

Getting started

'I want to build a gender perspective into my knowledge of trade issues and to be able to share this with other stakeholders.'

'I need tools for implementing gender in trade policy and practice.'

'I want a better understanding of the global trade agenda and the gender implications as they affect this region.'

These are some of the reasons that participants at a trade and gender workshop have given for needing to know more about trade and gender. Perhaps your own reasons are similar.

This unit introduces the action guide's approach and contents, and ways to use it. The unit will help you to:

- define your own objectives for using this action guide
- identify the parts of the action guide that best meet your needs
- draw up a plan for working through the action guide.

In this unit

Your task
Using the action guide
Learning action plan

Your task

First, think about your task in relation to trade and gender. What is it that you want to do?

For example:

- Do you take part in policy-making or strategy development?
- Are you planning a particular project or campaign?
- Are you working towards a specific event or development?
- Are you trying to understand why gender is important for trade negotiations?

Make notes about your task below.

Activity 1.1: Defining the task

What is your task in relation to trade and gender?

What are the steps you must take towards achieving your task?

What is the timeframe for achieving your task?

What are the gaps? What do you need in order to achieve your task?



Using the action guide

Now you have thought about your task, let's look at some aspects of using this guide.

Here are some thumbnail sketches of the kinds of people who may be using this action guide:

- a research officer in a ministry of tourism (or agriculture, etc)
- a business development officer in a ministry of industry and international business
- a manager from an economic policy and planning unit
- a trade officer from a chamber of commerce
- a senior foreign service officer from a ministry of external affairs,
- a gender officer from a department of gender affairs
- a university director from a centre for gender and development studies
- a member of a women's business network
- a regional trade policy adviser
- a trade negotiator from a regional negotiating machinery
- a member of a women's non-governmental organisation (NGO) or a centre for gender action and research.

Other?

Do you recognise yourself on this list? If so, copy the description in the box below. If not, add your own profile.

Activity 1.2: Profile



Next, what do you hope to achieve by working through this action guide? Note down your three main objectives.



Activity 1.3: Three main objectives

1

2

3

To help you identify how to make the best use of the action guide, read the following sections about background, what's in the guide and approach.

Background

The Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) identified the need for this action guide as part of its programme on Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion. COMSEC's experience, and that of many other organisations (such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development – UNCTAD), is that although trade clearly has different impacts on women and men, these differences are not adequately known or understood. There is also a lack of practical material to help people understand the differential impacts and take action in their work to address them.

COMSEC has run a series of face-to-face regional workshops on trade and gender. There has been considerable demand for these, but it is not possible to provide enough workshops to meet the need worldwide. This action guide can reach a far wider audience and it can be adapted to be used in many flexible ways. It also provides a starting point for other institutions to take the work forward.

The action guide thus shares the same overall purposes as the COMSEC programme on Gender, Trade Policy and Export Promotion:

- to sensitise trade policy makers to the impacts and implications of gender issues
- to integrate gender analysis into trade policy formulation
- to sensitise export promotion officials to the need to integrate gender in all strategies
- to present options on ways in which women producers and workers can take advantage of new economic opportunities on more favourable terms

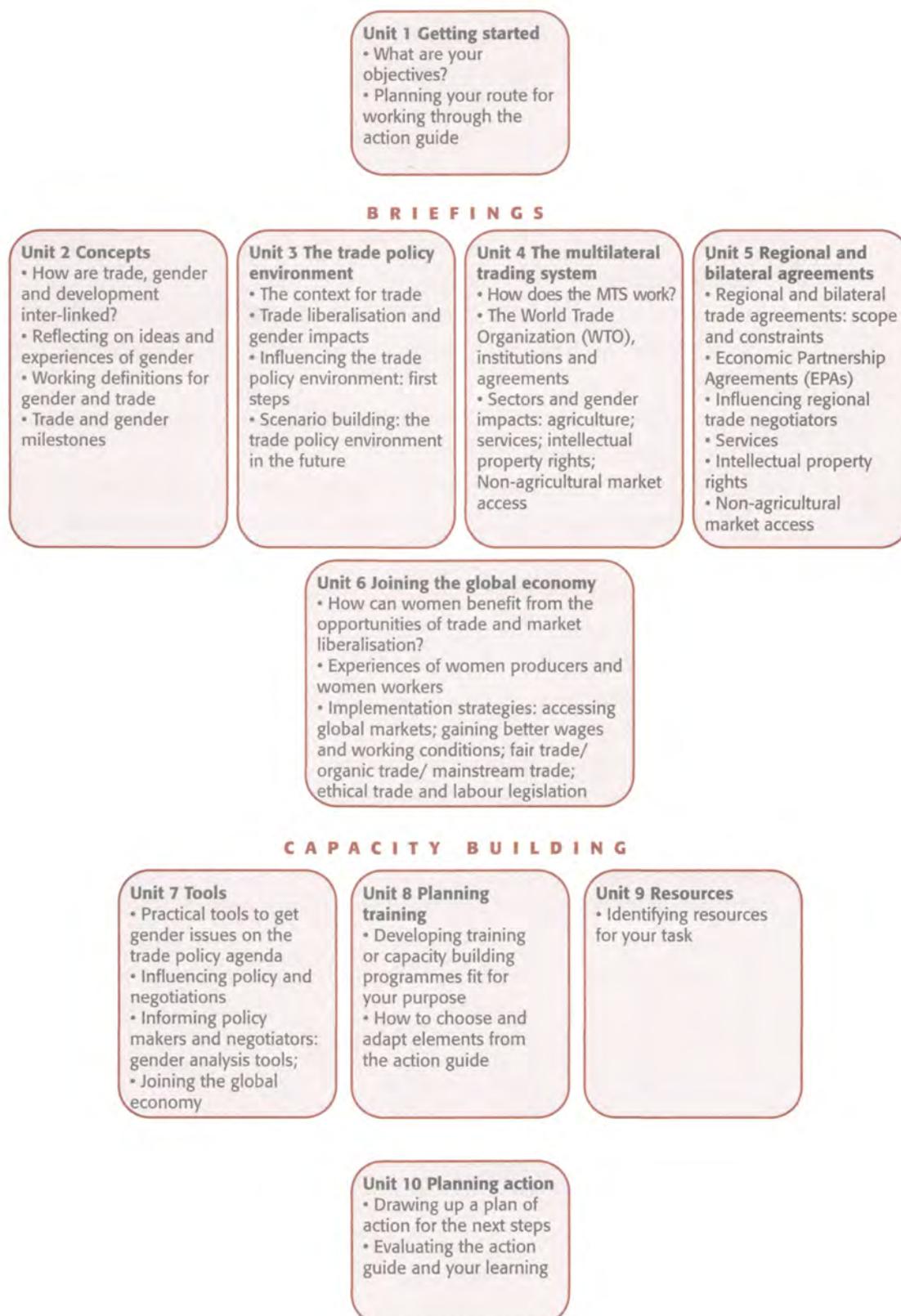
It aims to do this by:

- analysing gender impacts of trade policy on employment and entrepreneurship
- focusing on region-specific and sector-specific issues and trends and their gender impacts
- building capacity to integrate gender analysis in trade policy formulation and implementation
- building capacity of public and private institutions to enable women to respond to changes in trade policy.

What's in the action guide?

Here is an overview of the action guide, with an outline of what the units cover. Spend a few minutes now reading through the overview and highlight the units that seem to meet the needs of the task you identified above and your main objectives. Browse through the units themselves for a more complete picture.

OVERVIEW



Note that the action guide falls into two main parts.

- 1 Units 2–6 are briefing units that cover ‘why?’ and ‘what?’ – concepts, context, issues and background information – a basic introduction to the subject.
- 2 Units 7–9 are resource units that cover ‘how?’ – capacity-building tools and resources to enable people to take action and apply what they have learned to their own context and requirements.

Units 1 and 10 are about getting the most out of the action guide itself.

In addition the accompanying CD-ROM contains key readings and the complete text of books recommended for further reading.

Look back now at your list of the three main objectives you hope to achieve by working through the action guide (*Activity 1.3*). Note where they are covered by the outline above.

Approach

The action guide is flexibly designed so that it can be used for self-study or as a resource to build capacity and develop programmes for others. In its approach it:

- aims to provide knowledge and tools to help people draw up a practical action plan
- builds on what people already know or have done
- helps relate general information to specific countries, regions, sectors and contexts
- encourages teamwork and networking.

Each unit includes:

- objectives
- briefings
- short case studies
- recommended key reading on CD-ROM
- activities
- training suggestions
- end-of-unit review.

Key questions

Ask yourself now how you plan to use the action guide. Is it:

- as self-study material, working through it on your own?

If so, then the sections below on preparation and the learning action plan are especially relevant.

- as a resource to help you plan training or capacity building for others?

If so, you should still work through the action guide on your own first, before using it with others. The training suggestions in each unit and Unit 8 Planning training will be especially relevant for people planning to use the action guide as a resource.

Preparation

Before starting work on the action guide, think about the points below.

Getting support

Who can you draw on for support as you work through the action guide? Who is there locally, in your workplace, the sector and networks? Can you meet other people doing similar work? Or people in key target groups or with similar interests?

In your organisation, take time to get interest and support from management and colleagues as you work through the action guide.

Finding resources

Brief yourself on relevant documents and begin to keep a list of those that will be of use. Do any colleagues/ departments have useful reference collections? If not, start your own.

Timing

Each unit is designed to take between one and a half to three hours, but this will depend on you. Do you aim to get a quick overview? Or to study in more depth, following up suggestions for further reading and activities? In planning your route through the action guide, think about how much time you have and plan accordingly.

Learning

You don't have to start at the beginning of the action guide and work through each unit in order. You can adapt materials and activities to suit your needs. How do you like to learn? Some people might start by reading the action guide and suggested readings. Others might go straight to the activities. Others might use activities and ideas as a stimulus for talking to other people and learning from them. Follow the approach that you will find most effective.

Reflecting

Get in the habit of reflecting as you work through the action guide. Think how you can apply what you learn to your work, or what you might do differently in future in the light of what you learn. Use the review, found at the end of most units, to help you reflect.



Learning action plan

This activity brings together the questions you have thought about in this unit and will give you a plan for working through the action guide. Fill in the details.

Activity 1.4: Learning action plan

What is your task?

Purpose

Steps

Timeframe

What do you need to do the task?

What do you hope to get from the action guide?

Which action guide units will best meet your needs?

What will help you get the most out of the action guide?

How much time will you set aside for working on the action guide?
Over how many weeks?

How will you organise your work on the action guide over these weeks?

What other resources and people can you draw on for support?

At the end, how will you know you have succeeded in your objectives?

You should now have a clear idea of how you are going to use the action guide, and specifically which unit you are going to start with.

Unit review

At the end of most units there is a review of what has been covered. Use it to assess your progress. For example, look again at the objectives given at the beginning of this unit and check if you can now do them. Look through your answers to the activities again and see if you want to add to them.

This unit has covered the following main points:

- thinking about your own task
- an introduction to the action guide and how to make best use of it
- drawing up a learning action plan.

To recap, the learning objectives for the unit were to:

- define your own objectives for using this action guide
- identify the parts of the action guide that best meet your needs
- draw up a plan for working through the action guide.