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TOOLKIT

“Women Economic Empowerment
in BRICS: Policies, Achievements,
Challenges and Solutions”



With the support of the
Ministry of Economic Development
of the Russian Federation

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Toolkit “Women Economic Empowerment in BRICS: Policies, Achievements, Challenges and Solutions”

Edited by: Dr. Victoria Panova, Dr. Natalia Stapran

Project coordinators: Valeriia Gorbacheva, Ksenia Shevtsova, Stepan Kanakin

Authors: Dr. Marina Larionova, Irina Popova, Andrey Sakharov, Natalia Strigunova, Dr. Andrey Shelepov

Contributors: Evgenia Drozhashchikh, Nikita Kondratyev

Designed by: Olga Novoselova

Russian National Committee on BRICS Research
13-2 Krzhizhanovskogo str. Moscow
info@nkibrics.ru
www.nkibrics.ru

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Foreword by Dr. Victoria Panova



Victoria Panova

Scientific Supervisor,
BRICS Russia Expert Council;

Managing Director,
Russian National Committee
on BRICS Research

Dear friends,

We are delighted to present to your attention the Toolkit “Women Economic Empowerment in BRICS: Policies, Achievements, Challenges and Solutions”. It is a first-of-its-kind overarching study designed within the framework of the Russian BRICS Chairmanship in 2020. Why now and what purpose will it serve?

We believe that this toolkit is a rapid and targeted response to alleviate the adverse impact on women and girls caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year the world has seen implications of gender disparity trends that have been evolving throughout human history - lack of women’s economic participation, gender digital divide, prevalence of informal employment and unpaid care work as well as an alarming level of domestic violence against women during COVID-19 lockdowns worldwide.

To that end, BRICS, as a prominent example of an alliance uniting socially responsible economies, has always been attaching great importance to ensuring the inclusiveness of its communities and to meeting the needs of citizens. BRICS is committed to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls thereby implementing Sustainable Development Goal 5. Our priorities include endeavors to enhance the voice and representation of women in our economies and to promote an open and balanced economic development.

In keeping with these priorities, BRICS countries adopted its first Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership in 2015 to be renewed this year for another five year term. As one of the core instruments for BRICS cooperation, the Strategy enshrined the importance of experience exchange on the integration of targeted groups, including women, into the mainstream economy. BRICS countries, jointly and on their national levels have built expertise and a solid database of best practices with regards to the economic empowerment of women. The time has come to share this knowledge for the benefit of all.

Today the mission of BRICS should not end with responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic or some other factors. The mission of BRICS is about building a world in the interest of everyone with women at the center of its economic recovery. There is no doubt that BRICS will play its role to foster women inclusion and empowerment, and I am convinced that the presented Toolkit would add value to the efforts of our five countries in this direction.

Foreword by Dr. Natalia Stapran



Natalia Stapran

Director,
Department of Multilateral Economic
Cooperation and Special Projects,
Ministry of Economic Development
of the Russian Federation

Dear friends,

I have a pleasure to present to all our colleagues a new BRICS expert document “Women Economic Empowerment in BRICS: Policies, Achievements, Challenges and Solutions”.

On behalf of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation I would like to thank the BRICS Russia Expert Council for the significant work being done to prepare the first ever document in BRICS on this significant issue.

It is remarkable that the document is presented in the year of 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: now relevant data is available to measure the progress of our countries towards these commitments in economic dimension. It is of key importance that the BRICS member states pledged to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, including Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Women economic empowerment as one of the key issues of the BRICS economic agenda gains momentum in these challenging times of tackling a pandemic-related crisis.

Collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data is a vital priority nowadays as it is necessary for evidence-based policymaking.

We highly appreciate sharing best practices with the BRICS partners on the substantial issues of women empowerment agenda. Meaningful cases of the best experience were gathered, which should inspire all of us for new projects and initiatives aimed at unleashing the potential of women participation in the economy.

Analytics and data on BRICS women economic empowerment will be helpful as well for developing activities and initiating new projects of BRICS Women Business Alliance. In view of this we highly appreciate the new document as successful experience of practically-oriented collaboration between expert and business tracks in BRICS.

Let me express confidence that fresh high-relevant analytics and sharing best experience will catalyze the women economic empowerment in BRICS and contribute to effective participation of our women in the world economy and post-pandemic recovery.

Executive Summary

Persistent gender-based barriers hamper sectoral reallocation, impede a more efficient allocation of labour, slow a rise in total labour force participation, reduce productivity and economic growth rates. The BRICS countries have undertaken various and differing measures and initiatives for eliminating barriers, integrating women in economic activities, reducing the gender digital divide and ensuring gender economic equity but still have a long way to go.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the pre-existing barriers and knocked back the progress across every sphere, from health to the economy. Compounded economic and social impacts are felt especially by women due to their share in the health sector, informal employment and unpaid care work. More than ever the BRICS collective commitment to women economic empowerment is needed in addressing the double-pronged crisis.

The report presents an analysis of the policies, current trends, barriers, common challenges and opportunities in women economic empowerment in the BRICS countries. It highlights best practices in the BRICS members' gender policy which can be implemented by partners to overcome existing hurdles. The review is intended to facilitate peer learning and policy-making for the wellbeing of the BRICS women, societies and economies. The document starts with a brief overview of the members' national policies. It then reflects on the achievements, common challenges and prospects for women empowerment. In conclusion it provides policy recommendations for BRICS agenda and members' national policies.

BRICS pledged to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 on gender equality and 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, which seeks to address gender inequalities at work. The BRICS members demonstrated commitment and made progress towards bridging gender divide in the economy. All BRICS members have special national comprehensive policies to facilitate women empowerment and public authorities directly responsible for their implementation.

Brazil implemented a comprehensive strategy for women empowerment in 2013–2015. A new programme is now discussed by the government and interested stakeholders. Article 461 of the Brazilian Labour Code provides for equal pay for work of equal value. The Constitutional Amendment No. 72 (2013) extended labour rights to domestic workers. The 2015 Amendments (Art. 10) to the Constitution introduced employment protection regulations to prevent employers from making women redundant in the event of pregnancy. The Ministry on women, family and human rights is responsible for the gender policy coordination. Brazil achieved equality in terms of edu-

cation and health between men and women. However, women's average monthly salary is only 65% of that of men. Moreover, the higher the educational level, the greater the difference in income: from 1.4 times for those with up to 8 years of schooling, to 2.5 times on average for men and women with more than 15 years of study. Most of Brazil's 7 million domestic workers are women. Despite a 4 percent increase since 2009 only 39% of managers in the public and private sectors are women.

The National Strategy of Actions in the Interests of Women for 2017–2022 adopted by Russia in 2017 provides for improving the economic status of women and ensuring the growth of their welfare, inter alia. Coordinating Council for the Implementation of the Strategy under the Government of the Russian Federation was established in 2016. Equal pay for work of equal value is guaranteed by article 22 of the Labour Code. Measures to integrate women into the labour market are combined with social and

educational policies, such as maternity capital, child benefits, right to parental childcare leave for men, universal access to pre-school education for children below 3 years of age (to be provided by 2021). Support to women's entrepreneurship and participation in the labour market resulted in the increase of women in leadership positions in business (47% in 2018) and participation in the labour market (68.9% in 2018). However, according to ILO estimates the wage gap is still high amounting to 24.9% in 2018.

The Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development prepared the draft National Policy for Women in 2019. The comprehensive policy addresses the diverse needs of women through seven priority areas including health, education, economy, violence against women, governance and decision making, enabling environ-

ment and climate change. The Equal Remuneration Act and the Minimum Wages Act provides for the protection for women workers and equal pay. Over the last decade, India achieved considerable progress on gender equality in areas such as education and maternity care. The government's program for skills development, subsidized loans for businesses led by women, legislation doubling maternity leave, and requiring childcare facilities in companies that employ more than 50 people can remove structural barriers women face and offer a significant boost to India's economy. However, the policies have not yet translated into significant increase in women labour market participation (23.6% in 2018) and entrepreneurship (currently women constitute 14% of the total number of entrepreneurs).

The current National Program for Women's Development in China (2011–2020) set ambitious targets of ensuring that women constitute 40% of labour force by 2020, reducing the gender gaps in employment and income, raising the proportion of women among high level professional and technical personnel up to 35%, fully implementing the policy of equal pay for equal work. Implementation of the Program is coordinated and supported by the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council. China made significant progress reducing vulnerable employment and supporting transition from rural to urban jobs. Women own almost 31% of all business in China and the level of financial inclusion is assessed at 100%.¹ At the same time female workers are concentrated mostly in services, agriculture and informal work. Despite equality in law, gender inequality in pay

persists (women earn about 80% of men's salary²) and female to male share of unpaid care work is estimated at around 2.5.

South Africa's Social Transformation and Economic Empowerment program and the National Development Plan 2030 pursue the goal gender equality mainstreaming across policy areas. The Department of Women oversees implementation of the Programme as well as the Women's Financial Inclusion Framework and Framework on Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing. South Africa managed to close the gender gap in education achieving parity in terms of primary, and post-secondary educational attainment. However, unemployment disproportionately affects women with 29.5% unemployment rate. Self-employment is also low (12.9%).



The BRICS members' comprehensive multi-year strategies are complemented by focused initiatives with participation of private sector, targeting distinct issues impeding women participation in the economy. They include education, skills and professional development; support to start ups, enhancing access to digital technologies, especially in rural and remote areas; promoting women business leadership and improving access to finance.

Flexible work arrangements, currently in place in response to the pandemic, should continue beyond it and provide a new model of shared responsibilities within households.

However, BRICS tend to be ranked lower than developed and even some developing countries by various international indices, such as the WEF Global Gender Gap Index, the OECD SDG Gender Index and the UNDP Gender Development Index, where the BRICS members have an overall high performance in education and health, but lag behind in economic and especially political participation.

Barriers such as a higher amount of unpaid work, lack of quality childcare and elderly care facilities, unmet financing needs of women-owned businesses, lack of finance, necessary digital skills and knowledge and lower access to the technologies, persistent prejudice about the role of women in the society result in insufficient labour force participation, incommensurate entrepreneurial activities, inadequate participation in international trade and remaining gender

pay gap. Another important issue is lack of quality sex-disaggregated data for evidence-based policy making especially with regards to such areas as international trade, MSMEs and digital economy as well as comprehensive systemically collected statistics on unpaid work.

In the current double-pronged crisis more than ever the BRICS collective commitment to women economic empowerment is needed. "What is good for women is ultimately good for addressing income inequality, economic growth, and resilience".³ It is vital that the BRICS countries not only implement "gender-responsive economic and social policies and place women's economic lives at the heart of the pandemic response and recovery plans"⁴, but also take future-oriented actions to ensure women' equal participation and contribution to economic growth.

Improved education and training opportunities for women would facilitate the shift from precarious jobs to more stable and better-protected employment. Gender-responsive trade policies would open new opportunities to women as employees and entrepreneurs. Broader provision of social services would lift wom-

en's care burden and give them more time for paid jobs and leisure. Flexible work arrangements, currently in place in response to the pandemic, should continue beyond it and provide a new model of shared responsibilities within households.

¹ <https://newsroom.mastercard.com/asia-pacific/files/2017/03/Report-Mastercard-Index-of-Women-Entrepreneurs-2017-8-Mar.pdf>

² https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_650829/lang--en/index.htm

³ <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/07/21/the-covid-19-gender-gap/>

⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

Introduction

The BRICS countries made collective commitments to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation and agreed on a set of key policy principles to improve the quality of women's employment. Low levels of female participation rates have negative economic effects, like reducing potential growth rates. Indeed, gender equality is increasingly seen as the key to prosperous economies and inclusive sustainable growth, besides being a fundamental human right. These commitments support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, especially Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 on gender equality and 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, which seeks to address gender inequalities at work. Eliminating these barriers can have a tremendous social and economic impact.

A McKinsey study estimates that closing the gender gap could add at least USD 12 trillion to global GDP by 2025.⁵ Globally, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women could raise per capita productivity by 40%, according to the World Bank.⁶

Despite some significant progress in recent years, the gender gaps in the labour market participation remain large in the BRICS countries. In some cases, the gap has widened rather than decreased, and the years of solid economic growth have not necessarily led to higher female labour market participation.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic knocked back the progress across every sphere, from health to the economy. The BRICS countries were among the hardest hit in their respective regions.

Compounded economic and social impacts are felt especially by women due to their share in the health sector, informal employment and unpaid care work. Women's employment is likely to be hit more severely than men's by the current crisis as 41% of total female employment comes from the four sectors at high risk

of severe COVID-19 impact in terms of job losses.⁷ Of the 740 million women working in the informal economy, 42% are found in the abovementioned high-risk sectors, compared to 32% of men.⁸ Moreover, women represent less than 40% of total global employment but represent 57% of part-time workers whose jobs are among the first to be cut in the times of economic downturn. Earning less, saving less, and holding less stable jobs reduce women's ability to absorb the economic aftershocks of COVID-19.⁹ The pandemic, along with its associated closure of schools, childcare and other care facilities heavily increased the daily time spent on unpaid care work.¹⁰ As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic wrecks economies, reducing employment opportunities and triggering layoffs, women are expected to bear the heaviest brunt of job and economic losses.

⁵ https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Employment%20and%20Growth/How%20advancing%20womens%20equality%20can%20add%201.2%20trillion%20to%20global%20growth/MGI%20Power%20of%20parity_Full%20report_September%202015.ashx

⁶ <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB17-Report.pdf>

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744374.pdf

Table 1. Real GDP growth in 2020 projections (as of June 2020) and estimated impact on employment (as of end of April 2020)

	OECD ¹¹		World Bank ¹²	IMF ¹³	Estimated impact on employment: unemployment rate, %
	Single hit	Double hit			
Brazil	-7.4	-9.1	-8.0	-9.1	12.2019 – 11,0% 04.2020 – 12,6% ¹⁴
Russia	-8	-10	-6.0	-6.6	12.2019 – 4.6% 04.2020 – 5.8% ¹⁵
India	-3.7	-7.3	-3.2	-4.5	12.2019 – 7.6% 04.2020 – 23.5% ¹⁶
China	-2.6	-3.7	1.0	1.0	12.2019 – 5.2% 04.2020 – 6.0% ¹⁷
South Africa	-7.5	-8.2	-7.1	-8.0	2019Q4 – 29.1% 2020Q1 – 30.1% ¹⁸

Table 2. Women in health care (latest available data)

Sources: Brazil – Statista 2019, Russia – TASS 2018, India – WHO 2016, China - Chengxiang Tang & Daisheng Tang (2018) The trend and features of physician workforce supply in China: after national medical licensing system reform, South Africa – WHO 2017.

Indicator	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Share of women in number of physicians	45%	71%	17.1%	56%	43%

⁸ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744374.pdf

⁹ <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2319>

¹⁰ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_741060/lang--en/index.htm

¹¹ <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/real-gdp-forecast.htm>

¹² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects>

¹³ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/06/24/WEOUpdateJune2020>

¹⁴ <https://tradingeconomics.com/brazil/unemployment-rate>.

¹⁵ <https://gks.ru/storage/mediabank/osn-04-2020.pdf>.

¹⁶ <https://tradingeconomics.com/india/unemployment-rate>.

¹⁷ <https://tradingeconomics.com/china/unemployment-rate>.

¹⁸ <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>.

More than ever the BRICS collective commitment to women economic empowerment is needed in addressing the double-pronged crisis. It is vital that the BRICS countries not only implement “gender-responsive economic and social policies and place women’s economic lives at the heart of the pandemic response and recovery plans”¹⁹, but also take future oriented actions to ensure women’s equal participation and contribution to economic growth.

Improved education and training opportunities for women would facilitate the shift from precarious jobs to more stable and better-protected employment. Gender-responsive trade policies would open new opportunities to women as employees and entrepreneurs. Broader provision of social services would lift women’s care burden and give them more time for paid jobs and leisure. Flexible work arrangements, currently in place in response to the pandemic, should continue beyond it and provide a new model of shared responsibilities within households.

This report presents analysis of current trends, barriers, opportunities and common challenges in women economic empowerment in BRICS countries. It highlights best practices and prominent cases in the BRICS members’ gender policy which can be implemented by partners to overcome existing hurdles. The review of best practices and national policy measures is intended to facilitate peer learning and policy-making for the wellbeing of the BRICS women, societies and economies. Also, the document provides policy recommendations for BRICS agenda and member’s national policies.

¹⁹ <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

National Policies and Measures

Brazil

Key policy measures

In Brazil, the Government has promoted, for a number of years, national programmes that involve line ministries, civil society and the private sector to address gender and racial discrimination in the workplace. “Rede Brazil Mulher”, or “Brazilian Women’s Network”, was established in 2017 through a national Decree signed by President Michel Temer with the aim of facilitating synergies and coordination across different actors and sectors on healthcare, education, violence and women’s economic empowerment.



The last comprehensive strategy for women empowerment was implemented in 2013–2015. The adoption of such an encompassing programme for women is now discussed by the government and interested stakeholders. As of now Brazil has several legislative provisions that cover most aspects of gender agenda.

Women’s entrepreneurship development and businesses’ formalization is high on the Government’s agenda. Common measures include: tax reduction, subsidized interest rates, training in management, technical consulting and simplified registration procedures.

In the field of skills and education, the government has invested in the National Programme for the Access to Technical Education and Employment targeting different groups, including poor women and people with disabilities. The programme has a strong focus on training in non-traditional occupations. The Bolsa Família Companion Program, a partnership between Brazil’s Social Development Ministry and Promundo²⁰, promotes women’s economic empowerment by engaging men as allies. The National Programme for the Documentation of Rural Woman Worker gives

guidance to women, including quilombola²¹ and indigenous women, in family farming, artisanal fishers, and provides them with free of charge access to civil, social and labour documents to strengthen their autonomy and allow them to access public programmes.

Article 461 of the Brazilian Labour Code – Salary Equalization states that when workers’ functions are identical, provide equal value, and are provided to the same employer at the same locality, the workers shall be compensated with equal salary, regardless of sex, nationality, or age.

In terms of women’s labour market security, the adoption of the Constitutional Amendment No. 72 (2013) was an important milestone for the rights of domestic workers as it extended labour rights to them, including protection against arbitrary dismissal, unemploy-

²⁰ Promundo - a Brazilian-based, non-governmental organization promoting caring, non-violent and equitable masculinities and gender relations in Brazil and internationally

²¹ Quilombola - an Afro-Brazilian resident of quilombo settlements first established by escaped slaves in Brazil



Programmes for women economic empowerment in Brazil

The National Thousand Women Program

The objective of the program is to promote professional and technological training combined with an increase in the education attainment of women in situations of social vulnerability, especially in the North and Northeast regions of the country. The program implementation in each region takes into consideration its economic landscape and offers education and training in the most important sectors of economy thus raising the employment opportunities for women. In addition to the initial and continuing training courses and professional qualification, it offers high-level technical vocational education courses. Courses can be offered in conjunction with primary and secondary education (in integrated and concomitant forms).²²



Qualifica Mulher

The Qualifica Mulher program aims to facilitate the economic autonomy of women, through targeted actions, fostering training, qualification, entrepreneurship and integration in the labour market. The program includes courses in partnership with private and governmental institutions; fostering professional training and qualification centers; and incentive to microcredit, through a partnership with banks. The program is implemented in various regions of the country including remote, rural and poor states. It also targets special categories of women in need of integration or reintegration into the labour market.²³



Innovative Women Program

The objective is to encourage start-ups led by women. In the first stage, up to 20 start-ups led by women will be selected to participate in an acceleration program for 30 days, with content related to female entrepreneurship presented by speakers, executives and experts on the subject. After that, up to 5 projects will be chosen and will be awarded R\$ 100 thousand each.²⁴

#MulheresRurais (Rural Women)

Competition that selects practices aimed at the economic autonomy of rural women. The initiative seeks to highlight solutions undertaken by women, especially the experiences led by rural women, anglers, indigenous and Afro-descendants, regardless of the region of the country. Candidates can count on the support of professionals from any institution or organization that works with technical assistance and support for rural women. Interested parties must complete an online form.²⁵



ment benefits and a minimum wage guarantee. In addition, the National Plan for Combatting Informality includes improvement of labour inspections, policy integration, encouragement of social dialogue, dissemination and awareness raising for social actors with gender equality lenses. Moreover, according to the 2015 Amendments (Art. 10) to the Constitution, employment protection regulations were introduced

to prevent employers from making women redundant in the event of pregnancy. Investments have also been made at the municipality level to improve access to childcare and nursery centres. National programmes and legislature are complemented by targeted initiatives fostering skills and education development, access to finance, entrepreneurship, innovation and support to women in rural areas (see Box 1).

Main trends, opportunities and challenges

Brazil today has equality in terms of education and health between men and women. The life expectancy of Brazilian women is five years longer than men in good health. However, there is a persistent low rate of female participation in the workforce, combined with persistent wage and income inequalities.

Women are increasingly entering the workforce, but remain underrepresented in positions of power. Mirroring trends elsewhere in the world, just 16 percent of Brazilian CEOs are women. Although women are responsible for 70% of total scientific publications, they make up just 14% of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences.²⁶

In addition, the higher the educational level, the greater the difference in income: from 1.4 times for those with up to 8 years of schooling, to 2.5 times on average for men and women with more than 15 years of study.²⁷

Women's average monthly salary is only 65% of that of men. Almost half of employed women in metropolitan areas receive less than a minimum wage. Even with the same schooling, the number of women returning to work is lower than men. Women are over-represented in informal employment, where they do not have social security coverage. Most of Brazil's 7 million domestic workers are women. Black women face even more disadvantages.

In addition to the lower wages, and perhaps reinforced by this, the female workforce remains primarily responsible for carrying out domestic chores and personal care. While men spend, on average, 10.5 hours per week in this type of activity, women spend 18.1 hours, the difference being even greater among working women. This means that women are subjected to double working hours.²⁸

The high level of education of women, as well as their greater participation in the labour market, did not generate higher incomes. In all educational groups, when comparing men and women in the labour market, men always have higher incomes than women. In

The formalization of labour rights in recent decades, including for domestic servants, has provided women with important legal protections (despite the need for better enforcement). Women are now the most educated demographic in the country. Roughly 39% of managers in the public and private sectors are women – not yet parity, but an indication that women are finding ways to rise through the ranks.

²² <http://portal.mec.gov.br/programa-mulheres-mil>

²³ <https://republicanos10.org.br/noticias/republicanos-nacional/cristiane-britto-defende-aco-es-de-combate-a-violencia-contra-a-mulher-em-pe/>

²⁴ <https://www.gov.br/pt-br/noticias/financas-impostos-e-gestao-publica/2020/02/programa-mulheres-inovadoras-esta-com-inscricoes-abertas>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.br/pt-br/noticias/assistencia-social/2020/01/concurso-seleciona-empresendimentos-de-mulheres-rurais>

²⁶ https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/status_of_women_in_brazil_2019_final.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.cofecon.org.br/2020/03/08/artigo-mulheres-e-a-economia/>

²⁸ Picchio, A. (2018). Women's work at the heart of the labour market. In: Grecco, FS; Furno, JC; Teixeira, MO Dossier: Feminist Economics. Thematic. Campinas, SP: UNICAMP / IFCH, year 26, nº 52, p. 69-103.

Table 3. Selected gender-related indicators for Brazil

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal 2020

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	55.0	53.6	52.2	53.1	53.0	52.9	53.4	53.3	54.2	54.0
Labour force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	77.4	76.6	75.7	76.2	76.1	75.7	75.4	74.9	74.6	74.4
Female share of employment in senior and middle management (%)	35.2	..	36.6	36.4	37.0	37.4	38.0	38.2	38.4	38.7
Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (%) (national estimate)	71.9	..	70.0	70.2	70.4	71.7	71.1	70.9	72.5	73.0
Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	30.3	28.8	27.4	24.5	24.6	24.2	25.1	25.4	26.4	26.4
Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	35.0	34.5	34.3	33.7	34.1	34.2	35.8	36.4	36.7	36.6
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	27.6	26.3	25.1	21.9	21.9	21.5	22.2	22.4	23.2	23.2
Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	29.4	29.6	30.0	28.7	29.0	29.1	30.4	31.0	30.8	30.7



Russia



Key policy measures

According to the Constitution of Russian Federation, men and women have equal rights, freedoms and opportunities. The directions of state policy with regard to women are defined in National Strategy for Women for 2017–2022, the main document for gender policy in Russia. The state policy is guided by principle of equal rights and freedoms of men and women and is aimed at creating conditions for the full and equal participation of women in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of society.

Priorities for economic empowerment include:

- creation of conditions for women to receive professional education in the most advanced areas of the economy, providing ample employment opportunities for high-paying jobs;
- reduction of the wage gap between men and women;
- increasing the competitiveness of women in the labour market;
- expanding women’s employment opportunities in small and medium business;
- increasing the social responsibility of employers in relation to women with family responsibilities;
- increasing social protection of women.

The solution of these tasks involves the implementation of the following measures:

- organization of vocational training for women and the formation of new competencies and qualifications for women, including in the field of entrepreneurial activity;
- creation of specialized forms of grant support and conducting professional competitions for women innovators in order to stimulate the participation of women in high-tech industries and innovation;
- development and implementation of measures aimed at reducing the pay gap between men and women;
- ensuring women’s participation in the development of infrastructure of social entrepreneurship;
- reduction in the number of jobs with harmful and (or) dangerous working conditions on which women work;
- ensuring competitiveness and relevance in the labour market of women raising minor children, including through vocational training and additional vocational education of women on maternity leave until kids reach the age of 3 years, as well as women in need of advanced training and retraining in connection with the need for the formation of relevant competencies and qualifications;
- expanding the scope and application of flexible work arrangements, contributing to the combination of work with family responsibilities;
- development of a system for the provision of services for the supervision and care of children and disabled family members.



Women economic empowerment is also facilitated through the implementation of National projects of the Russian Federation. One of the goals under the “Demography” national project is to promote employment opportunities for women with children, through providing universal access (by 2021) to pre-school education for children below 3 years of age. Other priorities of the project include creating at least 255 thousand new places in nurseries, promoting private childcare institutions, and increasing the number of women who attend vocational training and skills improvement courses during childcare leave up to 230 thousand by 2024.²⁹ The National Employment Facilitation Program includes activities aimed to promote employability of women with children, including through providing vocational training opportunities and facilitating return to a former place of employ-

ment. The Government set the target to increase the employment rate of women with pre-school children up to 68.5% by 2024.³⁰

The Russian legislation, namely, the Labour Code, prohibits workplace discrimination based on gender (article 132: “Every employee’s wages depend on his or her qualifications, complexity of work executed, the amount and quality of the input labour”), and provides women with social guarantees, such as maternity leave and child rearing leave.³¹

National programmes and legislature are complemented by targeted initiatives fostering skills and education development, entrepreneurship, innovation and support to women in remote and rural areas (see Box 1).

²⁹ <http://static.government.ru/media/files/p7nn2CS0pVhvQ9800wAt2dzCIAietQih.pdf>

³⁰ <http://pravo.garant.ru/SESSION/PILOT/main.htm>

³¹ <http://tkodeksrf.ru>

▶ ³² <http://woman.iimba.ru/>

▶ ³³ <https://mama-predprinimatel.ru/story/>

▶ ³⁴ <https://finansist-kras.ru/news/banks/startovala-programma-obucheniya-predprinimatelstvu-dlya-zhen-voennosluzhashchikh/>

▶ ³⁵ <https://www.open.ru/about/press/44232>

BOX 2

Programmes aimed at women economic empowerment in Russia



“Woman in a new profession. It’s always possible to be successful”

The project aims to provide advisory, methodological and educational support to unemployed women through educational programmes of professional retraining for obtaining professions in demand on the labour market, as well as support for women’s leadership and entrepreneurship. In implementing the project, state support funds are used as grants in accordance with an order of the President of the Russian Federation. The target audience consisted of 14 categories of participants - socially unprotected or poorly protected women (unemployed, migrants, students, aspiring entrepreneurs, potential entrepreneurs, women with limited physical abilities, single mothers, large families, women with small children, children with disabilities, women of preretirement age, wives of military personnel, other categories).³²



Federal educational project “Mother Entrepreneur”

The project is designed specifically for women on maternity leave. Its aim is to help them start their own business and implement business ideas that could not be implemented independently. The winner of the projects’ competition receives a 200 000 rubles grant for opening own business.³³

“Small Business Course” (SBC)

All-Russian entrepreneurial initiative for military spouses”. Promsvyazbank in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence launched the project in 2019. The initiative is aimed at creating new business and job opportunities for female military spouses with focus on rural and remote areas, by providing access to training, networks, mentorship and role models. The ministry agreed to provide access to remote military installations, so in-person skills training and workshops for up to 300 wives of military personnel in 2021.³⁴

Women’s business support programs of Otkrytie Bank

Social networks are being used more and more often to support women empowerment efforts. The program of the bank “Otkrytie” and social network Vkontakte #Yadelayubizness for women entrepreneurs was launched in 2018 with an objective of supporting women-entrepreneurs innovative business ideas in ICT sector. The participants are trained as part of VK Live master classes with the participation of experts from Vkontakte and Otkrytie Bank. The winners of the competition receive 350 thousand rubles each.³⁵



Main trends, opportunities and challenges

The labour force participation rates of men and women have increased in Russia during the past decade, although the men's rate has grown more than women's. As a result, the gender participation gap has widened, exceeding 15 percentage points in 2018 (70.5% for men compared to 54.9% for women). Men's unemployment rates are also higher than women's (4.4% compared to 4.3%).

One important reason for existing pay inequalities is the representation of men and women in different areas of employment with women being concentrated in comparatively less lucrative positions in such sectors as hotel and restaurant services, education, health care and social services, while men are more prominently employed in transport and communications, construction and production, and the distribution of electricity, gas and water. In part, such distribution can be attributed to existing legislative barriers. As of 2020, Women are banned from working in 456 types of jobs, due to safety and healthcare concerns. In 2019 the Ministry of Labour issued an order³⁶ reducing the list to 98 positions. However, the new legislation will not take effect until 2021. In terms of educational attainment gender gap is non-existent in Russia, as 38.1%

of the female labour force in the country has higher education compared to 29.3% for men (2018).³⁷

Self-employment rate among women is also lower than of men – 5.5% compared to 7.7% in 2018. Since 2009 this indicator has been fluctuating for both sexes, however, volatility for self-employed women has been worse with 1.1 percentage points difference between the highest estimate (6.6% in 2009) and the lowest (5.5% in 2017-18), compared with 0.8 percentage points difference for men.

Regional disparities in economic development also represent a significant challenge to gender equality in Russia, as poorer regions tend to have disproportionately fewer job and education opportunities for women.³⁸

Table 4. Selected gender-related indicators for Russia

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal 2020

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	56.3	55.9	56.2	56.1	55.8	55.7	55.6	55.7	55.3	54.9
Labour force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	70.0	70.3	70.6	70.6	70.8	71.0	71.2	71.4	70.9	70.5
Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (%) (national estimate)	85.2	84.3	84.7	84.7	84.4	84.3	84.0	84.1	78.0	..
Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	6.6	5.9	6.2	6.0	6.4	6.2	6.3	6.4	5.5	5.5
Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	8.0	7.6	7.8	7.7	8.1	8.1	8.1	8.5	7.7	7.7
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	5.7	5.0	5.3	5.2	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.5	4.6	4.6
Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	6.3	6.0	6.3	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.8	5.9	5.9

³⁶ <https://regulation.gov.ru/projects#npa=79077>

³⁷ https://www.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/Trud_2019.pdf

³⁸ <https://www.gks.ru/folder/210/document/13204>

World Bank study "Women, Business and the Law 2020" interprets unequal pension eligibility age as a barrier, affecting gender economic equality in Russia.³⁹ This point, however, is debatable, given that Russian legislation confers women the right, not the obligation, to retire from work.

Russia's standing in international gender equality rankings reflects some of the persistent barriers. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020, Russia achieved top scores in two out of four sub-categories, namely Educational Attainment

and Health and Survival, ranking 32nd in the Economic Participation and Opportunity category and 122nd in Political Empowerment.⁴⁰

These results may be indicative of a persistent socio-psychological bias against women in leadership roles. As such, it is important to mobilize the potential of primary, secondary and higher education institutions as well as media, to promote grassroots-level gender equality and cultivate gender-neutral perception of power and responsibility in the society, with a focus on younger generation.

³⁹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf>

⁴⁰ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

India

Key policy measures



In 2019 Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development prepared the draft National Policy for Women. The Draft envisions a society in which, "women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life".⁴¹ The draft policy addresses the diverse needs of women through identified priority areas: I) Health including food security and nutrition, II) Education, III) Economy (including agriculture industry, labour, employment, NRI (Non-resident Indian and person of Indian origin) women, soft power, service sector, science and technology), Violence against women, IV) Governance and decision making, V) Enabling environment (including housing, shelter and infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation, media and culture, sports and social security) VII) Environment and climate change.⁴²



Current National Policy recognizes women's contribution as producers and workers in the formal and informal economies alike, and highlights the need for revisiting the conventional concepts of work to better capture such contribution. It also acknowledges the need for effective strategies and policies to counter the feminization of poverty and increased gender inequality in respect of working conditions and unsafe working environment, especially in rural areas and the informal economy. To this end, training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture are put forward, in view of the critical role of women as producers.⁴³ The Policy also recognizes the need for an enabling environment towards women's economic empowerment, through the expansion and improvement of the infrastructure for care services, like child care facilities, both publicly provided and in the workplace, and homes for the elderly and the disabled.⁴⁴

The prevention and punishment of sexual harassment at the place of work and the protection for women workers working formally and informally, including through the enforcement of the Equal Remuneration Act⁴⁵ and the Minimum Wages Act.⁴⁶

National Policy for Skills Development and Entrepreneurship provides for the skilling of women in non-traditional occupations and for the creation of more gender-inclusive workplace environments, as part of broader efforts to meet the additional 100.7 million qualified workers required across 24 key sectors by 2022.⁴⁷

National programmes and legislature are complemented by targeted initiatives fostering skills and education development, access to finance, entrepreneurship, innovation and support to in child-care (see Box 3).

⁴¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1576198>

⁴² <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1576198>

⁴³ <https://wcd.nic.in/womendevlopment/national-policy-women-empowerment>

⁴⁴ <https://wcd.nic.in/womendevlopment/national-policy-women-empowerment>

⁴⁵ <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1494/3/A1976-25.pdf>

⁴⁶ https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/TheMinimumWagesAct1948_0.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://www.msde.gov.in/assets/images/Skill%20India/National%20Policy%20on%20Skill%20Development%20and%20Entrepreneurship%20Final.pdf>



BOX 3

Programmes for women economic empowerment in India

Disha Programme: Creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women in India

The program aims to improve the lives of 1 million underprivileged women in India, by enabling them to acquire marketable skills and become employable. Disha supports women to become economically self-sufficient so that they and their families can seek better and equitable opportunities. The project also works towards developing innovative and scalable public-private partnership models and establishes a continuum that connects education to skills, jobs, and growth.⁴⁸

Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

The STEP Scheme aims to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs. The Scheme is intended to benefit women in the age group of 16 years and above across the country. Grants under the Scheme are given to institutions / organizations, including NGOs, directly and do not involve the States/ UTs in financing and management.⁴⁹

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)

As an enabling platform, WEP is built on three pillars- Iccha Shakti, Gyaan Shakti & Karma Shakti. Iccha Shakti motivates aspiring entrepreneurs to start their business, Gyaan Shakti provides knowledge and ecosystem support to women entrepreneurs to help them foster entrepreneurship, Karma Shakti provides hands-on support to entrepreneurs in setting-up and scaling up businesses. In addition to providing services such as free credit ratings, mentorship, funding support to women entrepreneurs, apprenticeship and corporate partnerships; WEP encourages entrepreneurs to share their entrepreneurial journeys, stories & experiences to nurture mutual learning.⁵⁰

Mahila E-haat

This is a unique direct online marketing platform leveraging technology for supporting women entrepreneurs, self-help groups (SHGs) and NGOs for showcasing the products and services which are designed and manufactured by them. This exclusive portal is the first in the country to provide a special, focused marketing platform for women. Being a bilingual portal, it aims at financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women. This unique e-platform showcases products and services.⁵¹

Scheme for Working Women Hostel

The objective of the scheme is to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi-urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exist. The scheme is assisting projects for construction of new hostel buildings, expansion of existing hostel buildings and hostel buildings in rented premises.



⁴⁸ https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/about-deloitte/UNGCNI_black_final%20v6%20web%20high%20res.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://wcd.nic.in/schemes/support-training-and-employment-programme-women-step>

⁵⁰ <https://wep.gov.in/about-wep>

⁵¹ <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Mahila%20E-haat%2024012017.pdf>

Main trends, opportunities and challenges

Women's contribution to the country's GDP is currently just 18%, one of the world's lowest, with only 25% of India's labour force being female. Women's labour force participation rate in India remains persistently low and continues to decline, falling from 26.2% in 2009 to 23.6% in 2018. At present, the overall unemployment rate in India is 7%, but it is as high as 18% among women. This is also relevant for the participation of young women.

Informality in India seems to be shrinking slowly, although it is still pervasive. Furthermore, Indian women are disproportionately concentrated in occupations that experience little to no employment growth.⁵² Gender occupational segregation is influenced by women's level of education, with only 25.7% of working-age women having completed a secondary or higher level of education, and household's composition. But biased gender norms concerning the type of work that is most suitable for women and men, and their role in the family and society also seem to play an important role.⁵³

India's rapid urbanization has not yet resulted in more women entering the labour market. Employment on rural areas have been shrinking and very little rural women managed to make the transition and find employment in urban areas. This makes the need for greater public safety and safe transport more significant. By any measure, the gap is particularly large and has been widening.⁵⁴

Also, in India women face higher risks associated with health. Inadequate and poor nutrition, coupled with a lack of access to primary healthcare are major contributors to India's high rates of female mortality.

Promoting women economic participation can significantly contribute to overall economic growth in India and create more opportunities. At 17% of GDP, the economic contribution of Indian women is less than half the global average. But according to World Bank, India could boost its growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9% per year if around 50% of women could join the work force.⁵⁵ Women's economic empowerment is also interconnected with poverty reduction in general as women tend to invest more of their earnings in their children and communities.

One of the ways to increase women's participation in the economy is to promote female entrepreneurship. Women currently own a mere 20% of all enterprises in India. However, these enterprises directly employ 27 million people.⁵⁶ Notably, most of these women-owned ventures are single-person businesses, which translates to lower returns and employment. Only 17% of all woman-owned enterprises employ hired workers in comparison with 28% for all enterprises.⁵⁷

Despite persistent unresolved issues, over the last decade, India has demonstrated considerable progress in achieving gender parity in areas such as education and maternity care. Examples of important steps in the right direction are the government's program for skills development, subsidized loans for businesses led by women, and recent legislation doubling maternity leave, and requiring childcare facilities in companies that employ more than 50 people.⁵⁸ If fully implemented and complied with, these policies could eliminate some of the barriers women face and create a significant boost to India's economy.

In future, in addition to the steps aimed at increasing economic participation more attention should be given to shifting social norms around marriage, work and household duties, and these aspects need to be part of the agenda too. Encouraging the creation of quality employment, providing support for child and elder care, and facilitating mobility to and from work can remove significant structural barriers for women to enter labour market.

Table 5. Selected gender-related indicators for India

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal 2020

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	27.0	25.8	24.4	23.0	23.2	23.4	23.5	23.7	23.8	23.6
Labour force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	81.2	80.7	80.3	79.8	79.6	79.5	79.3	79.0	78.7	78.6
Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	88.0	87.5	85.5	83.2	82.9	82.5	82.1	81.7	81.2	80.8
Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	82.2	82.1	81.0	80.0	79.7	79.3	78.9	78.5	78.1	77.6
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	87.4	87.0	85.0	82.8	82.4	82.0	81.6	81.1	80.7	80.2
Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	80.8	80.7	79.4	78.2	77.8	77.4	77.0	76.6	76.2	75.7

⁵² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_636205.pdf

⁵³ Dasgupta, S and S Verick (eds.) (2016). *Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda*, ILO/SAGE, Geneva/New Delhi

⁵⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth>

⁵⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth>

⁵⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/unemployment-india-female-entrepreneurs-gender-solutions/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.bain.com/insights/powering-the-economy-with-her-women-entrepreneurship-in-india/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2018/03/17/women-indias-economic-growth>

China

Key policy measures

The Chinese Government in recent years has made significant efforts at the legal and policy level to ensure that women enjoy equal rights with men in terms of participation in politics, economy, culture, and social and family life. In 1995, the State Council promulgated the first National Program for Women's Development in China (1995–2000).



In 2000, it was superseded by the National Program for Women's Development in China for 2001–2010, which set objectives, strategies and measures according to six priority areas: women and the economy; women's participation in decision-making and management; women's education; women and health; women and the law; women and the environment. For its current mandate (2011–2020), the Programme has set additional and more ambitious objectives and targets, such as ensuring that 40% of all country's employees will be women by 2020, and progressively expanding the number and share of urban female workers.

The Program also seeks to reduce the gender gaps in employment rate and the income gap between men and women in non-agricultural sector, and to raise the proportion of women among high level professional and technical personnel up to 35%. Moreover, it sets the goal to fully implement the policy of equal pay for equal work for men and women by establishing a sound, scientific and rational income distribution system.

The main governmental institution responsible for the implementation of the Program is the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council (NWCCW). Civil society is also engaged in the process. The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) is the largest organization in China responsible for promoting government policies on women, and protecting women's rights. Although labelled as a NGO, the ACWF has a longstanding relationship with the government. It is involved in consultations on laws and policies at provincial levels and has the capacity to provide research and policy advice as well as direct services. In particular, the ACWF implements measures to improve the capacity of young

female entrepreneurship and employment through mentorships, small-sum guaranteed loans, and financial interest subsidies.

The ACWF has established Associations for Promotion of Fair Employment of Women to ensure gender equality in employment. Programmes including Women Entrepreneurship and Innovation Actions and Poverty Reduction Actions have been implemented and to promote business start-ups and innovation.

With regard to addressing gender discrimination in pay, the Law on the protection of women's rights and interests (adopted in 1992 and amended in 2005) and the Labour Law of the People's Republic of China both stipulate "equal pay for equal work" for women and men.

National programmes are complemented by targeted initiatives fostering skills and education development, access to finance, entrepreneurship, innovation and support to transfer of rural women workforce to non-agricultural sectors and urban jobs (see Box 4).

Main trends, opportunities and challenges

As a result of recent policy measures China performs relatively well in global rankings on gender equality. However, the pace of progress towards full gender equality has slowed compared to other countries. There are several social and economic barriers for gender equality. Although female labour force participation rate in China remains high, the ratio of female to male participation has declined. Moreover, gender-based occupational segregation is observed, with female workers concentrated mostly in services, agriculture and informal work.

Despite equality in law, in practice there is gender inequality in pay, much of which is unexplained even after controlling for education and experience. According to ILO, there is a wage gap of 17.2% of wom-

en's pay compared to men's pay, and using the factor-weighted gender pay gap it is estimated to be 20.8%.⁵⁹ The female to male share of unpaid care work has been estimated at around 2.5.⁶⁰ The main

⁵⁹ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/enhanced/WCMS_650829/lang-en/index.htm

⁶⁰ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf

BOX 4

Programmes for women economic empowerment in China

The Sunshine Project

The objective was to provide government subsidized training to the increasing number of surplus workers, especially women, in China's rural areas, assisting them in acquiring essential skills for urban jobs to promote the transfer of rural female workforce to non-agricultural sectors and urban areas. Training under the Sunshine Project is fully funded by government grants. The central government has contributed the major proportion (it totaled RMB1250 million (about USD180 million), while local governments were also required to contribute some of the funds. The project was implemented in 26 provinces, including 1393 counties and 5090 training bases, and was claimed to have trained 2.5 million people (including 1.3 million women) and helped find 2.2 million jobs. The project also helped leverage up the training programs of other levels of government. The Sunshine Project is considered as the world's largest project for rural labour transfer training.



The small-sum guaranteed loan with financial discount program

The Chinese government has provided small-sum guaranteed loan with a financial discount to boost women employment and self-employment. In 2009, the Ministry of Finance and other relevant ministries and departments issued the Circular on Improving the Policy of Providing Small Loans with Interest Paid by Government in Order to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment, which includes women's federations in the system for providing small secured loans for laid-off workers, and aims to raise the credit line of small secured loans and expand channels of application for secured loans. In 2009–2018, a total of RMB383.77 billion (about USD55 billion) were allocated, with the central and local governments appropriating RMB40.86 billion (USD5.8 billion) of funds with discount interest rates, benefiting 6.569 million women in employment and self-employment.



The Entrepreneurship Mentor Action for Female College Students and the Entrepreneurship Support Action for Female College Students

Since 2009, the ACWF, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of China have implemented the Entrepreneurship Mentor Action for Female College Students and the Entrepreneurship Support Action for Female College Students. 8100 entrepreneurial bases for female college students were established and 12000 entrepreneurship mentors recruited, providing free training on starting business and finding employment for 300000 female college graduates and helping 130000 female college graduates start their own businesses or find jobs. By the end of 2012, RMB1.25 billion (about USD180 million) in start-up loans and supporting funds had been provided for 46000 female college graduates.

Women Entrepreneurship and Innovation Action

The ACWF announced the launch of the Women Entrepreneurship and Innovation Action in June 2015. The initiative aims to encourage rural and urban women across the country to commit themselves to innovation and entrepreneurship in China's "new normal" economic phase. The Action is aligned with implementation of the central government's "public entrepreneurship and innovation" strategy and seeks to help women to take advantage of new opportunities such as "Internet plus" (the integration of the Internet and traditional industries through online platforms and IT). New training was developed on the Internet, exemplary bases established to provide examples for women to follow and social resources are encouraged to support the program. In addition, services have been made available to women who want to start their own businesses and innovate. No comprehensive information on the results of the Action is available, however, in 2016 guaranteed loans for women entrepreneurship reached RMB50.221 billion (USD7 billion), benefitting 607,700 women.



South Africa

Key policy measures

South Africa's policy aimed at women empowerment is the responsibility of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities.⁶¹ It is implemented through the "Social Transformation and Economic Empowerment" program and the National Development Plan 2030. The "Social Transformation and Economic Empowerment" program purpose of facilitating and promoting "the attainment of women's socio-economic empowerment and gender equality"⁶² has three focal areas reflected in its three sub-programmes:

- a) Social Empowerment and Transformation: mainstreaming the social empowerment and participation of women towards social transformation.
- b) Economic Empowerment and Participation: mainstreaming the economic empowerment and participation of women towards economic transformation and development.
- c) Governance Transformation, Justice and Security: mainstreaming gender equality, and eliminating gender-based violence.

The National Development Plan 2030 contains specific provisions aimed at moving towards gender equality, namely:

- expansion of public employment with a specific focus on youth and women;
- support for the role of women as leaders in all sectors of society;
- reduction of social, cultural, religious and educational barriers to women entering the job market;
- ensuring access to safe drinking water, electricity and quality early childhood education, to free women from doing unpaid work;
- protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups from crime;
- ensuring security of tenure should for women communal farmers;
- nutrition intervention programme for pregnant women and young children.⁶³

The Department of Women also oversees the implementation of Women's Financial Inclusion Framework,⁶⁴ and Framework on Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing.⁶⁵

South African government in close cooperation with private sector and social partners implements several national policies for women economic empowerment (see Box 5).

reason is a lack of affordable childcare and caring for elderly relatives. Women's unpaid care work is particularly widespread in rural areas. Finally, the relaxing of the one child policy may become a reason for gender discrimination in the workplace and lead to older women withdrawing from the labour market to stay with their grandchildren.

In terms of institutional environment, the mandate of the NWCCW to make policy is not fully clear and enforcement of laws is sometimes weak; given the historical specifics, gender norms and stereotypes still persist in the Chinese society, limiting the extent to which laws and policy frameworks are effectively implemented. Women's civil society organizations are operating in an increasingly restricted space.

Table 6. Selected gender-related indicators for China

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal 2020

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	64.4	63.8	63.6	63.4	63.2	62.9	62.6	62.2	61.8	61.3
Labour force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	78.2	77.9	77.7	77.5	77.4	77.1	76.9	76.6	76.3	75.9
Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	55.7	54.7	53.8	53.0	52.2	51.5	50.8	50.1	49.4	48.7
Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	50.5	49.7	49.1	48.5	48.0	47.4	47.0	46.5	46.0	45.5
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	54.2	53.2	52.2	51.4	50.6	49.8	49.1	48.4	47.6	46.9
Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	46.5	45.7	45.0	44.5	43.9	43.4	43.0	42.5	41.9	41.4



⁶¹ https://www.environment.gov.za/projectsprogrammes/environment_sector_genderstrategy/policy_framework#:~:text=There%20is%20equality%20of%20all,Gender%20equality%20in%20the%20country.

⁶² http://www.women.gov.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=14&Itemid=107

⁶³ <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Executive%20Summary-NDP%202030%20-%20Our%20future%20-%20make%20it%20work.pdf>

⁶⁴ <http://www.women.gov.za/images/Womens-Financial-Inclusion-Framework-WFIF.pdf>

⁶⁵ <http://www.women.gov.za/images/GRPB-framework-250119A.pdf>

Programmes for women economic empowerment in South Africa

“B'avumile Skills Development Initiative”

The B'avumile skills development programme is a women's empowerment capacity-building initiative aimed at identifying talent in the arts and crafts and textiles and clothing sectors. It is a formal training programme to develop women's expertise in the production of marketable goods and the creation of formal enterprises in the creative industry.



“Technology for Women in Business (TWIB)”

TWIB is an annual business award, introduced to accelerate women's economic empowerment and the development of women-owned enterprises through the recognition of technology-based business applications and systems, and to unlock constraints to enterprise innovation and growth as well as global competitiveness. TWIB targets women entrepreneurs who use enterprising technological innovations to increase the production and enhance the quality of their products. Their business must be a profit-making enterprise that demonstrates diffusion of technology. The awards are part of the broader TWIB vision of linking women with relevant science and technology-driven business solutions that will improve their business creativity and potential, and reward those women who have used technology to grow their business.



“South African Women Entrepreneurs' Network (SAWEN)”

SAWEN is a membership organization with a mandate to represent and articulate the aspirations of all women entrepreneurs who operate within the South African SMME sector. SAWEN aims to fast-track support provided to women in addressing challenges faced when establishing, strengthening and sustaining their enterprises.



Main trends, opportunities and challenges

The key challenges facing South Africa in its strife for gender equality are: a wide gender labour participation gap, higher female unemployment, gender-based violence, disproportionately high HIV prevalence among women, and a lack of representation of women in top management positions. Women are generally poorer than men, and spend more hours in caring for others, which reduces the time available to engage in income-generating activities. As a result, women suffer more from poverty and have less economic opportunities and rights. Occupational segregation is also a concern.

Gender-based violence not only represents a physical barrier for women empowerment, but also reflects deeply engrained prejudice against women in the society. According to the government, the country finds itself in the “gender-based violence and femicide crisis”.⁶⁶ The GBVF National Strategic Plan 2020–2030, drafted in 2019 aims to provide a cohesive strategic framework to guide the national response to this crisis.

Though increases in labour force participation rates have been noted both for men and women, South Africa still has the highest unemployment rate in the BRICS, which reached 27.3% in 2018. Unemployment disproportionately affects women with 29.5% unemployment rate compared to 25.5% for men (2017). Women self-employment rate is also significantly lower than that of men (12.9% compared to 17%).

Since 2009 it has dropped by 1.7 percentage points, while during the same period men's indicator has risen by 0.8, reflecting the disproportionate vulnerability of women's enterprises to economic volatility and crises.

Despite persistent inequalities in economic empowerment, South Africa managed to close the gender in education – there is virtual parity in terms of primary, secondary and post-secondary educational attainment, with more women than men graduating in accordance with the country's population gender ratio. According

to the South African Department of Statistics, in 2019 gender distribution in post-secondary education was 52 to 48% in favour of women.⁶⁷

The South African efforts to promote women economic empowerment should remain focused on overcoming historical disproportions, affecting women in historically disadvantaged communities, and societal constraints, such as gender violence, along with implementing programs aimed at promoting women entrepreneurship.

Table 7. Selected gender-related indicators for South Africa

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal 2020

Indicator	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	46.3	44.7	45.2	45.4	46.4	46.6	47.8	47.8	48.9	48.8
Labour force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)	62.2	60.5	59.8	60.3	60.5	60.7	61.9	62.1	62.7	62.6
Female share of employment in senior and middle management (%)	33.2	32.1	33.7	34.8	33.1	34.3	33.9	35.7	35.2	33.9
Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (%) (national estimate)	74.2	73.7	75.2	74.9	76.3	76.4	76.8	76.5	77.5	77.7
Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	14.6	14.6	14.1	13.1	13.0	11.8	12.1	12.3	12.9	12.9
Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	16.2	16.7	16.8	17.2	16.3	15.9	16.5	17.2	17.1	17.0
Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	12.0	11.8	11.3	10.7	10.4	9.3	9.8	9.7	10.2	10.2
Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate)	8.6	9.2	9.3	9.7	8.9	8.4	9.1	9.5	9.5	9.4



⁶⁶ https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201909/nspongbfvdraft.pdf

⁶⁷ http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=737&id=4=4

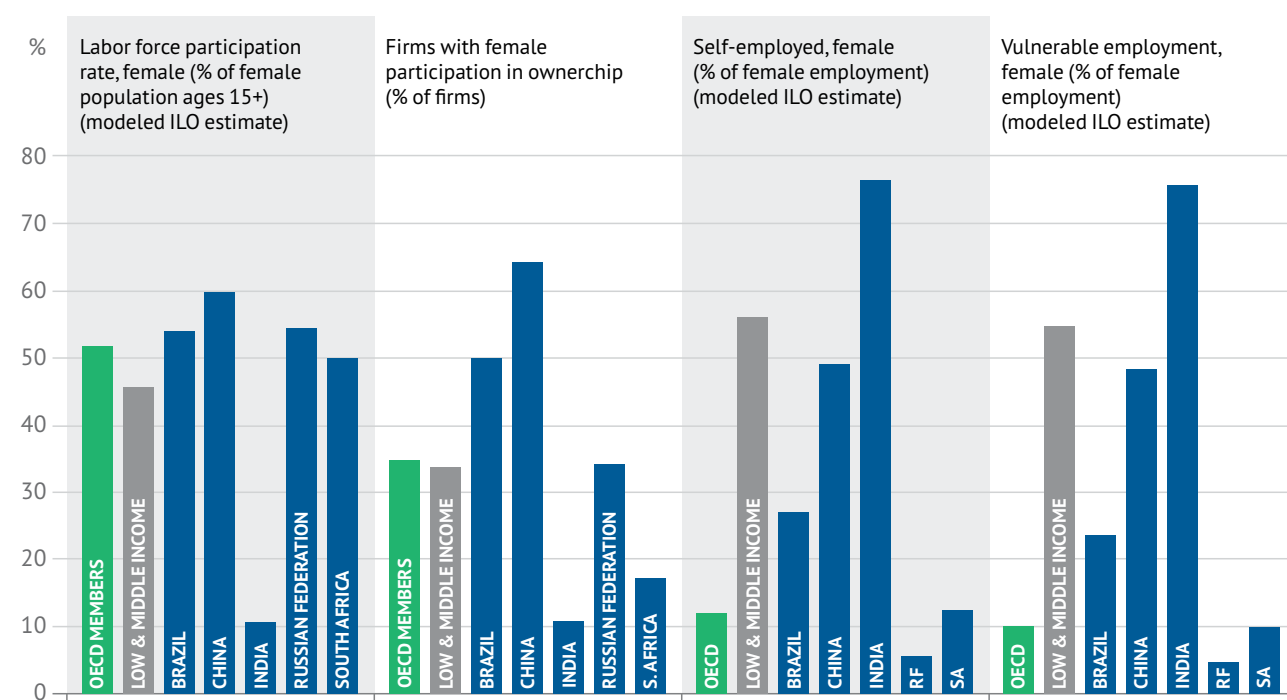
Achievements, Barriers and Prospects

BRICS Response to Gender Divide. Progress So Far

The BRICS as a grouping committed to fully implement Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030 and has taken actions individually and collectively to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation and improve the quality of women’s employment. The members addressed the issues of women economic empowerment since 2010 when the leaders pledged to give special attention the most vulnerable groups such as women in cooperation for sustainable social development, with social protection, full employment, and decent work policies.

Figure 1. Selected gender-related indicators for the BRICS members and the average for the OECD and low and middle income countries.

Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal, latest available data – 2018.



The Fortaleza Declaration stated the BRICS commitments to address social issues in general and in particular gender inequality and women’s rights. In Ufa the leaders reiterated the commitment and promised to support a greater access to ICTs to empower women and help bridge the gender digital divide. In the Goa Declaration they emphasized the women role as agents of development and reaffirmed the commitments “to gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as contained in the 2030 Agenda”. The Brasilia

Summit welcomed the establishment of the BRICS Women Business Alliance (WBA) intended to increase the role of women as drivers of economic growth and contribute to the economic empowerment of women in the BRICS.ence and femicide crisis”

In general, advancement towards women’s economic empowerment in the BRICS countries has been significant, though uneven.

Persistent Barriers and Challenges

Persistent challenges and barriers as well as accomplishments are reflected in the international gender equality indices. Though the data from the ranking should be interpreted with caution,⁶⁸ analysis of the rankings reveals different barriers for each member and helps to see some common problems.

Thus, according to the Global Gender Gap Index released annually by the World Economic Forum and evaluating performance in four major categories: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment the BRICS members demonstrated mixed results. Among the grouping’s members South Africa has the highest position – 17, followed by Russia – 81, Brazil – 92, China – 106 and India – 112.⁶⁹ Common issue for Brazil, Russia and China is low political participation of women, which affects the overall ranking significantly. On the other hand, South Africa and India have a very high position on political empowerment ranking. Health and survival are problematic areas for India and

China, while in the other three members this issue is in general solved, according to the assesment.

Educational attainment gaps remain an issue for all BRICS members except Russia. Finally, all five BRICS members have low positions in economic participation and opportunities aspect, which confirms that actions should be taken by the grouping to bridge the gap in economic participation. The ranking makes obvious the fact that sex-disaggregated data is a serious problem for all BRICS members. For many aspects of each indicator BRICS countries simply do not have available data, what also might be a reason for lower ranking.

Table 8. Global Gender Gap Index 2020 for BRICS

Source: World Economic Forum 2019

Indicator	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Overall place	92	81	112	106	17
Economic participation and opportunity	89	32	149	91	92
Educational attainment	35	1	112	100	67
Health and survival	1	1	150	153	1
Political empowerment	104	122	18	95	10

2019 SDG Gender Index (OECD) calculated for 129 countries – aligned to the ambitious commitments made in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – shows the BRICS countries as a group are under-performing against the global average on gender equality. The Index assesses the performance of all countries on gender aspects of all 17 SDGs. In this Index

Russia holds 59th position, South Africa – 71st, China – 74th and India – 95th.⁷⁰

According to SDG Gender Index in general weak spots for the BRICS members are the lack of transparency in government budgets (gender budgeting) and the gaps in gender statistics. SDGs aspects with lowest

⁶⁸ Currently there are of lot of international rankings dedicated to gender equality. Some of them assess gender equality across a broad range of thematic areas and aspects, others are more focused on specific issues. All available rankings and indices as well as their methodology were analysed during the work on this report. This paper draws on the data from rankings and indices which 1) have most clear and well-explained methodology, 2) assess a wide range of issues and can illustrate challenges faced by BRICS members, 3) provide numerical data and sources, 4) are most commonly used by researchers and policy-makers, 5) developed by international organisations which have best access to data due to close cooperation with the states

⁶⁹ http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/?doing_wp_cron=1595515301.6649460792541503906250

⁷⁰ <https://data.em2030.org/2019-sdg-gender-index/explore-the-2019-index-data/>

scores include women's safety from violence, low levels of women's political participation, key labour rights and high levels of economic inequality between the richest and poorest in society in general. Cumulatively, analysis shows that missing elements of national policy have disproportionately negative impact on women and children. Currently, none of the BRICS countries are making enough in terms of laws and budget decisions needed to ensure that women and girls benefit equally from, and have the chance to contribute to, a future of shared and sustained growth across the BRICS bloc. All of the BRICS nations could do more to convert their substantial economic growth into driving force to bridge the gender divide.

Gender Development Index developed by UNDP also reveals some problematic issues impeding gender

equality in BRICS with Russia positioned 49, Brazil – 79, China – 85, South Africa – 113, India – 129. The index assesses overall human development index for both genders, life expectancy at birth, expected and mean years of schooling, estimated gross national income per capita. In all BRICS countries life expectancy at birth is higher for women. Also, expected years of schooling indicator is higher for women. But for other indicators for almost all BRICS members women have worse numbers than men. Overall human development index for women is lower for all BRICS members except Russia. Mean years of schooling are lower for all members as well as estimated gross national income per capita. This once again shows that barriers exist in education and employment which result in lower income for women in BRICS.

out open and favourable lines of credit, many female entrepreneurs will be forced to close their businesses. That is why it is extremely important to work with

both women who want to start their business and financial institutions to eliminate remaining barriers and make their interaction a win-win process.⁷³

Table 10. Access to finance for start-ups

Source: OECD 2017.

Indicator	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Share of the population who report borrowing money to start a business, by sex (%)	Male				
	6.6	16.7	6	14	6.3
	Female				
	2.9	13.6	3.2	10.8	5.1

International rankings and analysis of national contexts reveal that BRICS members face common challenges and have some similar barriers when it comes to narrowing gender divide, but they also have great opportunities to bridge the gap, promote women economic empowerment and facilitate overall economic growth and prosperity. Challenges to be addressed are summarized and structured into five groups.

Women Economic Empowerment: Entrepreneurship and MSMEs

Entrepreneurship creates opportunities for women's employment and economic development. However, evidence suggests that there are significantly fewer women than men in business and entrepreneurship in the BRICS countries.

Table 9. Data on entrepreneurship

Source: Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2019⁷¹

Indicator	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Share of female-owned business in total number of businesses (%)	28.9	31.2	7.4	25.6	21.5

One of the key issues impeding women entrepreneurship is lack of financing. Women entrepreneurs are often discriminated against when attempting to access credit. Women own and lead roughly 6.6 million formal MSMEs and 39 million micro-businesses

in emerging markets, with a total estimated unmet credit demand of \$1.7 trillion.⁷² They also usually have less initial capital and necessary experience or knowledge. This will be a challenge as credit is of paramount importance in the survival of firms. With-



⁷¹ <https://newsroom.mastercard.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Mastercard-Index-of-Women-Entrepreneurs-2019.pdf>

⁷² https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/Industry_EXT_Content/IFC_External_Corporate_Site/Financial+Institutions/Priorities/Banking_on_Women/

⁷³ https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/financial-inclusion-for-women-a-way-forward/

Women Economic Empowerment: Digital Economy

Digitalization can enhance women economic empowerment cutting on some of the traditional cultural and mobility barriers, helping access new markets, enhancing work flexibly, improving financial autonomy and access to finance. However, hurdles to access, affordability, lack of education as well as inherent biases and socio-cultural norms undermine women and girls' ability to benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital transformation.⁷⁴

In addition, girls' relatively lower educational enrolment in those disciplines that would allow them to perform well in a digital world (e.g. STEM and information and communication technologies), coupled with women's and girls' limited use of digital tools and relatively scarcer presence or activity on platforms – e.g. for business purposes – suggest a potential scenario of widening gaps and greater inequality, especially in disadvantaged areas.⁷⁵ These issues are of utmost importance for BRICS countries.

Another urgent issue which BRICS members should keep in mind and address is automatization of jobs

brought about by digitalization. McKinsey Global Institute predicts as many as 160 million may need to change jobs in the age of automation – nearly one-quarter of all women employed today.⁷⁶ In BRICS women could be more affected because they tend to be overrepresented in the performance of routine tasks that are at risk of automation.

Concrete policy actions are needed to promote digital skills development, employment and job creation including through the digital platforms.



⁷⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/sti/education-and-skills-in-bridging-the-digital-gender-divide-evidence-from-apec.pdf>

⁷⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/going-digital/bridging-the-digital-gender-divide-key-messages.pdf>

⁷⁶ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/the-future-of-women-at-work-transitions-in-the-age-of-automation>

Women Economic Empowerment: International Trade

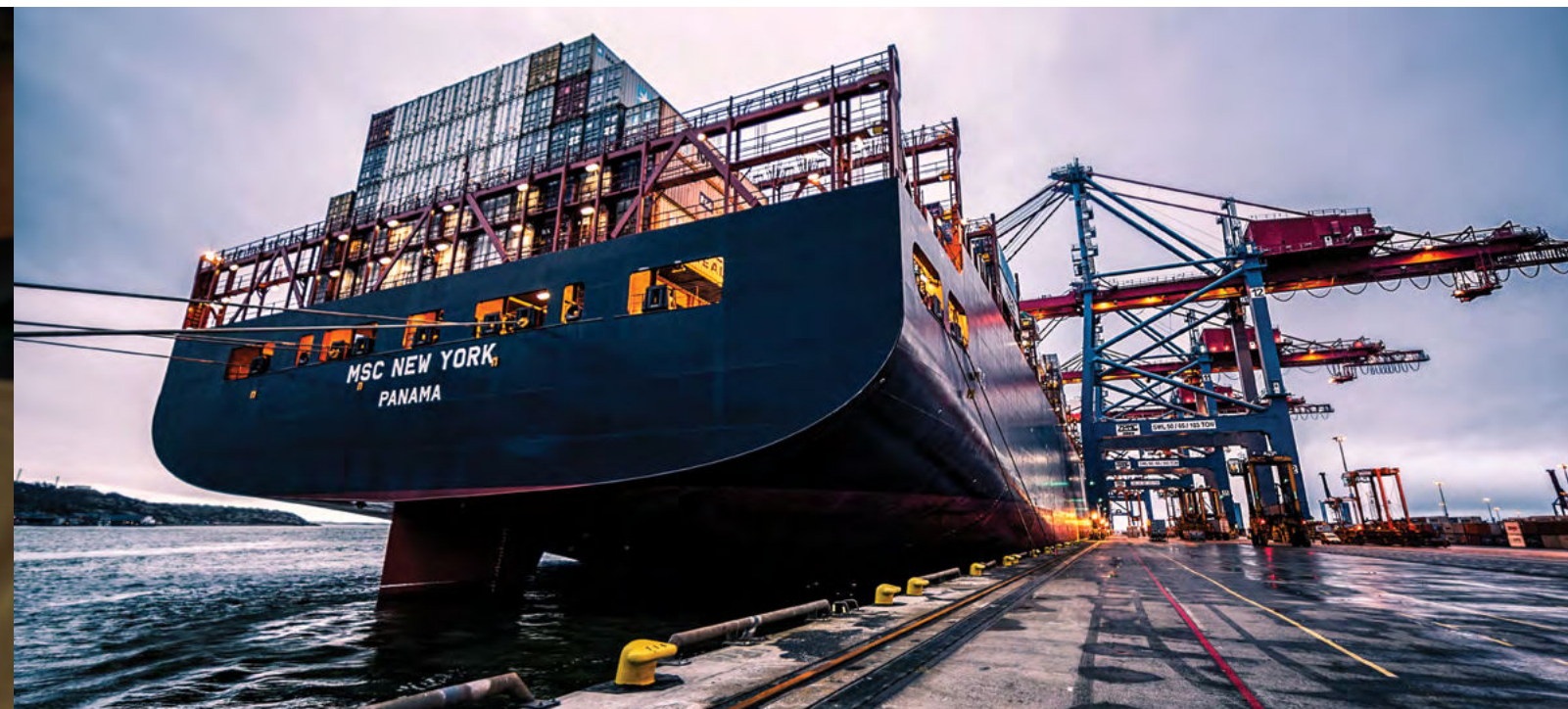
Today sectors involved in international trade create significant employment opportunities for women, with exporting companies in developing countries employing more women than is the case for non-exporters, according to WTO.⁷⁷ Gender-specific data on trade and MSMEs is one of the key challenges for the BRICS countries. That is why it is hard to assess BRICS-specific challenges for women in international trade.

But overall trends show that more and more women are playing an active role in services, agriculture and manufacturing as cross-border traders, producers and entrepreneurs. Integration into GVCs can potentially help female entrepreneurs in BRICS countries to improve the quality of their products, scale up and diversify their production. However, evidence suggests that we have a long way to go. Women are much less integrated into international trade, so they are not enjoying the benefits.⁷⁸ Women-owned and led businesses are still underrepresented in international trade and tend to be small and operate in the informal sector. Only 15% of exporting firms are led by women.⁷⁹ Another issue is access to information.

Women-owned businesses in BRICS that are active in international trade have the potential to grow their

businesses, and thereby create inclusive growth in their communities, through expanding employment, according to analysis from the ITC.⁸⁰ Women entrepreneurs are also more likely to employ women, thereby spreading the benefits of their success.⁸¹

Mainstreaming gender issues into the free trade agreements is one of the possible options for policy-makers to facilitate women empowerment through trade, according to International Trade Centre.⁸² As the ITC recommends to ensure that trade agreements create equitable opportunities and contribute to inclusive growth and development, the specific needs of women could be mainstreamed in their design, content and scope.



⁷⁷ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/womenandtrade_e/tradecandriveforwomen_e.htm

⁷⁸ <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Special-Reports/Womens-Entrepreneurship.pdf>

⁷⁹ https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news17_e/dgra_21jun17_e.pdf

⁸⁰ [https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/women_in_trade_web\(1\).pdf](https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/women_in_trade_web(1).pdf)

⁸¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/international-womens-day-trade-facilitation-empowers-women/>

⁸² https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/ITC%20Mainstream%20Gender_FTA_20200707_web.pdf

Women Economic Empowerment: Unpaid Work

Disproportionate amount of unpaid work performed by women compared to men in BRICS countries is one of the common barriers to higher women economic participation and one of the roots of existing gaps. The situation is further aggravated by COVID-19 outbreak. Prior to COVID-19, women did triple the amount of unpaid domestic labour as men. Measures to contain the pandemic such as quarantines and closures of schools imply additional household work and responsibility. Some women may be forced to make difficult decisions to leave the labour market or opt for part-time jobs, as juggling between caring for family members and paid work becomes untenable.⁸³

Table 11. Time spent on unpaid work in BRICS countries

Sources: Brazil – World Bank 2012, Russia – World Bank 2014, India, China and South Africa – OECD.

Indicator	Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
Time spent on unpaid work (minutes per day)	women				
	191.5	259.2	351.9	234	249.6
	men				
	43.2	115.2	51.8	91	102.9

Expansion of universal public services, especially healthcare, childcare and elderly care, investment into facilities and infrastructure care are necessary to ease

the burden of unpaid work. It is also necessary to promote gender equality by offering options or incentives for men to also participate in domestic tasks.⁸⁴

Women Economic Empowerment: Evidence-Based Policy-Making

In order to develop, implement and monitor efficient gender-equality policies decision-makers need to see the real picture of existing challenges and improvements. Collecting and reporting of high-quality sex-disaggregated data are vital for designing policies, monitoring their outcomes, establishing what works for women-empowerment and adjusting relevant policies.

According to the ILO, a system of frequent data collection and production of statistics in line with the latest labour statistical resolutions is needed.⁸⁵ According to the World Bank, the lack of sex-disaggregated data and statistics that make gender gaps visible, resulted in an incomplete picture of women's and men's economic, political and social situations in the world,⁸⁶ and the impact of women economic empowerment on eco-

nomical and social development. BRICS members have systemic sex-disaggregated data for basic socio-economic indicators in the realm of demographics and labour force participation. However, these data are not sufficient for efficient evidence-based policy-making for women empowerment in the fields of international trade, SMEs development and digital economy.

⁸³ [https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/women_in_trade_web\(1\).pdf](https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/women_in_trade_web(1).pdf)

⁸⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/international-womens-day-trade-facilitation-empowers-women/>

⁸⁵ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_674831.pdf

⁸⁶ <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/fillingdatagaps>

Conclusions and Recommendations for BRICS



The BRICS economies have already put in place a number of important actions aimed at narrowing the gender gap. Targeted initiatives include education, skills and professional development; enhancing access to digital technologies; providing access to finance; support to entrepreneurship, innovations and start-ups; promoting women business leadership and transition from rural to urban jobs. But more needs to be done in light of the rapid digitalization and the COVID-19 impact on economies and societies. The review allows to propose some policy options for empowering and integrating women into economy for the BRICS states to consider.

Facilitating women empowerment in digital economy

In the context when women remain affected by the first digital divide (access to infrastructure), while the second digital divide (access to technological skills) is widening, the BRICS members may consider coupling access and affordability-related policies with education-related initiatives aimed at enhancing digital literacy:

- Supporting women-led SMEs in transitions to digital business models, e-commerce and digital production model.
- Including gender aspect and gender-related goals and numeric targets into national digital development programmes.

- Establishing targets for women in STEM.
- Establishing BRICS award and prizes enhancing the visibility of women in STEM and in high technology sectors and tackling socio-cultural norms and biases and stereotypes hindering women participation in digital economy.
- Adopting collaborative approach to regulating digital platforms to ensure they provide secure education and communication space, gender-unbiased services and quality jobs.

Addressing gender pay and income gap

The gender pay gap remains significant in all BRICS countries despite the fact that all members included equal pay principles into their national documents. BRICS members may consider:

- Promoting the approach of gender budgeting, especially in the design and implementation of anti-crisis measures, as the gender-blind approach to fiscal stimulus may result in an inefficient allocation of resources and risks exacerbating existing inequities.
- Encouraging the development of flexible forms of work.
- Taking actions to lower the gender pay gap and setting a numeric goal to be reached by 2025.
- Adopting national strategies to promote the quantity and quality of childcare and elderly-care facilities to help women balance working and family duties.
- Conducting a joint BRICS and ILO research on major causes of gender pay gap and lower labour participation for women.

Empowering women through SMEs and international trade

Entrepreneurship and trade generate employment and innovation. Participation of women in business activities depends on access to finance, skills, networking, knowledge of regulation and secure legal environment. The BRICS members may consider:

- Promoting financial and technical support to women-led MSMEs, especially for transition to digital business models, e-commerce and digital production model.
- Working both with women who want to start or develop their business and with financial institutions to eliminate remaining barriers and make their interaction a win-win process.
- Facilitating mentoring, networking and greater exposure to relevant role models among BRICS countries.
- Establishing a BRICS award for women-led MSMEs.
- Exchanging of best practices on reducing informality in women labour through promotion of entrepreneurship.
- Developing sustainable microfinancing schemes for rural and most vulnerable women while providing necessary legal basis to protect them from the fraud.
- Raising awareness about cross-border trade regulations and procedures for women-led MSMEs.
- Mainstreaming gender issues in the international trade agreements.
- Fostering the dialogue between policymakers, the private sector and civil society on women economic empowerment.

Evidence-based policy making

Evidence-based policy making requires systematic collection of data, aimed at identifying priorities, and defining and monitoring key lines of actions. Gender-disaggregating the data serves as the basis for gender budgeting and provides the requisite understanding for development of effective policies. The BRICS members may consider:

- Promoting cooperation among national statistics authorities to develop a list of gender-specific indicators taking into account key issues (MSMEs, digital economy, trade) and SDG 5 and SDG 8 indicators.
- Adding a gender dimension to data already collected by National Statistical Offices.
- Designing and implementing the collection and publication of BRICS report on the best practices and gender-related statistics (National Statistical Offices, Labour ministers and the ILO).



Encouraging national companies to implement women empowerment programs

Currently, a lot of private businesses implement women empowerment initiatives both inside and outside their operations, helping thousands of women and contributing to narrowing the gender divide in the BRICS countries. The BRICS governments may consider closer cooperation with private businesses to encourage national companies as well as multinationals to promote gender equality.

Private business initiatives to promote gender equality in BRICS

Brazil

Unilever Brazil fosters women's empowerment internally, through HR initiatives that promote the rise of women in the organization and provide an inclusive environment in which women and men may develop their potential globally; institutionally, by participating in the global #HeforShe campaign and the local movement named Associação Movimento Mulher 360; as well as by means of the Unilever brands, with actions such as the global Dove Self-Esteem project and the Ciclo Brilhante Programme.⁸⁷

Chevron is a partner with the Community Inclusion Project in Brazil which helps women develop business skills that lead to sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families.⁸⁸

Russia

Women in Mining Russia project is implemented by the mining company Polymetal together with consulting company Deloitte in CIS to develop equal opportunities in the working environment and support women's leadership in the mining and metallurgical industries. It includes an annual forum, open seminars, business breakfasts and a mentorship and coaching programs in cooperation with universities.

Business Women Program by Ernst & Young Global Limited includes an award and a series of educational activities for women entrepreneurs and leaders. The Business Women Program is aimed at supporting women's entrepreneurship and increasing career opportunities for women. Winners are selected by an independent jury with participation of successful entrepreneurs, investors, independent experts and past winners.

India

ITC Limited's initiative provided a range of gainful employment opportunities to over 64,000 poor women cumulatively, supported with capacity building and financial assistance by way of loans and grants. Included in the total are 22,700 ultra-poor women in the Company's core catchments, who have access to sustainable sources of income through non-farm livelihood opportunities. The financial literacy and inclusion project, in partnership with Madhya Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (MPSRLM) and CRISIL Foundation, was rolled out in 765 villages across 11 districts during the year.⁸⁹

Hindustan Zinc Limited flagship project SAKHI is geared towards mobilizing rural women into self-help groups and developing their capacities around leadership, skill development, savings and entrepreneurship.⁹⁰

China

44 private companies submitted the CEO statement supporting the Women's Empowerment Principles which United Nations Global Compact developed to guide businesses on adopting practices to empower women, such as equal pay for work of equal value, gender responsive supply chain practices and zero tolerance of sexual harassment and started creating fairer conditions for women in the workplace, marketplace and the community.⁹¹

Women in Factories China Program sponsored by Walmart seeks to empower women and the factories where they work as agents of sustainable change.⁹²

South Africa

WDB Investment Holding is a women-founded, women-led and operated group with a combined over 25 years' experience with a focus on funding and supporting women entrepreneurs. WDB is all about making a social impact on women; providing them with business funding and investment opportunities.⁹³

The Women Entrepreneurial Fund (WEF) was established by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) to support access to entrepreneurial funds for women business owners. R400 million has been set aside for women-owned businesses.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/community/organizations/2016/10/unilever-brazil>

⁸⁸ <https://www.chevron.com/-/media/shared-media/documents/empowering-women-in-brazil-transcript.pdf>

⁸⁹ https://csrbox.org/India_CSR_news_Top-10-Women-Empowerment-Projects-through-CSR-in-India-in-the-Financial-Year-2018-19_540

⁹⁰ https://csrbox.org/India_CSR_news_Top-10-Women-Empowerment-Projects-through-CSR-in-India-in-the-Financial-Year-2018-19_540

⁹¹ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/03/china-s-companies-step-up-support-for-women-s-empowerment-principles>

⁹² <https://www.bsr.org/en/collaboration/groups/women-in-factories-china-program>

⁹³ <https://www.wdbinvestments.co.za/>

⁹⁴ <https://bplans.co.za/funding-financial-assistance-sa-women-entrepreneurs/>

