



# Empowering Women in the African Continental Free Trade Area





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# Introduction

The International Trade Centre (ITC)'s SheTrades Initiative promotes equitable economic opportunities for women and works to increase their participation in trade. In addition, SheTrades is dedicated to making sure that the policy ecosystem is conducive for women to benefit equally.

With respect to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), ITC offers technical expertise, online learning modules, and tools to make sure the agreement works for women. This document provides an overview of these resources.



54

**Countries included  
in the AfCFTA**



1  
BILLION

**People supported  
through the AfCFTA**



2.5  
TRILLION  
(USD)

**Market of goods  
& services created  
through the AfCFTA**

## The African Continental Free Trade Area's potential

The AfCFTA presents a ground-breaking opportunity to create a unified continental market, boost Africa's share of global trade, and achieve the goals of Agenda 2063. With trading under the AfCFTA having started in January 2021, these objectives can only be accomplished if the agreement is fair and inclusive.





## ABOUT

# AfCFTA & GENDER EQUALITY

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Women's equal participation in international trade is critical to promoting economic growth, enhancing productivity, increasing international competitiveness, and reducing poverty. Recognizing gender equality as an objective of the AfCFTA, it is important to make sure gender considerations are fully taken into account and that women are well-positioned to seize regional trade opportunities.



ITC is providing training and strategic guidance to women's business associations and governments **to make sure that women's voices are heard.**



INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE'S  
**TECHNICAL  
EXPERTISE**

01

## Identifying priorities for a gender-responsive AfCFTA



**9 policy briefs** on priorities for women in trade facilitation, non-tariff barriers, standards, trade in services, ICTs & digital trade, strengthening women's associations, investment, competition, intellectual property, & e-commerce



**44 recommendations** on Phase I issues for women in the AfCFTA

02

## Networking support for women-owned businesses



Mobilize more than **150 women's business associations** across the continent



**Peer-to-peer** learning & knowledge-sharing



Kick-off the development of a **formal network**



03

## Providing additional capacity-building

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Women's business associations **supported with training** on sustainable business development models, governance of associations, service portfolio development & risk management



Boosting **policy** **advocacy** skills

04

## Gender-mainstreaming in AfCFTA national strategies

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Technical assistance & capacity-building for governments on **gender-mainstreaming** into AfCFTA national strategies



Supporting national-level consultations on **gender issues & the AfCFTA**

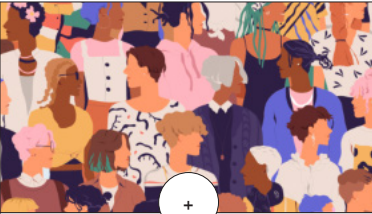
AFCFTA

# LEARNING RESOURCES

01

## Navigating the AfCFTA through the SheTrades Academy

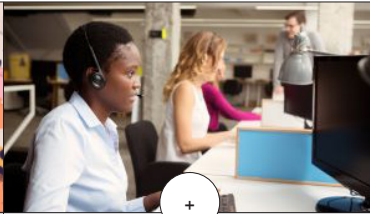
Access three modules here: <https://learn.shetrades.com/>



Fostering an Inclusive African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)

[VOIR EN FRANÇAIS](#)



Making COMESA Work for Women

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)



Opportunities under ECCAS for Women in Business

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)

[VOIR EN FRANÇAIS](#)



For more learning resources & information, visit our [WEBSITE](#)

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02

## Delivering results & insights through research

Guides for women-owned businesses available on <https://www.shetrades.com/>



**Survey of African Women's Business Associations on AfCFTA & COVID-19**

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)



**Products and Markets with Export Growth Potential in COMESA**

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)



**Reforming Public Policy Step-by-Step: An Introduction to Dialogue & Advocacy for Women's Business Associations**

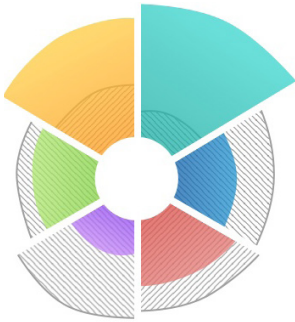
[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)

[VOIR EN FRANÇAIS](#)

AFCFTA

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## 01 SheTrades Outlook



SheTrades Outlook is an innovative policy tool that helps **improve how a country's ecosystem supports women to trade.**

### To better assess your country

The tool includes 6 policy areas and can be used to:

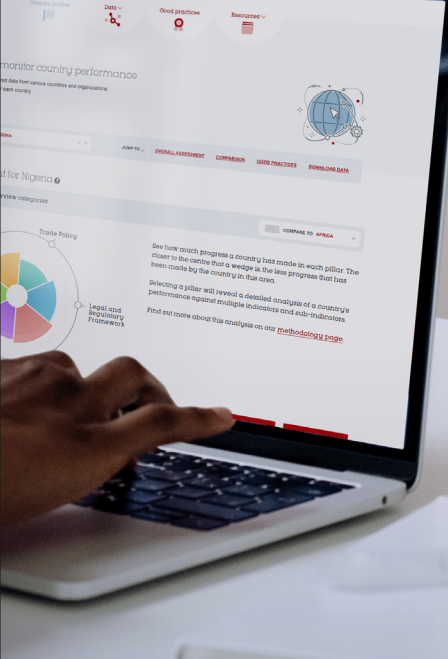
- identify data gaps
- examine areas for inclusive policy reform
- learn from good practices of other countries



57 Countries included in the SheTrades Outlook tool



28 African countries examined

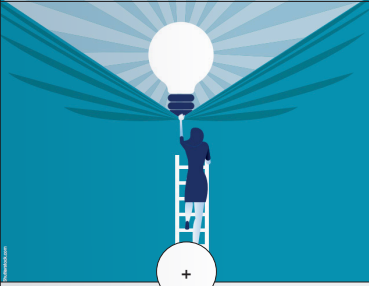


For more information on SheTrades Outlook, visit our [website](#)

02

## Policy Reform Resources

ITC also provides technical assistance for policy reform with methodologies detailed in:

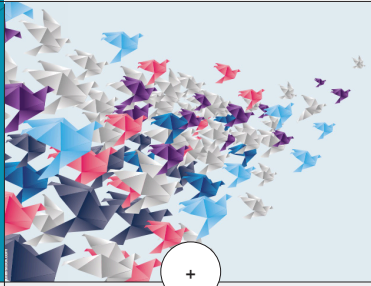


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**Making Public Procurement Work for Women**

**2020**

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)

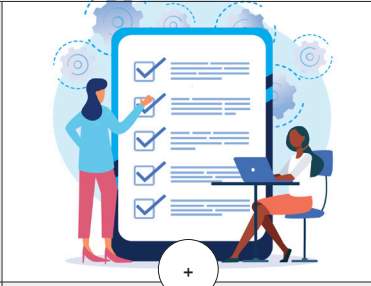


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**Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements**

**2020**

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)



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**From Design to Evaluation: Making Trade Policy Work for Women**

**2021**

[VIEW IN ENGLISH](#)

ABOUT

# THE SHETRADES AfCFTA PROJECT

Funded by GIZ, the SheTrades AfCFTA project aims to support women-owned businesses to benefit from trade opportunities created by the AfCFTA through capacity building, networking, and advocacy. The project is working with more than 150 women's business associations across the continent to identify priority issues for women under the AfCFTA and foster dialogues with trade negotiators.

Beyond developing concrete recommendations on Phase I, II, and III issues, the project has supported the launch of an Africa-wide network of women's business associations, provided technical assistance at the national level, created training resources to support women's associations under the Regional Economic Communities, and provided crisis-management toolkits to help women weather the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This project has worked with the African Union Commission (AUC), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and Trade Law Centre (Tralac) to deliver results for women.

Contributions to the  
Sustainable Development  
Goals (SDGs)



1  
NO  
POVERTY





5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS





ABOUT THE

# ITC SHETRADES INITIATIVE



ITC's SheTrades Initiative empowers women around the world to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

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

For more information, visit us at [www.shetrades.com](http://www.shetrades.com)



ITC SheTrades Initiative is supported by:



In partnership with



Funded by the European Union



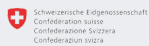
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands



From the People of Japan



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Eidgenössisches Departement für Wirtschaft, Bildung und Forschung WBF  
Sveitsrástjórnunin  
Skattastofnunin



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ICELAND



In partnership with Canada



Irish Aid  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs



Norad



Sida



# #SheTrades

HER SUCCESS. OUR FUTURE.

The International Trade Centre's (ITC) SheTrades Initiative aims to remove barriers to women's participation in trade.

We work with governments, business support organizations, the private sector and women producers and entrepreneurs to create the right capacities and conditions for women to unleash their full economic potential through trade.

## CONTACT DETAILS

**Judith  
Fessehaie**

Head, ITC SheTrades Initiative  
[womenandtrade@intracen.org](mailto:womenandtrade@intracen.org)



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON  
THE ITC SHETRADES INITIATIVE,  
VISIT OUR [WEBSITE](#)