



The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa- COMESA

Overview of COMESA and Gender in COMESA

Tunisia-COMESA Conference on Women in Business

29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Outline



2

- I. **Part One: Overview of COMESA**

- II. **Part two: Overview of Gender in COMESA**



COMESA

- A regional economic community (REC), international inter-governmental organization or grouping of **21** African States which have agreed to promote regional integration through trade development.

COMESA VISION

- “To be a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community **with high standards of living for all its people** ready to merge into an African Economic Community”

Overview of COMESA



4

Objectives of COMESA

1. Create and maintain a full **free trade** with **free movement of goods and services** produced within COMESA and the **removal of all barriers**.
2. Establish a **Customs Union** where goods and services imported from non-COMESA countries will attract an agreed single tariff.
3. Free movement of capital and investments.
4. Gradual establishment of a payment union and the eventual establishment of a **common currency**.
5. Adoption of a **common visa** including the right of establishment leading eventually to free movement persons.

Overview of COMESA



Who are the COMESA Member States

- Burundi
- Comoros
- D R Congo
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Libya
- Madagascar



- Malawi
- Mauritius
- Rwanda
- Seychelles
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Tunisia
- Eswatini
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe



COMESA in Figures



6

No of Countries

21

Population

560 million People

Intra-Exports

USD 12.8 billion - 2021

Combined GDP

\$768 billion

Trade Potential

Intra-COMESA trade potential over \$100 billion - 2020

Fact

The largest regional economic body in Africa;
constitutes a third of the continent

Overview of COMESA



7

Programmes

- **Trade and Customs** – Trade facilitation and access to markets
- **Industry, Agriculture and Climate Change** – Industrialization, value addition, SME development, job creation, protection of the environment
- **Transport, Infrastructure, and Logistics (Energy, ICTs)**- infrastructure development, innovations,
- **Gender, Social Affairs and Youth** – Promote gender equality, women and youth empowerment, social development
- **Statistics and Research** – Evidence based programming and tracking of progress

COMESA Institutions



8

COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) based in **Malawi**: Support women in business. Has national chapters

Trade & Development Bank (TDB) based in **Burundi**: Provides financing for trade and development

COMESA Business Council: (Lusaka): is a Business Member Organization - business support services and linkages, policy advocacy and membership development;

PTA Reinsurance Company (ZEP-RE): Kenya: provides insurance cover for insurance companies

Court of Justice (Sudan)- interpretation of the COMESA treaty, adjudicates/arbitrates on unfair trade practices and injustices

COMESA Institutions



9

Regional Investment Agency: (Egypt): promoting investments within the region and facilitate the development of the private sector.

Africa Leather and Leather Products Institute: (Ethiopia): develop the leather industry in the COMESA Region through training.

Africa Trade Insurance Agency: (Kenya): provides insurance against political risks that may discourage investors.

COMESA Competition Commission: (Malawi): to enforce rules for fair competition in trade practices.



- **COMESA Clearing House: (Zimbabwe):** to enable MSs use their own currency for intra-regional trade instead of foreign currencies (e.g. \$, €)
- **COMESA Monetary Institute: (Kenya):** Coordinates the Monetary Harmonization programme;
- **Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) – (COMESA Secretariat);-** promote regional cooperation in energy development, trade and capacity building.



Part Two:

Overview of Gender in COMESA

Gender in COMESA



12

The founding leaders of COMESA recognized that there cannot be sustainable development without the participation of women, men and youth.

COMESA Treaty recognizes socio-economic differences of women and men, and the need to take deliberate efforts to address the challenges/gaps to make the work of COMESA at all levels to benefit all.

Overview of Gender in COMESA



13

- Data from various studies indicate that women and youth continue to lag behind in many areas of development including the sectors that COMESA works in.
 - **In Trade-** they are the majority at the lower level (micro and small-scale level) with limited access to markets
 - **In Agriculture** – they are the majority small-scale farmers
 - **In Industry**, they are those who cannot meet the SPS/TBT standards to access markets
 - **In Energy and ICTs**– they have limited access

Issues of Concern among Women Entrepreneurs in the Trade Sector



14

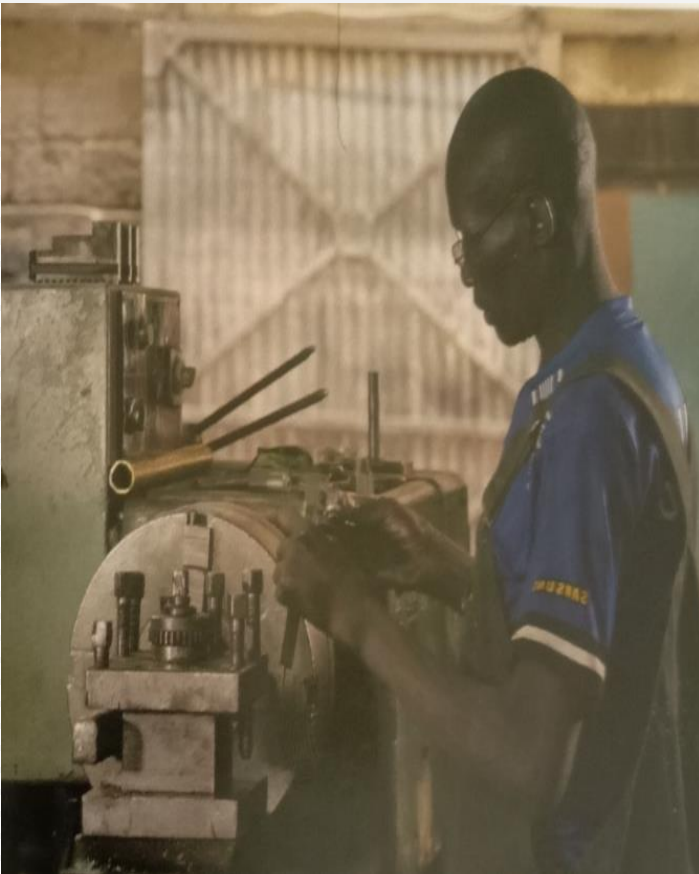


- Limited awareness to information on opportunities under regional and continental FTA
- Inadequate skills on export management, costing, packaging, etc
- Limited knowledge and capacity to comply with standards and regulations, business registration; tax, labour laws, etc;
- Lack of linkages to finance lending institutions;
- Limited participation in trade fairs, business networks;
- Lack of trading, storage, sanitary and childcare facilities at borders;

Issues of Concern among Women Entrepreneurs in the Productive Sector



15



- Limited access to equipment, land, inputs;
- Most women run micro, small, informal, individual businesses (not shareholders in large firms or cooperatives);
- Limited access to information on investment opportunities, markets, financial services;
- Limited opportunities for mentorship and sharing of experiences.

Issues of Concern among women Entrepreneurs under the Connectivity (Soft/Physical Infrastructure) Domain



- Limited access to ICTs, digital information and networking platforms including e-commerce platforms;
- Limited awareness and use of platform dedicated to the information needs of women entrepreneurs;
- Limited ICT skills
- Limited access to electricity supply;

Other Issues of Concern



17

- Limited availability of **gender statistics** in economic sectors;
- Limited **Affirmative Action** or efforts on gender responsive procurement,
- Care burden – **time poverty**
- High rate of illiteracy among women
- Harassment and GBV
- Low representation of **women in leadership** to advocate for their rights;
- Limited budgetary support to initiatives supporting women



Regional

- COMESA Treaty
- Institutional structures
- COMESA Gender Policy (2016)
- COMESA MTSP 2021 – 2025

Continental alignment

- African Union - Agenda 2063; Maputo Protocol on Gender; AU Gender Strategy; **Achieve full Gender Equality in all spheres**

UN Global alignment

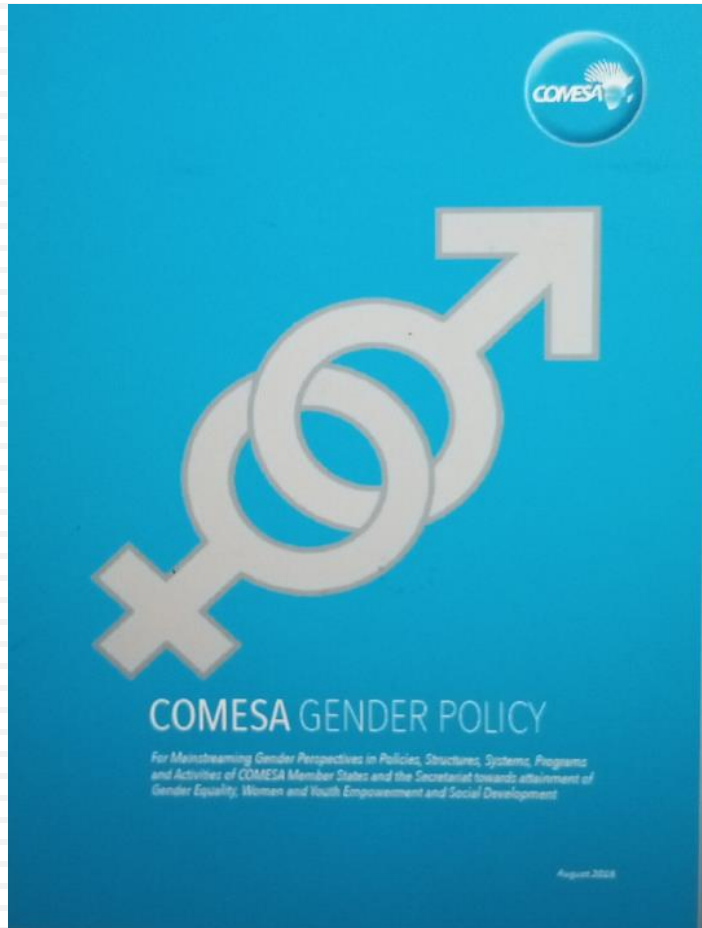
- Agenda for Sustainable Development; Beijing Platform of Action; **Achieve Gender Equality and Empowerment of all women and girls**



- **Article 154:** Calls for full participation of women in agriculture, industry and trade, elimination of discrimination against women, adoption of technologies to empower women, and support to institutions promoting GEWE.
- **Article 155;** Calls for awareness on women in business issues, creation of enabling environment for women to participate effectively, special programmes for women SMEs, skills training, access to finance



- Gender Division at Secretariat
- COMFWB
- National COMFWB Chapters
- Gender Technical Working Group
- Ministries of Gender in Member States
- Gender Commissions at Member States
- CSOs promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (**partnership**)



- **The policy calls on stakeholders** to support women to ensure equal access to and control of resources and opportunities; provide targeted financial packages and training for women; and provide information and networking platforms, among others.



- Twin Track Approach – (**Mainstream Gender in all Pillars**, and Stand-alone Pillar on Gender and Social Integration).
- Eliminate gender inequalities to strengthen inclusion of women and youth in all pillars of the regional integration agenda (market integration, productive integration, physical connectivity, and enabling mechanisms and processes and M/E framework).
- Targeted support for women MSMEs



Key Interventions

23

- ▣ **Capacity building initiatives** including Gender and Trade Online Course;
- ▣ **Gender guidelines** for different sectors;
- ▣ **Gender Technical Working Group** -availability of gender focal persons in division/unit/institution;
- ▣ Gender Statistics initiative- Promote availability of **gender disaggregated data** for evidence-based planning and for tracking progress;



Connected. Networked. Empowered.
Connectées. Réseautées. Autonomisées.
تواصل. ترابط. تمكين

- www.womenconnect.org
- **50MAWS mobile App**
 - For enhanced access to markets, information, capacity building, mentorship, networking opportunities, and other services

Cross-Border Initiatives



25

- **Small-scale cross border trade initiatives** to address gender issues and ease operating environment at borders, and promote formalization of businesses for women;
- **Traders Charter-** on obligations of service providers and cross border traders to ensure protection of small scale cross border traders

Simplified Trade Regime; Border Facilities; Addressing GBV, Corruption, Harassment, Access to information; Collection of gender disaggregated data,

Profiling of Women and Youth SMEs



26

- a) Identify a pool of women and youth SMEs mainly to capture sector, market and enterprise-level information in order to identify key constraints and opportunities at country, regional and international levels for targeted support.
- b) Generate evidence and knowledge on the status and challenges of women and youth-led SMEs in the COMESA region for evidence-based policy making, program development and resource allocation;
- c) Document and share good practices of women and youth led SMEs in the COMESA region;
- d) Facilitate the creation of women and youth-led SMEs database in the COMESA region.



Expected Results

27

- Improved implementation of **legal, policy and strategic frameworks** that for inclusive and effective participation of women and youth in all programmes, projects
- **Strengthened gender mainstreaming and youth integration in programs** implemented by Member States, COMESA Secretariat and COMESA Institutions.
- Increased awareness and **access to opportunities for and participation of women and youth in intra regional trade (COMESA FTA and AfCFTA)**
- **Strengthened availability gender sensitive statistics** related to COMESA's regional integration agenda.

Conclusion



28

- Women and youth are all critical players to the Regional Integration Agenda and must be adequately engaged, empowered to participate and contribute effectively to the cause.
- WE must all do part.



**Thank you for your
Attention**