

## **GIZ-Gender Competition 2024**

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### **Background**

*The regional project “Trade Facilitation in Central Asia” (TFCA)* is implemented in four Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The main objective of the project is to make border crossing and transit faster, more efficient, and transparent by implementing trade facilitation measures. The project is implemented in cooperation with national ministries responsible for trade policy, customs authorities, and border control agencies, as well as business associations.

Since 2019, with the support of the "Trade Facilitation in Central Asia" project and other international organizations, regional meetings of the National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are being organized. The main purpose of the meetings is to develop regional cooperation on trade facilitation, including the exchange of experience between the countries of the region and the study of best practices for the implementation of trade facilitation measures.

### **Challenge**

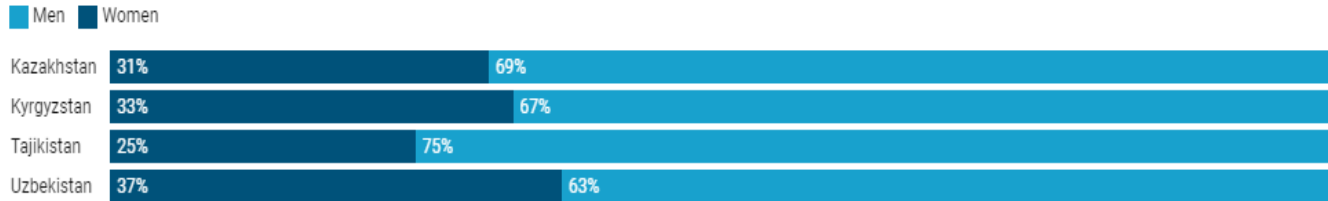
According to SDG 5. 'Ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls', promoting and strengthening the interaction of media and press-offices of government bodies, raising awareness on gender equality in the community; raising awareness of mass media actors about the gender-legal system of Central Asia, identifying the main types and forms of violence against women, taking into account the development of digital technologies and the spread of social networks, assessing their impact on the lives of women and girls, studying the image of women in the media and the role of television in overcoming stereotypes, creating gender-aware and sensitive materials.

Despite the seeming equality of business environments in Central Asia, female entrepreneurs unlike males face a range of obstacles that prevent them from being more successful, expanding and earning more.

Violence has negative consequences not only for the life and health of victims and their families, but also leads to significant socio-economic costs for society. Due to gender-based violence, some countries lose up to 3.7% of their GDP. This is more than 2 times the spending of most governments on the education system.

The laws of Central Asian states have no regulations that restrict economic rights by gender in any way. Regardless of gender, anyone may freely register as a sole proprietor, open a legal entity for the purpose of manufacture. Nevertheless, female entrepreneurs in all countries of the region are far fewer than male entrepreneurs.

**Only one third of entrepreneurs in Central Asia are women**



Source: Statistics Agencies of CA states

One of weighty factors hindering the effective fulfilment of women's economic potential is the irrational distribution of housework and gender stereotypes in the society. Moreover, a man, usually a father or a husband, controls the property in Central Asian countries. It means lower financial capacities for women from the very beginning.

Moreover, according to experts, women may encounter obstacles within a household. A man may forbid his wife to work, so that the woman could give herself to keep hearth and home together and to raise children.

One of the reasons for such inequality is that women are traditionally employed in social, low-paid areas of education, medicine, social services. It seems that women can grade up to men's incomes in business. However, it's not that simple. According to the report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, female entrepreneurs earn less than their male colleagues in Central Asian states. They usually focus on a limited number of activities such as public catering, tailoring, wholesale and retail trade, beauty salons, and food processing, and are behind men in terms of volumes and productivity.

**Solution**

Since 2022, in the frame of the regional meetings of the of the National Trade Facilitation Committees, TFCA has been organizing **Central Asian Networking and Leadership Conferences for Women in Trade** jointly with World Trade Organization (WTO), International Trade Center (ITC), Association of Women in Logistics and Transport (WILAT) and other national and international partners.

Female representatives from public and private sector, involved in trade procedures from Central Asian countries participate at these events to learn experts' presentations from Central Asia and abroad, facilitate discussions, share their success stories, experience, proposals, and use this forum as a regional hub for networking.

As per TFCA regional project observation, the role of female customs inspectors, women working in ministries responsible for trade is mostly in the middle management and only a very few women make it to the higher management. Also, when observing border posts in Central Asia, it's hardly possible to see a woman. So, one of the approaches to the solution of this situation was to give trainings on leadership skills, negotiation skills, and of course, the most important one is on digital skills. This can give the capacities to women to grow in their career and have more influence on the agenda of setting on trade facilitation.

So, the subjects that women discuss are related to the role of gender in trade facilitation; gender equality, diversity, and inclusion; experience on the NTFC Gender Subcommittees of other

countries abroad; digital transformation in trade and steps to success within digitalization; overcoming personal barriers to business growth; practice of business negotiations etc.

## Results

As a result, they raised awareness on gender related aspects of trade facilitation; developed recommendations for overcoming challenges for women in trade; improved leadership skills to enhance women's participation in trade procedures; created networking between women from public and private sector, involved in trade; strengthen networking between women from public and private sector.

Due to the organization of this Central Asian Networking and Leadership Conferences for Women in Trade, the number of female participants at the Regional Meetings of NTFCs increased from 30% in 2019 to 50% in 2023.

## Outlook

Based on the experiences described above, the project plans to implement targeted gender-related activities in the next programme phase to increase women's role in trade in Central Asia.

Link: <https://bit.ly/3uLKj7w>

*Pictures from the second conference for women in trade in November 2023*

