

Preface

Commonwealth Businesswomen: Trade Matters, Best Practices and Success Stories is one of the first outputs of the Commonwealth Secretariat's programme focus on trade and gender issues. The publication is a collaborative effort between the Trade, Enterprise and Agriculture Department and the Gender Affairs Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Other programmes initiated by these departments include the development of a Commonwealth Businesswomen Network (CBWN), which is intended to function as a mechanism through which the interests of women entrepreneurs can be promoted in trade policy decisions (see Appendix II), and a forthcoming reference manual on the gender impacts of the multilateral trading system.

The book is divided into five sections. It provides an overview of globalisation and trade liberalisation, including their gender impact. It also gives a brief introduction to the rules of the global trading system, looking at agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as the workings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. In addition, it addresses some of the challenges that the new international order presents to women's small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The book also provides case studies which address issues traditionally seen as problems for businesswomen: access to credit, information, technology and markets, and equity issues. These are followed by more than 30 success stories, which tell a persuasive story of women who have overcome various personal and industry challenges to develop viable businesses. They are a compilation of best practices in business, pioneered and/or adapted by businesswomen across the Commonwealth. A final chapter looks at Commonwealth and international mandates related to women and trade.

In order to assist women entrepreneurs, several awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes on globalisation and its implications for women in business have been held in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Canada and the United Kingdom. The aim of these programmes is to assist businesswomen to develop a thorough understanding of the rules of the global trading system, so that they are better placed to reap some of the benefits of globalisation by, for example, obtaining access to new markets.

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