

Workshop on advancing regional trade integration through RTAs in Asia and the Pacific

Bangkok, 9-10 Oct 2023

Session 5. Gender in RTAs

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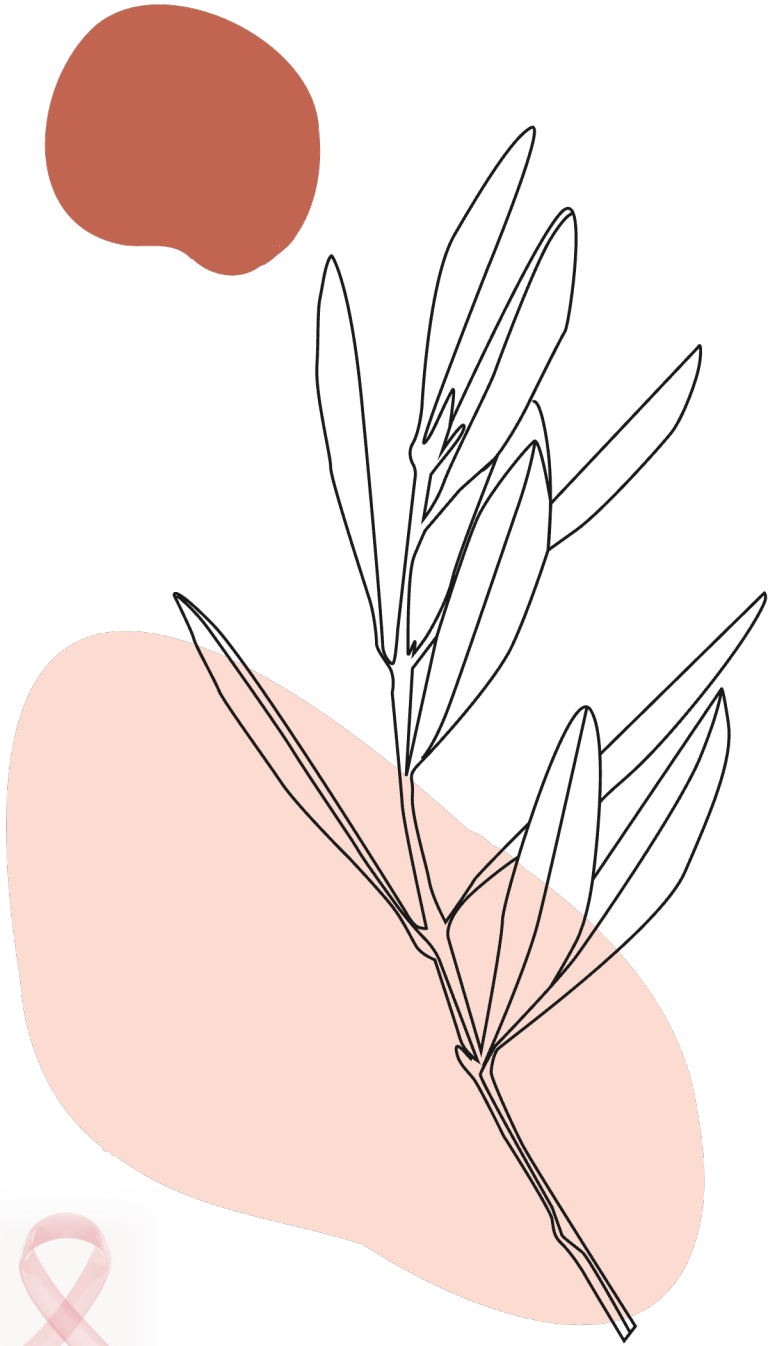
RTAs are not a Panacea for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment

Overview

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ RTAs and gender equality and women's economic empowerment (WEE)
- ✓ Limitations to RTAs' effective promotion of gender equality
- ✓ External factors influencing gender inequality
- ✓ Multifaceted approach
- ✓ Recommendations and conclusions
- ✓ References

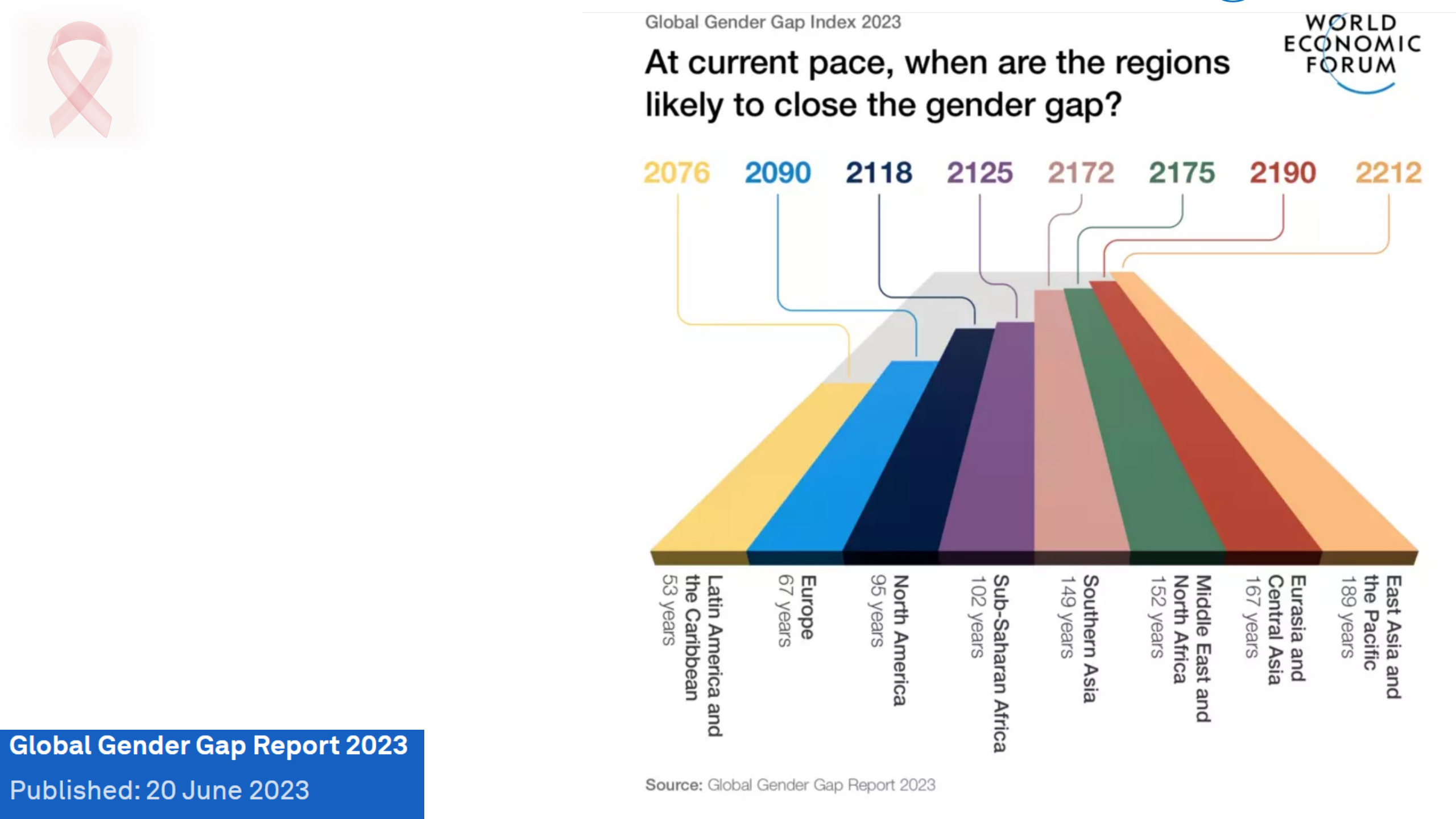




Introduction

- A brief reminder of the existing gender gaps in the members of APTA, region, or globally

- Role of trade in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment



Global Gender Gap Report 2023

Published: 20 June 2023

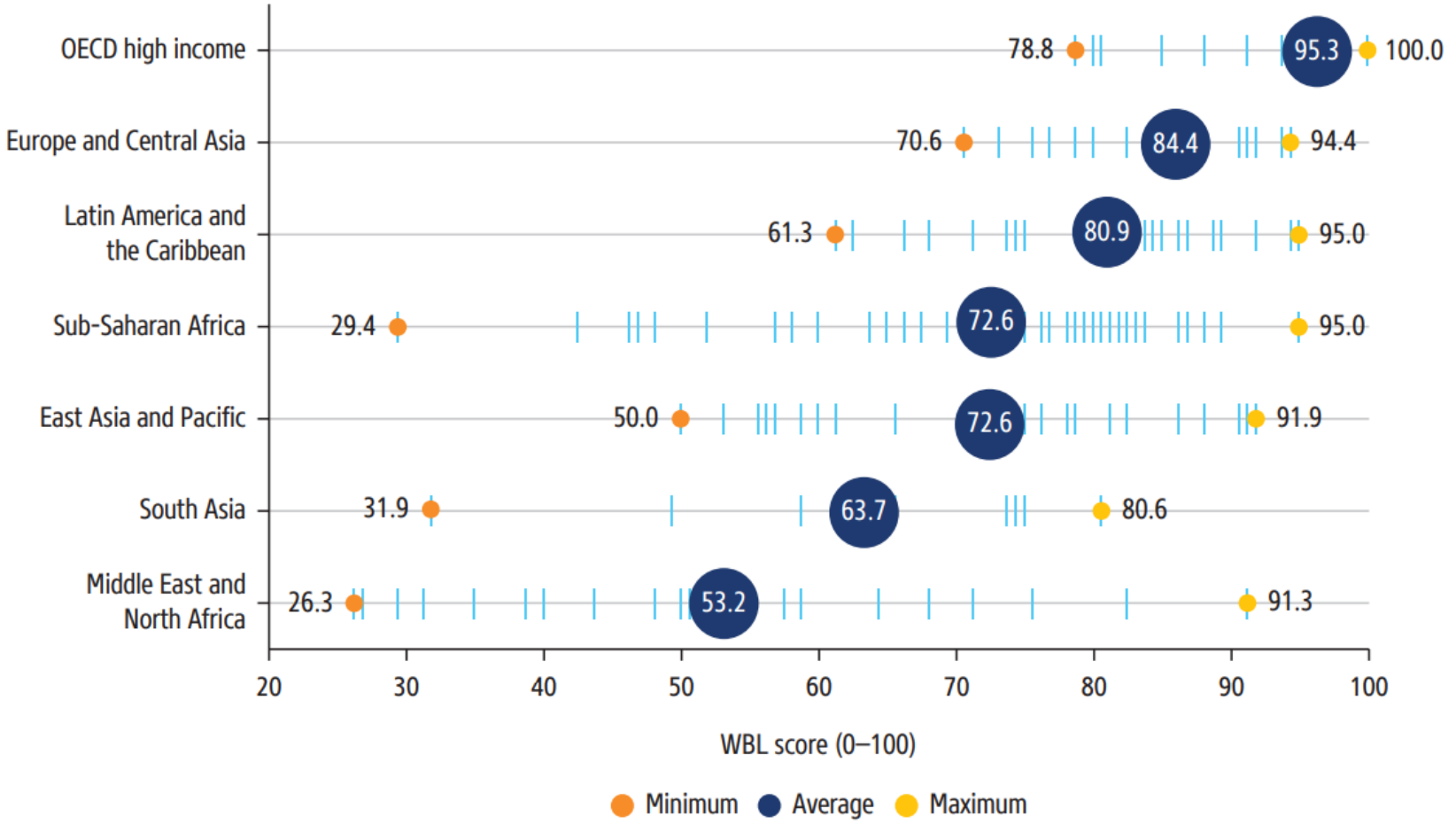
Global Gender Gap index

The Global Gender Gap Index measures scores on a 0 to 100 scale and scores can be interpreted as the **distance covered towards parity** (i.e. the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed).

Country	Overall	Economic	Education	Health	Political
Bangladesh	0.722	0.438	0.936	0.962	0.552
China	0.678	0.727	0.935	0.937	0.114
India	0.643	0.307	1.000	0.950	0.253
Lao PDR	0.733	0.851	0.964	0.975	0.140
Mongolia	0.704	0.745	0.994	0.980	0.099
Rep. of Korea	0.680	0.597	0.977	0.976	0.169
Sri Lanka	0.663	0.555	0.988	0.980	0.130
Global Av.	**0.684**	**0.601**	**0.952**	**0.960**	**0.221**
Years to parity	*131*	*169*	*16*	*na*	*162*

FIGURE ES.2 | THE LARGEST GAPS ARE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA AND IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Dispersion of Women, Business and the Law 2023 *average scores, by region*



Source: Women, Business and the Law database.

Note: Each vertical line represents the score of an economy in its respective region. Each blue circle indicates the average score for a region. The minimum and maximum scores within each region are specified. OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.



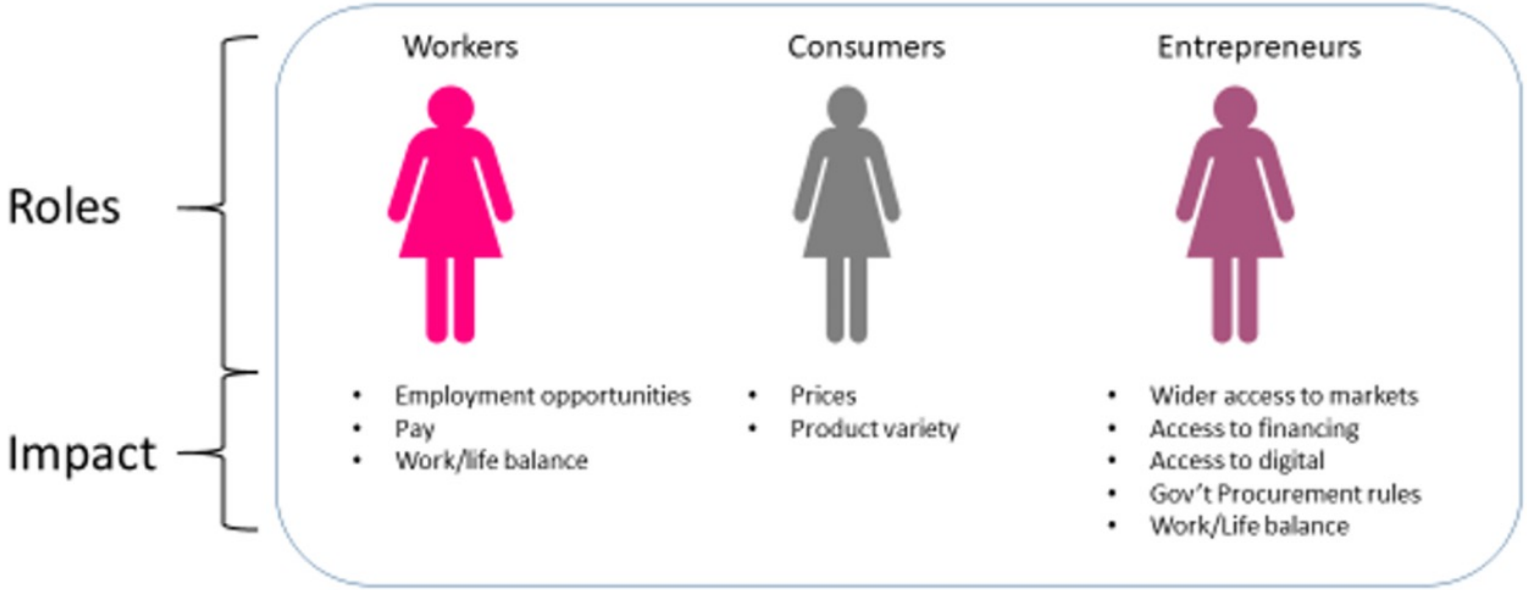
Women, Law and Business 2023 Index

Shows the distance to 100 where both women and men have equal legal rights. At BAU, 50 years or 1500 reforms are needed to achieve equality under the law.

Country	Overall	Mobility	Work-place	Pay	Marriage	Parent-hood	Entrepr-eneurship	Assets	Pension
Banglade sh	49.4	100	50	25	60	20	75	40	25
China	78.1	100	100	25	100	100	75	100	25
India	74.4	100	100	25	100	40	75	80	75
Lao PDR	88.1	100	100	75	100	80	100	100	50
Mongolia	90.6	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	25
Rep. of Korea	85.0	100	100	25	100	80	75	100	100
Sri Lanka	65.6	100	75	25	100	20	75	80	50
Global Av.	**77.1**								

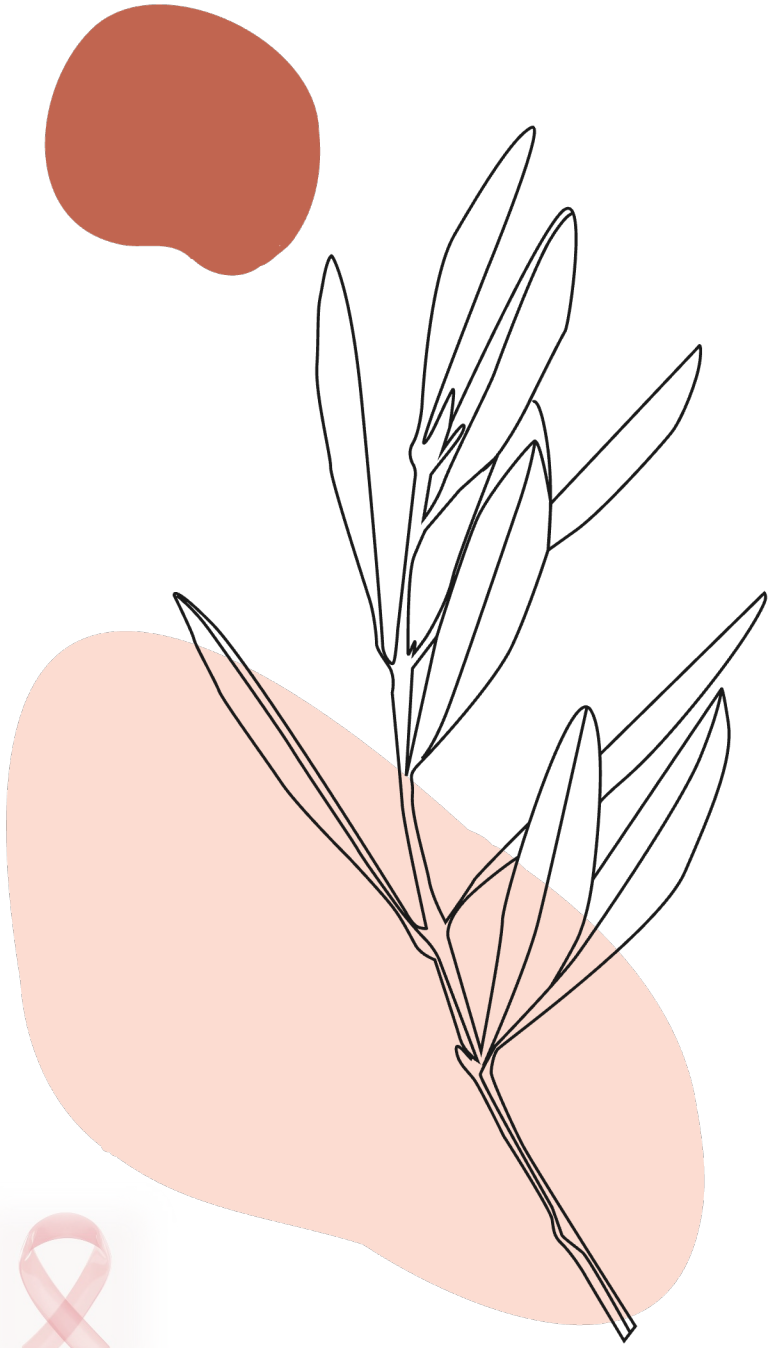
Why is trade crucial for gender equality and women's economic empowerment?

OECD Analytical Framework 2021:



Plus:

- ✓ Positive spillover effects on social norms
- ✓ Policy leverage and advocacy



RTAs and promotion of gender equality and WEE

- The evolution of RTAs and their propensity to expand their scope, from shallow to deep trade agreements

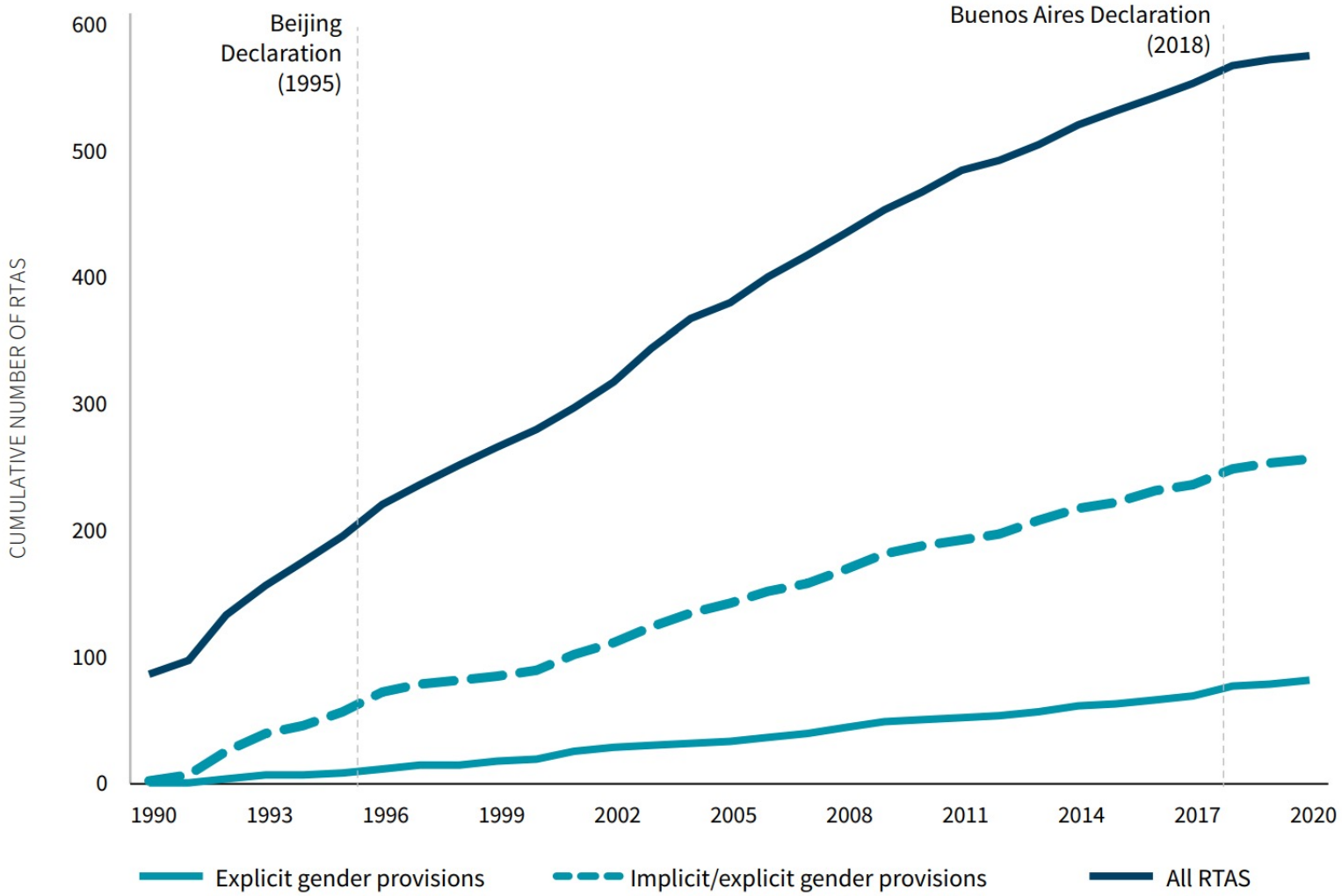
- Inclusion of non-trade (non-economic) objectives

- Gender-related provisions in RTAs on a rise

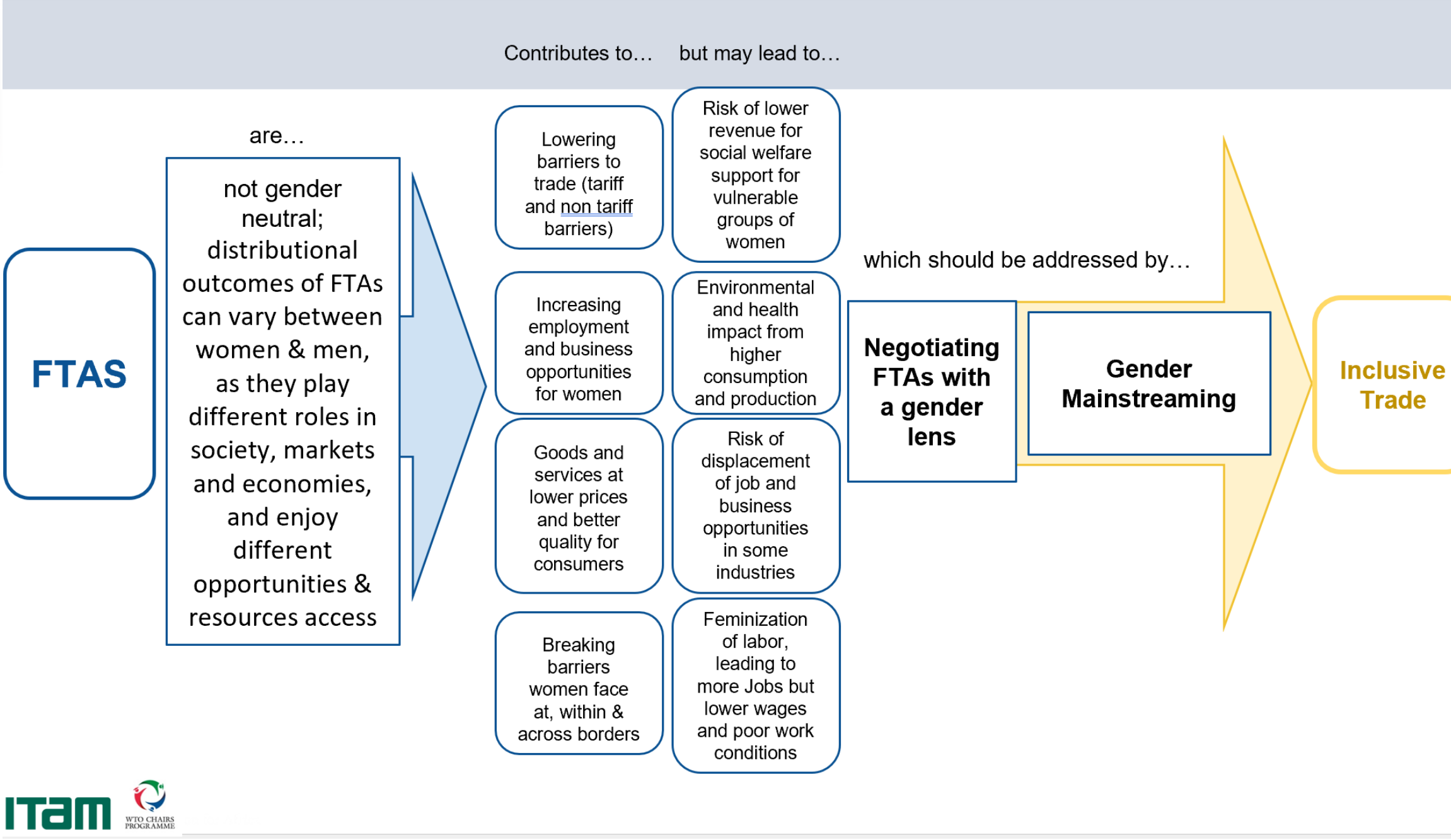
Evolution of RTAs and gender provisions

Explicit and Implicit Gender Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs)

- ✓ Number of agreements mentioning gender increases over time
- ✓ Some countries opt to include a separate chapter on gender equality (NZ-UK FTA)
- ✓ Global Trade and Gender Arrangement (GTAGA)
- ✓ Only one multilateral agreement (DRS) includes a provision on gender



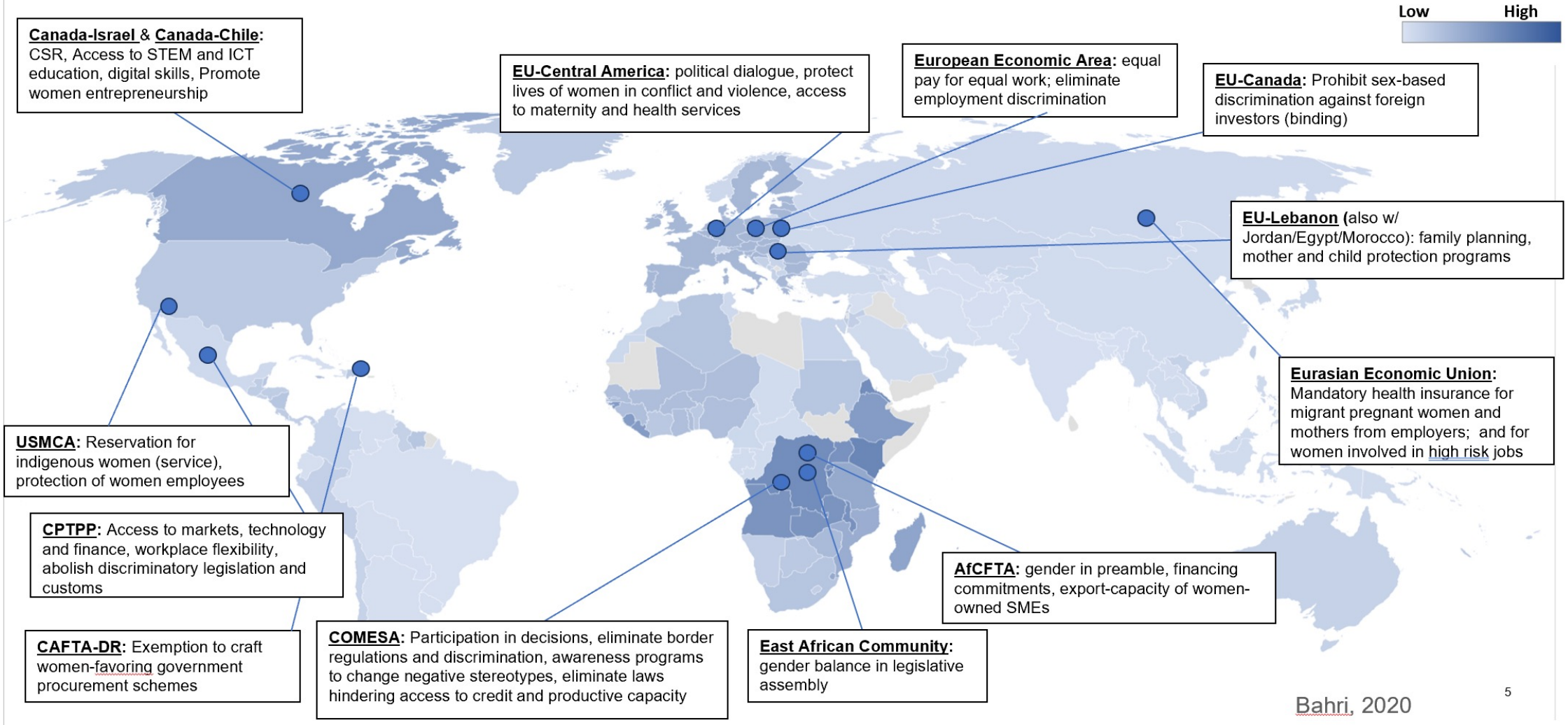
Source: José-Antonio Monteiro. *The Evolution of Gender-Based Provisions in Regional Trade Agreements* (Geneva: Economic Research and Statistics Division, World Trade Organization, February 24, 2021), https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd202108_e.pdf.



Source: Bahri (2023) Presentation for the Masterclass, Gender and Trade in LDCs, UNCTAD

Trade Agreements can Help: Good Practice Examples

The Solution



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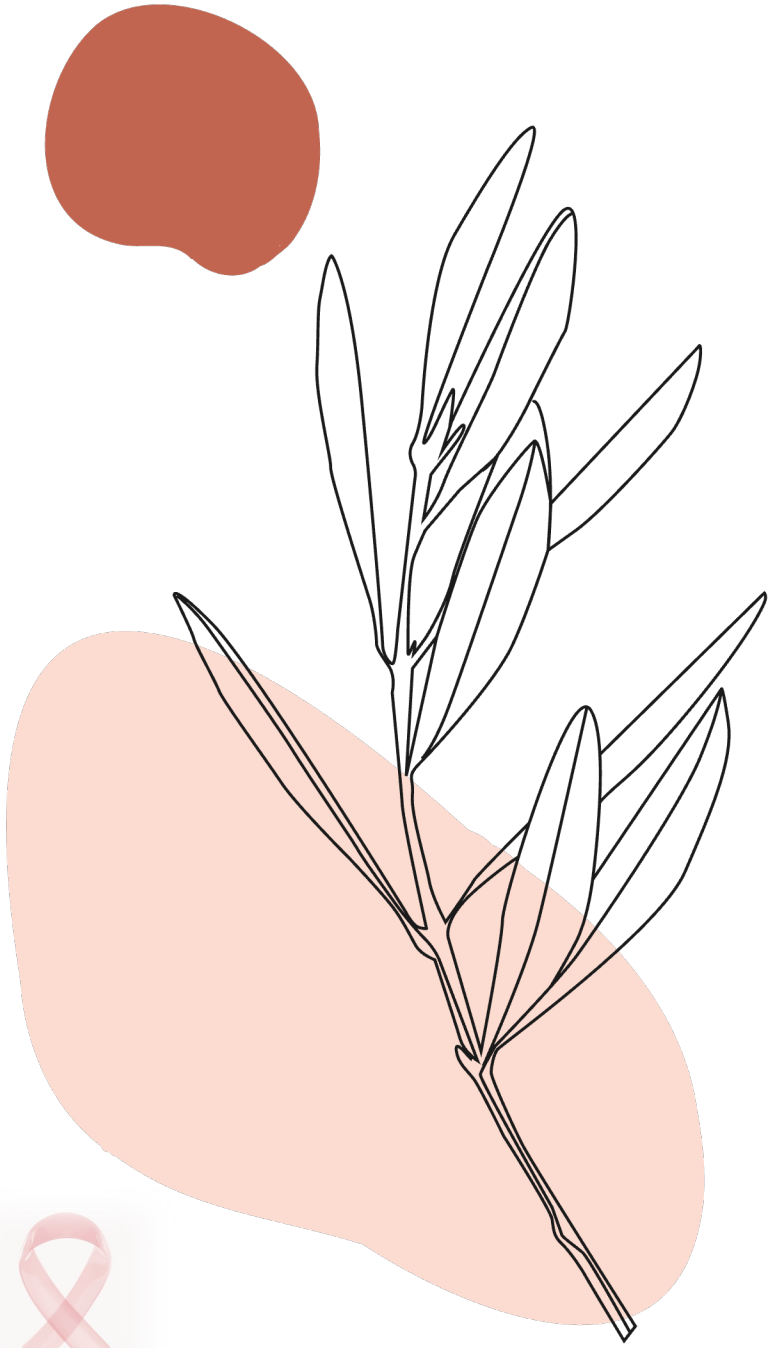
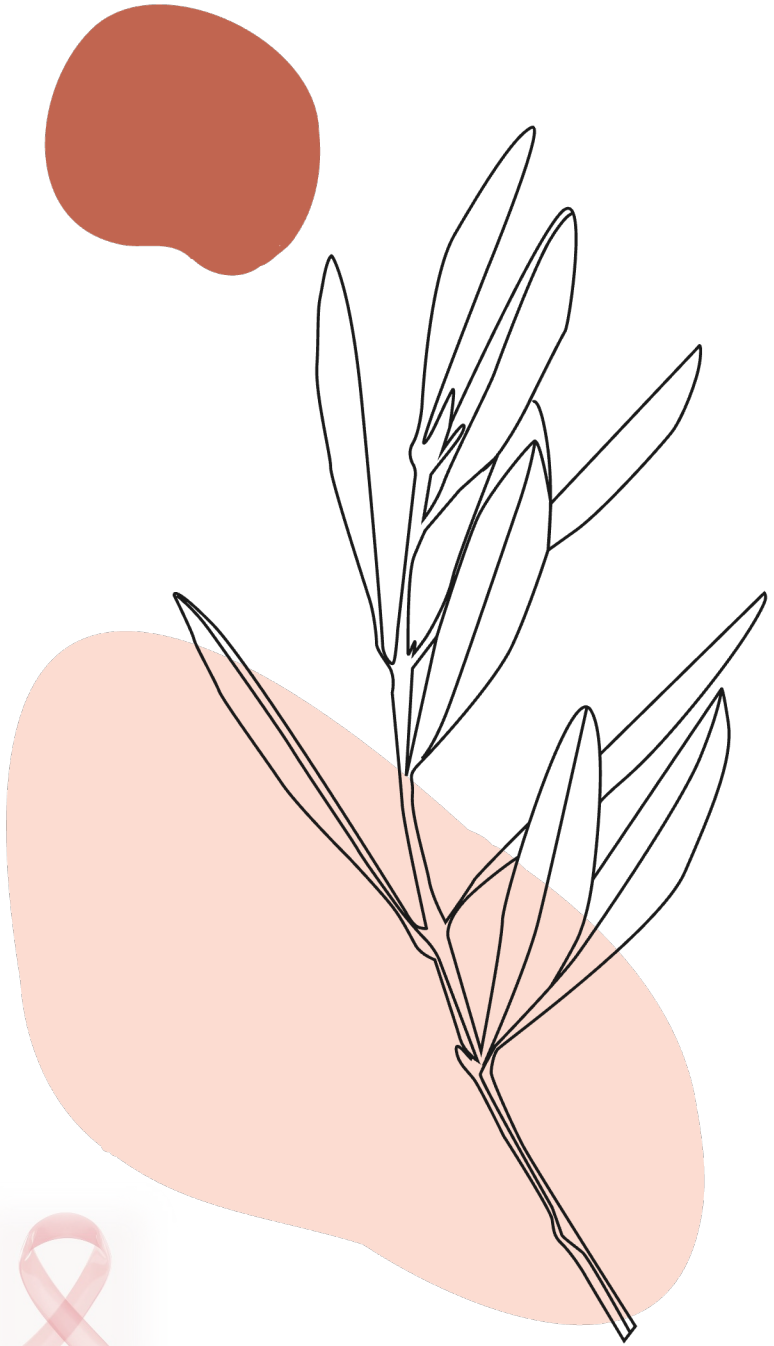


Limitations of current RTAs' effective promotion of gender equality and WEE

- Provisions are generic and lack specificity

- Enforcement issues: The lack of robust mechanisms to ensure countries adhere to gender-related provisions

- Economic discrepancies: certain trade liberalization measures might inadvertently disadvantage female-dominated sectors



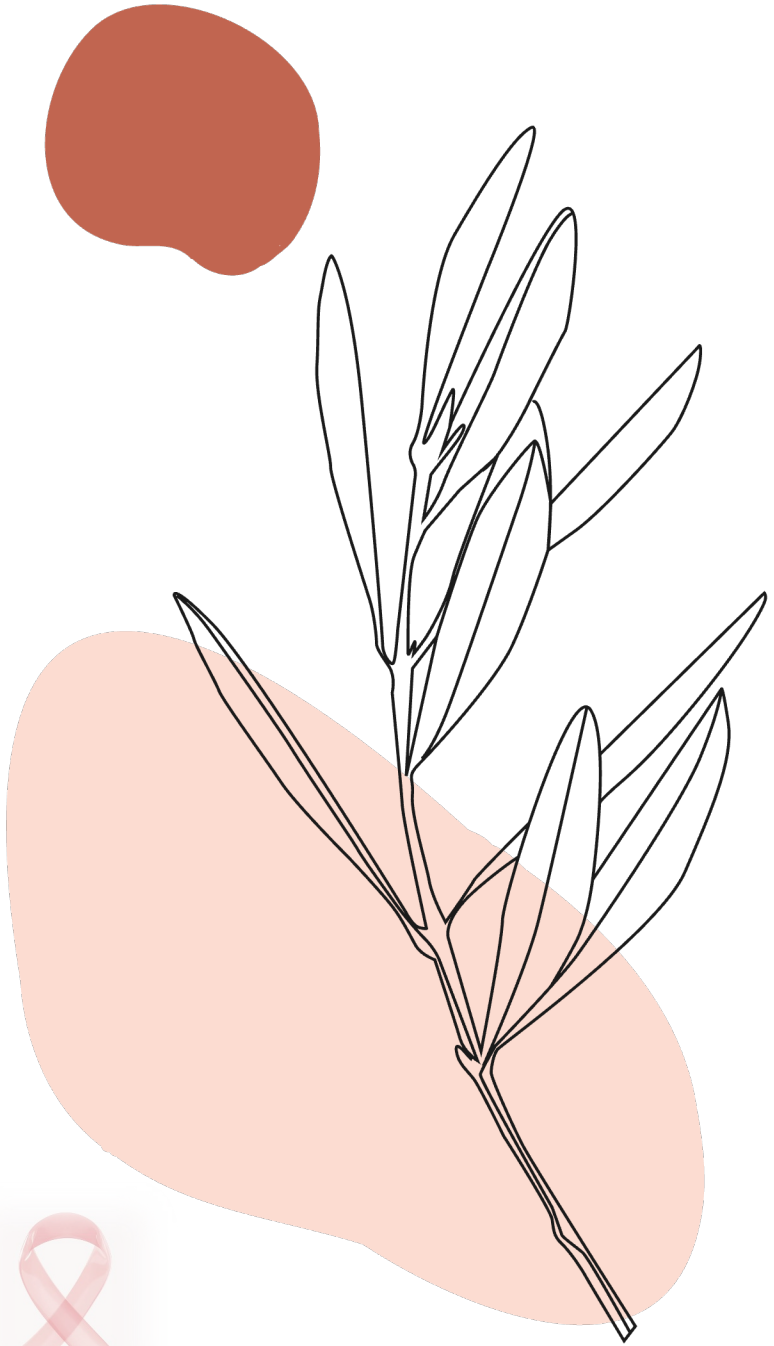
External factors influencing gender inequality

- Social and cultural norms that affect gender roles in different countries

- Education and training opportunities available for women

- Existing national laws that might supersede RTA provisions, such as discriminatory inheritance laws or restrictions on women's work

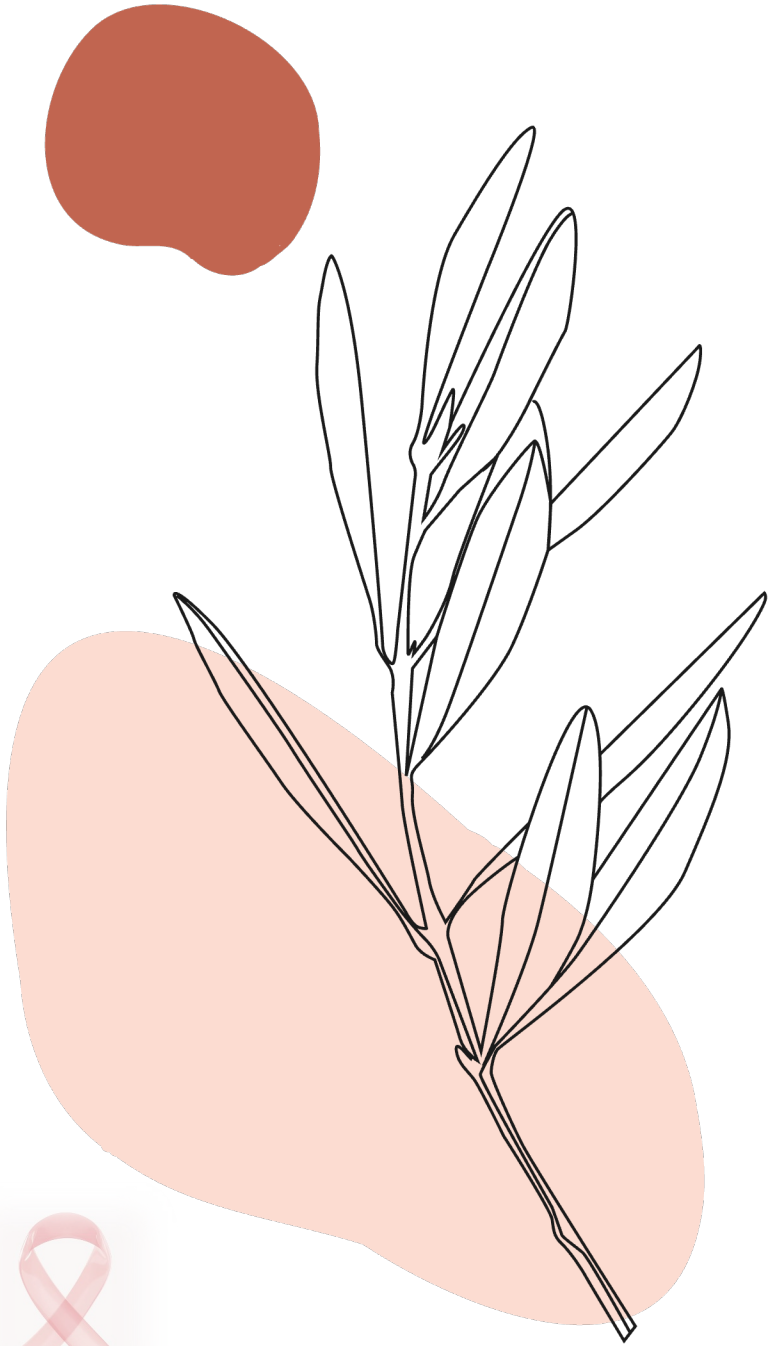
- Reflect on the existing gender equality gaps, gender digital gaps, gender profitability gaps, gender leadership gaps…. and what are the approaches to close these gaps?



Multifaceted approach

- The importance of *combining RTAs* with national (trade and other) policies, grassroots movements, and international collaborations

- Case studies showing successful multi-pronged strategies for gender equality and women's economic empowerment



Recommendations for policymakers and negotiators

- Draft future RTAs with more specific, actionable (hopefully binding) gender-related provisions

- Collaborate with gender experts and women's rights and business organizations during and after RTA negotiations

- Periodic (regular) reviews of RTAs to assess their impact on gender equality and make necessary amendments

- Use every opportunity to consider incorporating gender provisions into multilateral agreements

Conclusion

- RTAs can play an important role in promoting gender equality, but they are not a standalone solution

-we need a more holistic, multi-layered approach to truly empower women economically and ensure gender equality



Questions & discussion

Resources- read more in:

Bahri, A. et al., 2023. Trade Policy and Gender Equality, Cambridge University Press

Bahri, A., 2023. Presentation on the book Trade Policy and Gender Equality, Masterclass, Gender and Trade in LDCs, UNCTAD (26 Sep)

CSIS, 2021. Women and Trade- How Trade agreements can level the gender playing field

Kuhlmann, K. 2023. Handbook on Provisions and Options for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Trade Agreements, UN ESCAP

Kuhlmann, K. and A. Bahri, 2023. Gender Mainstreaming in Trade Agreements: "A Potemkin Facade"?

Laperle-Forget, L. and Y. Trudel, 2023. Giving Teeth to Gender Equality: Challenging gender-related obligations compliance through RTAs dispute settlement

Mikic, M., 2023. Advances in Feminizing WTO, in Bahri et al.

Taneja. N. 2022. Women and Trade: Towards an Enabling Ecosystem in India, Policy Brief, ICREAR

UN ESCAP various RTA trend reports

