures can also be filed at the CARICOM office. Lastly, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy framework has a formal complaints mechanism.



## WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Governments may consider collecting gender-disaggregated data on persons reporting trade malpractices. This can help assess the needs of women and track how government initiatives are impacting women traders.

There is also an opportunity to collect gender-disaggregated data on public procurement vendors. This can help map women's participation in government procurement and develop tailored support to increase their participation. Further, Caribbean countries can adopt a preferential public procurement scheme for women. This can ensure that women-led businesses take advantage of business opportunities in the public procurement market. Out of the seven Caribbean countries in SheTrades Outlook, only the Dominican Republic collects gender-disaggregated data on the vendors in public procurement and has adopted a preferential scheme for women in public procurement.

There is also a need to improve information dissemination – via print, radio or online – on the application and selection process for public tenders. Ensuring timely and accessible information on public procurement processes can help women prepare and submit their bids successfully. This is essential because women's business associations have reported that they find procurement processes cumbersome.

Information on changes in Customs procedures and trade regulations should also be published regularly online and at the borders. Additionally, Caribbean countries can ensure that trade processes can be completed electronically by establishing and implementing a single window electronic interface. The Dominican Republic has fully implemented its single window and offers 11 automated services, including the submission of electronic Customs declarations, electronic application for and issuance of import and export permits, electronic submission of sea/air cargo manifests, electronic application for and issuance of a preferential certificate of origin, electronic application for and issuance of sanitary and phytosanitary certificates, and e-payment of Customs duties and fees. Other Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have partially implemented a single window interface. Saint Lucia and Guyana were in the process of establishing a single window when data was collected in 2020/21.

Caribbean countries also have an opportunity to adopt gender-sensitive practices in Customs. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Dominican Republic have adopted the Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool from the World Customs Organization.

Lastly, providing training on trade and gender issues to border-level Customs officials remains important. This can help eliminate the gender-based discrimination and harassment typically faced by women in trade.

## ACCESS TO SKILLS

	Barbados MISSING DATA	Dominican Republic	Guyana		Jamaica	St. Lucia MISSING DATA	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Trinidad and Tobago
<b>Education and literacy</b>								
Law mandates compulsory education								
Gender disaggregated data on adult literacy	MISSING DATA					MISSING DATA	MISSING DATA	
<b>Skills programmes for workers and entrepreneurs</b>								
Enrolment rate in technical and vocational programmes (female/male ratio)			MISSING DATA			MISSING DATA		
Skills training programmes for workers are conducted								
Business skills training for MSME owners are conducted								
Training to facilitate access to markets are conducted								
<b>Targeted support and capacity building programmes for women</b>								
National institutions provide targeted support and capacity building programmes for women								
<b>Access to ICT and business innovation support</b>								
Policies and programmes are in place to support women's business innovation								
Access to internet								

Pillar score shows "Missing data" if more than 20% of the indicators have missing data.





Improved access to education is essential to build necessary skills and reduce inequality of opportunities between men and women. It is also vital to break the vicious cycle of poverty. This pillar focuses on measures designed to enhance women's abilities and business-related skills. One objective is to close the education gap. Another is to equip women with the capacity to compete and succeed in international markets and occupations traditionally dominated by men.

The average performance of the seven Caribbean countries in this pillar is medium. This is related to the availability of both skills upgrading programmes for workers and entrepreneurs, and training on trade procedures and regulations.

### WHAT WORKS?

There are several skills upgrading programmes for workers in the Caribbean countries assessed. These include trainings offered by the Institute for Technical-Professional Training in the Dominican Republic, the Ministry of Small Business in Barbados, the Guyana Industry and Information Unit, the National Skill Development Centre in Saint Lucia, the Saint Vincent Centre for Enterprise Development, and the National Training Agency in Trinidad and Tobago, among others.

Various national institutions provide training opportunities for entrepreneurs in the region. For example, the Jamaica Business Development Corporation provides training to women entrepreneurs on literacy skills through the Personal Entrepreneurship Initiative. ExporTT in Trinidad and Tobago provides training to improve exportation. The Saint Vincent Centre for Enterprise Development offers skills and knowledge trainings for micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) owners. The Small Business Development Centre in Saint Lucia conducts training for MSMEs on business plans, recordkeeping and product development. The Guyana Office for Investment provides information on doing business. To promote youth entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Youth and Community Empowerment in Barbados offers training to youths on finance. Lastly, the *Ministerio de Industria, Comercio y MIPYMES* (Ministry of Industry, Commerce and MSMEs) in the Dominican Republic organizes a free training every year for entrepreneurs and provides training to women through the National Programme on Women Entrepreneurship.

There is also training available to help MSMEs navigate trade rules and procedures in Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic.



© SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

### WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

National institutions in the Caribbean countries can consider strengthening technical and vocational education and training programmes to upgrade the skills of the population, especially women. To ensure greater women's participation in existing skills upgrading programmes, national institutions could provide women participants with targeted incentives.

There is an opportunity to conduct training on public procurement procedures for small businesses, especially those led by women. This can ensure that women-led businesses have the capacity to compete for public tenders.

National institutions can also consider collecting gender-disaggregated data on participants of skills upgrading programmes, training on trade and public procurement rules and procedures, and business skills training for MSMEs.

Except for the Dominican Republic, all Caribbean countries assessed have business innovation policies and initiatives in place.

Lastly, gender-disaggregated data on internet and mobile phone usage can be collected via national statistical surveys. Currently, out of the seven countries, only Barbados and the Dominican Republic collect this data.

## ACCESS TO FINANCE

	Barbados	Dominican Republic	Guyana		Jamaica	St. Lucia	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Trinidad and Tobago
<b>Access to financial services</b>								
Digital financial services are available								
There is access to formal financial resources (female/male ratio)	MISSING DATA		MISSING DATA			MISSING DATA	MISSING DATA	
<b>Financial inclusion strategies and programmes</b>								
Financial inclusion strategy or programme is implemented								
<b>Financial support for women-led businesses and women's business associations</b>								
Women-led businesses receive financial support to participate in trade fairs								
<b>Fiscal and trade finance schemes</b>								
Financial institutions are mandated to report gender-disaggregated data					MISSING DATA			
Fiscal schemes are available to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities								
Trade finance schemes are available in the country to facilitate trade								
<b>Financial instruments and other financing opportunities</b>								
Financial instruments are available to support entrepreneurial opportunities								
Venture capital financing opportunities are available to support women entrepreneurs								

Pillar score shows "Missing data" if more than 20% of the indicators have missing data.



This pillar focuses on women's access to formal financial services. It also covers whether governments – alone or in partnership with the private sector – have developed innovative solutions to promote financial inclusion for women. Examples include removing or modifying bank requirements for physical collateral or verifiable cash flow so that women can access finance more easily.

The seven Caribbean countries' have medium performance in this pillar due to several factors. These include the adoption of a financial inclusion strategy and national financial literacy programmes, availability of trade finance schemes to facilitate trade, provision of financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs, and the availability of a variety of digital financial services in the countries.

### WHAT WORKS?

Digital financial services are available in the Caribbean countries. These can help facilitate entrepreneurship and trade. They include mobile and online banking, international wire transfers and issuing payments.

The governments of Jamaica and the Dominican Republic have adopted national financial inclusion strategies to include more women in the formal financial sector and improve their access to affordable financial services. The Bank of Jamaica developed the [National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2016–2020](#). In the Dominican Republic, the Superintendency of Banks and the Central Bank have designed a [National Financial Inclusion Strategy](#) to support women in accessing financial and banking products. Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago have financial literacy plans in place.

In Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic, national institutions provide financial support for women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs.

Lastly, export-import banks and other financial institutions in the respective Caribbean countries offer trade finance schemes. In Saint Lucia, trade finance schemes are provided by BELfund and the Saint Lucia Development Bank.



### WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

There is an opportunity to encourage financial institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data. This can help these institutions and the government to understand and address the financial needs of women entrepreneurs and traders. This is especially important because gender-disaggregated data on bank account ownership is missing in most of the seven countries assessed. Currently, only the Dominican Republic mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data on financial services.

The Caribbean countries have financial instruments in place to support entrepreneurial activity. However, loans, grants and other financial instruments targeted at women entrepreneurs remain crucial.

Lastly, in general, there is a lack of venture capital financing opportunities for start-ups, including those that are women-led.

## WORK AND SOCIETY

	Barbados	Dominican Republic	Guyana	Jamaica	St. Lucia	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Trinidad and Tobago
<b>Woman's opportunities in the labour market</b>							
Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men							
Estimated annual earned income, US\$ PPP (female-male ratio)			MISSING DATA		MISSING DATA	MISSING DATA	
Labour force participation rate (female-male ratio)							
Female share of employment in managerial positions (%)					MISSING DATA	MISSING DATA	
<b>Time spent on unpaid work</b>							
Time-use on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male-female ratio)							

Pillar score shows "Missing data" if more than 20% of the indicators have missing data.





This pillar addresses the unconscious or conscious gender biases that prevent women from participating equally in the economy. This includes existing patterns of job segregation and the interventions set up by governments to address these biases.

The seven Caribbean countries score the lowest in this pillar. This is mainly due to a lack of gender-disaggregated data on time spent on unpaid domestic work in the seven Caribbean countries, existing wage gaps, and labour-force participation gaps between men and women.

### WHAT WORKS?

Guyana, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic have a conducive legal framework that allows women to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks in the same way as men.

Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago have facilitated women's employment in managerial positions.

### WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Time-use surveys are not conducted in the Caribbean countries, except in the Dominican Republic. Further, there are still large differences in the wages earned by men and women, particularly in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. A gap persists between the labour-force participation rate of women and men in all seven Caribbean countries assessed.



# The way forward

There are several areas where the seven Caribbean countries have made progress in promoting gender equality. Based on SheTrades Outlook results, on average, the countries have made the most progress on Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Finance and Access to Skills.

More can be done to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment, particularly through business and trade. Caribbean countries can improve the mainstreaming of gender into trade policy. Specific recommendations on how this can be achieved are provided in this policy brief. Further details on the steps and actions for policymakers to improve the gender responsiveness of trade policy are outlined in the ITC policy guide [From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women](#).

There is also an opportunity to ensure that women can navigate through the business environment and access skills upgrading programmes and financial instruments. Implementing targeted initiatives and establishing inclusive frameworks can help address challenges related to the business environment, skills development and financing.

Finally, national institutions can work together to ensure that gender-disaggregated data is collected across institutions.



## 01

### THE WAY FORWARD: MAINSTREAMING GENDER INTO TRADE POLICY

The Caribbean countries have an opportunity to use trade policy as an instrument to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Specifically, national governments can:

- Incorporate gender issues in trade agreements and conduct gender impact assessments before and after signing a trade agreement
- Use gender indicators to track the outcomes of trade policies and programmes
- Establish focal points responsible for trade and gender issues
- Adopt the internationally recognized definition of a woman-led business specified in the ISO International Workshop Agreement 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria
- Provide training on gender issues to the staff of the ministries responsible for trade and industry, and Customs officials.

## 02

### THE WAY FORWARD: INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS

It is important to ensure that policies, schemes and practices related to business and trade benefit both women and men. To do this, Caribbean countries can:

- Adopt a preferential public procurement scheme for women
- Include trade concerns in regional and national policies to promote gender equality
- Fully implement national single window electronic interfaces to facilitate trade
- Adopt a gender-responsive budgeting approach in the government.



## 03 THE WAY FORWARD: MONITORING MECHANISMS

To support the monitoring and evaluation of existing gender-responsive initiatives, the following are recommended.

- Encourage financial institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data on financial product usage
- Collect gender-disaggregated national statistics on time use
- Collect gender-disaggregated data on:
  - exporting firms
  - suppliers in public procurement
  - participants in skills training programmes

## 04 THE WAY FORWARD: TARGETED INITIATIVES

Initiatives targeted to women are crucial to ensure that they benefit from access to skills and finance initiatives. Specifically, national institutions can:

- Conduct training on public procurement for women-led businesses
- Establish incubators/start-up accelerators in the country that target women entrepreneurs
- Provide financial instruments to women to encourage entrepreneurship
- Provide incentives to women to ensure their participation in skills upgrading programmes
- Provide venture capital financing opportunities, especially to women-led start-ups.

### GOOD PRACTICE: IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO FINANCE, SKILLS AND MARKETS

*The CEDA WE-Xport programme was created to support women-owned businesses in all stages of business development. It aims to build the capacity of women to access finance, provide tools for women to produce competitive goods and services, and increase women's access to international markets.*

*The WE-Xport programme's activities include conducting access to finance workshops; providing technical support to firms and business support organizations; developing and implementing a business coaching programme for women-owned businesses; and supporting women-owned businesses to attend international trade fairs.*

*Between 2018 and 2020, CEDA supported 20 women-owned businesses through the WE-Xport programme. Some of the beneficiaries have secured a contract to supply raw materials to Starbucks, collaborated with a New York chef, increased sales, entered new export markets, utilized new distribution channels and developed a business network.*

*CEDA has partnered with the Caribbean Development Bank to implement access to finance activities.*

Source: CEDA

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about this Policy Brief and the SheTrades Outlook project can be found at [www.shetrades.com/outlook](http://www.shetrades.com/outlook)

This policy brief was prepared by Vanika Sharma (International Consultant, SheTrades Initiative, ITC) under the guidance of Ma. Diyina Gem Arbo (Associate Economic Affairs Officer, SheTrades Initiative, ITC). National consultants carried out the interviews in the seven Caribbean countries: Cherise Adjodha in Barbados, Claribel López Rodríguez in the Dominican Republic, Mellissa Ifill in Guyana, Natalie Rochester in Jamaica, Maria Lashley in Saint Lucia, George Berisford in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Terry Ince in Trinidad and Tobago.

### Contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals:



# #SheTrades

FOR EVERY WOMAN, EVERYWHERE

The International Trade Centre's (ITC) SheTrades Initiative is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the Initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and foster a better trade environment for all.



International  
Trade  
Centre

SheTrades

**International Trade Centre (ITC)**

54-56 rue de Montbrillant  
1202 Geneva  
Switzerland