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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN TRADE FACILITATION

THE ROLE OF CUSTOMS AND BORDER SERVICES

AGENDA

1. Background

2. WEEGE at the Border

a) Findings

b) Recommendations

3. WEEGE within Customs

a) Findings

b) Recommendations

4. Q&A

I. BACKGROUND



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METHODOLOGY

- Mixed methods
- Literature review
- In-depth interviews (semi-structured questions;
Zoom and WhatsApp)
 - Purposive sampling

WOMEN WORLDWIDE ARE NOT EXPERIENCING THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TRADE

There is a significant gap between men and women engaged in trade:

- Most women run SMEs
- Less than 4% of large trading companies are led by women
- Women face greater barriers starting businesses

Women make up most of the small-scale traders globally, and more than 70% in Africa

- Women traders, running companies of all sizes, face disproportionate family care burdens

2. WEEGE AT THE BORDER: FINDINGS



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CUSTOMS SERVICES HAVE DUAL AND COMPETING FUNCTIONS

Charged with enforcing the laws of multiple agencies to secure the homeland while also facilitating trade and revenue collection in a neutral manner

FINDINGS

All Economies:

- Women need access to innovative trade facilitation technology, on platforms available to them
- Lack of trade information is a major barrier
- Customs officials are not always properly trained or knowledgeable



Rwandan women cross-border traders
World Bank

Advanced Economies:

- Most advanced economies have enhanced automation and trade facilitation

Women traders operate in male-dominated environments, where they hold less power relative to male customs and border officials.

FINDINGS

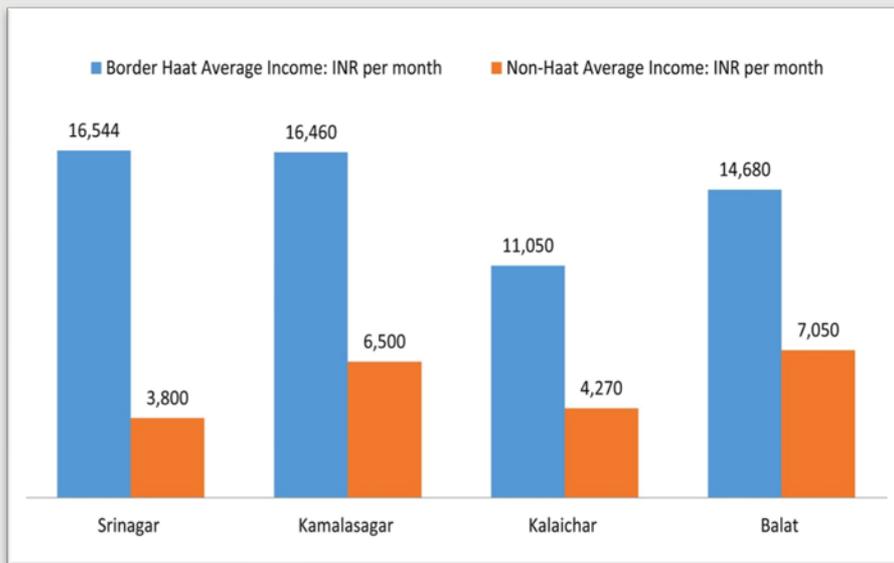
In Many Emerging Economies:

- Small-scale women traders are marginalized, hampered, and unrecognized
- Customs services lack full automation and trade facilitation
- Border infrastructure does not meet the safety and physical needs of women traders, thereby putting them at risk
- Lack of markets, warehouses, cold storage, and lodging facilities hampers women traders

FINDINGS

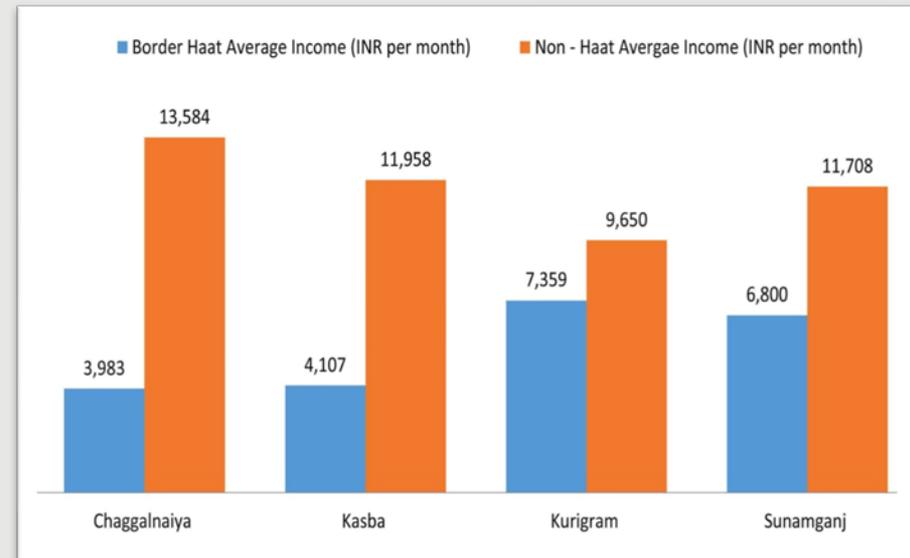
The needs of women traders are generally not a consideration in trade initiatives

India border



Cuts International, Bordering on Happiness

Bangladesh border



3. WEEGE AT THE BORDER: RECOMMENDATIONS



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RECOMMENDATIONS (All Economies)

Customs agencies should:

1. Recognize that ‘neutral’ implementation of rules and procedures can disproportionately impact SMEs negatively
2. Empower women traders by providing transparent and easy-to-access customs information and technology to reach women wherever they are
3. Provide updated and ongoing training to customs officials (including those at the border) in rules and procedures
4. Outreach to potential SME traders on topics such as “how to become a trader” to enable more women to experience the economic benefits of trade

RECOMMENDATIONS (Emerging Economies)

Customs agencies should:

1. Implement full automation and trade facilitation measures
2. Adopt a Charter of Rights for Traders
3. Build women-friendly and safe infrastructure at the border

RECOMMENDATIONS (Emerging Economies)

Customs services should:

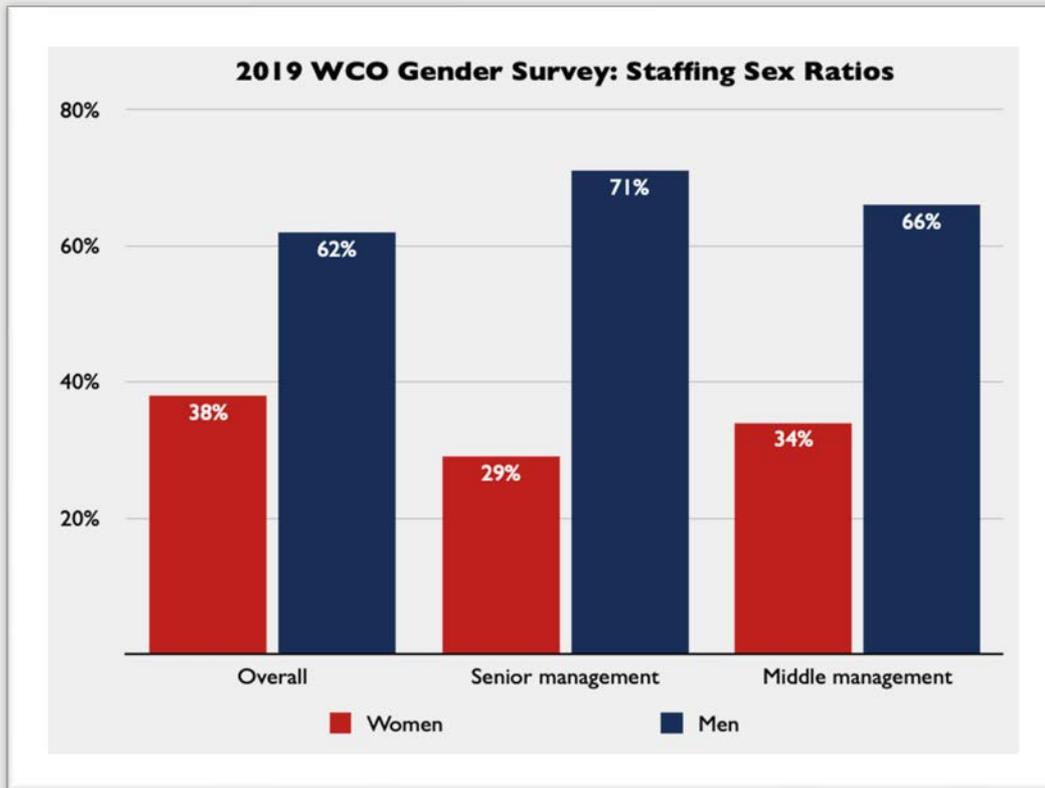
1. Study solutions to recognize small-scale traders without the barriers of formalization
2. Study the economic impact of increasing the *de minimis* duty exemption to promote small-scale trader, especially in e-commerce

4. WEEGE WITHIN CUSTOMS: FINDINGS



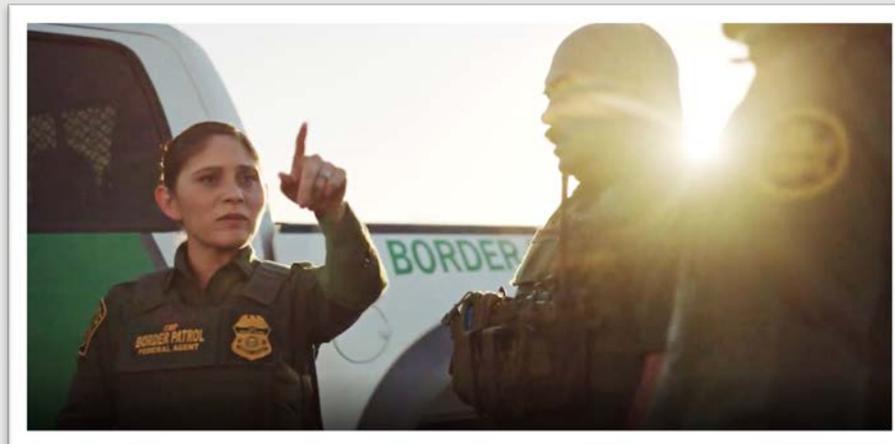
FINDINGS: Gender-balanced Staffing

Globally, progress is being made to bring more gender balance to all areas of customs work; however the sector remains **broadly male-dominated**, especially in **leadership and enforcement positions**



FINDINGS: Recruitment, Retention, Advancement of Women

- Gender-blind recruitment strategies
- Retention factors: mentorship; sponsorship; challenging, diverse, public-service work
- Advancement tenuously tied to efforts of individual women champions; can easily regress without legislation or policies
- Environments of male camaraderie and sometimes cronyism



United States Border Patrol agent
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

FINDINGS: HR Policies and Safety Concerns

- Difficult to reconcile the needs of officers with the needs of certain positions
- Sexual harassment and abuse of power are a real risk
- Heightened safety and security risks in uncontrolled and militarized environments
- Basic infrastructure for women
- ‘Everyday sexism’ is common

FINDINGS: Capacity Building

- Most training programs address issues of sexual harassment and abuse of power



Malaysian customs department taking corruption-free pledge, 2017
New Straights Times

- However, few agencies train officers to understand or reflect on unconscious gender and other biases or how these may impact their work and interactions with others

5. WEEGE WITHIN CUSTOMS: RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use behavioral design learnings to increase the hiring, retention, and promotion of female staff
2. Build targeted systems of accountability for progress on gender equality
3. Regularly provide customs and border officers with tailored trainings on gender and sexual harassment prevention
4. Invest in a strong and integrated gender architecture

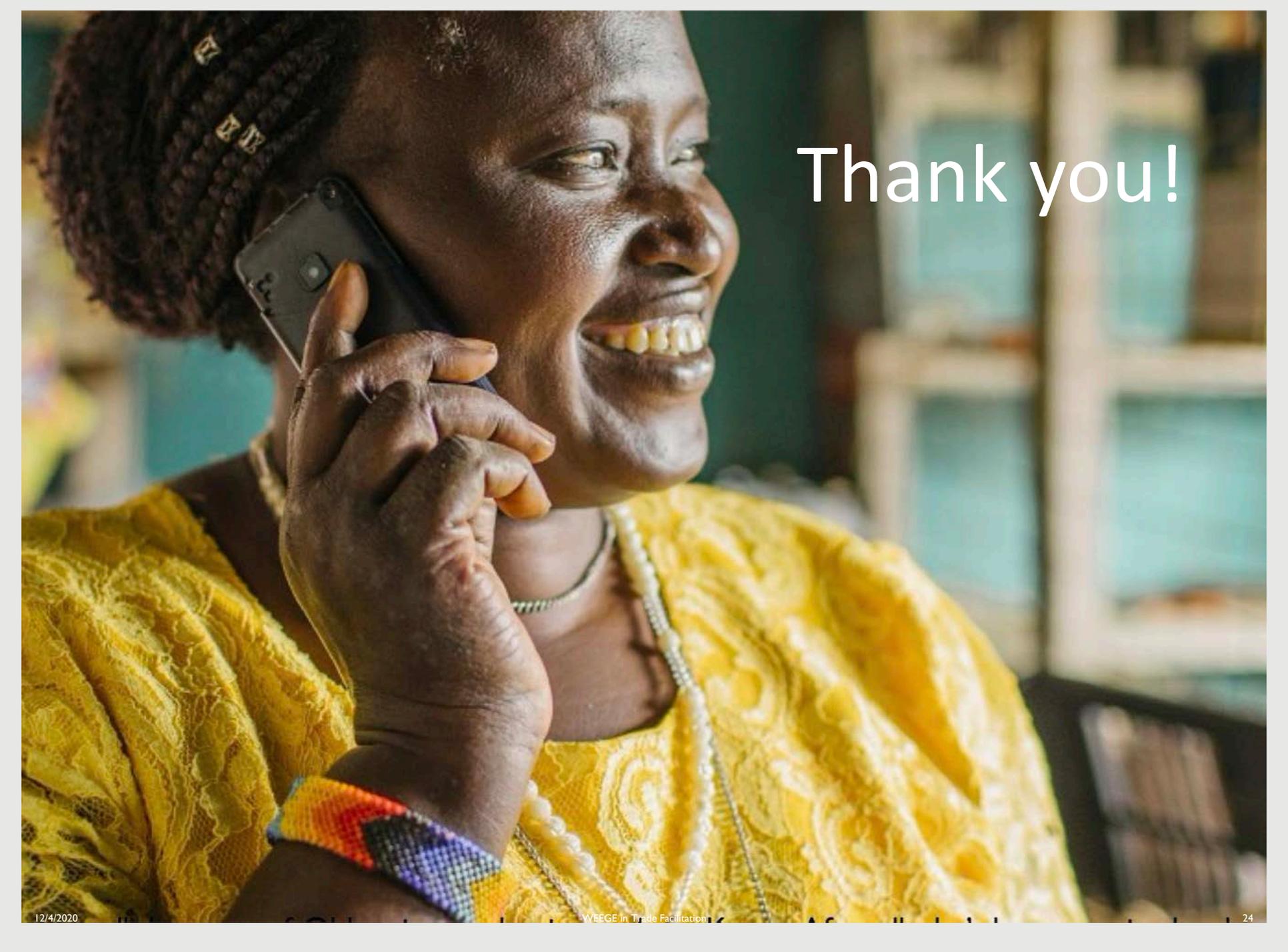
COUNTRY-BASED EXAMPLES

- ICELAND: Equal Pay Certification
- CANADA: Gender-Based Analysis Plus



4. Q&A



A close-up, profile view of a woman with dark skin and braided hair, smiling warmly while talking on a black mobile phone. She is wearing a bright yellow, textured lace top and a colorful beaded bracelet. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a shop or office with shelves.

Thank you!