

## Trade Facilitation Surveys in South Africa Information Note

The World Bank Group's Trade Facilitation Programme in Middle Income Countries (TFMICs) is a partnership with the United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth office to support middle income countries in addressing economic development challenges related to inconsistent, unpredictable, and costly trade facilitation transactions, as well as, possible lack of gender equality and inclusion, transparency and trust among public and private stakeholders.

In South Africa, the South Africa Revenue Service (SARS) together with the World Bank Group (WBG) are undertaking a survey to identify trade facilitation-specific barriers to cross-border trade and to understand whether certain stakeholders face disproportionately greater barriers than others, such as women-led firms as opposed to men-led firms that undertake cross-border trade in goods.

While the intention of trade facilitation interventions are to benefit all traders equally, there is a global lack of data on how trade facilitation policies and interventions impact traders by **gender**.

Burdensome Customs requirements, lack of knowledge of border policies and procedures, and/or poor infrastructure might, for instance, impact women traders more than their male counterparts.

The adoption and implementation of policies and reforms in compliance with commitments established under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)<sup>1</sup> could be a catalyst for women traders by creating predictable and efficient border processes, reducing clearance times and trade costs, reducing the opportunity for fraudulent practices at the border, and increasing the involvement of women in trade facilitation decision mechanisms. The WTO TFA may also be particularly beneficial for women who tend to be time-constrained due to obligations in the home and view time at the border as costly.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the bottlenecks is especially critical in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as unimpeded trade can limit the negative impacts of the pandemic both in the short term and in the recovery process.

### How was the survey questionnaire designed?

A multiple-choice questionnaire was designed by trade facilitation and survey experts at the WBG based on input from focus group discussions in Malawi, Zambia, Fiji, and Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> The TFA, which entered into effect in 2017, aims to promote trade facilitation through improved transparency, simplified and automated procedures, coordinated border management, and consultative mechanisms (World Trade Organization 2015).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2015), The Role of Trade in Ending Poverty.

The questionnaire was piloted in five countries in the Pacific Islands region<sup>3</sup> under the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) that provides support to low income countries to fully and effectively align their border processes and procedures with the WTO TFA.

The survey is largely focused on areas related to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Some questions outside the scope of the WTO TFA – such as on safety at border posts – are included in the survey to better understand the cross-border trading environment in each of the countries.

The survey results are analysed and synthesised to identify key takeaways.

#### **How will the results of the survey be used?**

The findings of the survey will be used as a baseline to inform the SARS as well as WBG project activities related to trade facilitation or other interventions to better address trade-facilitation specific constraints.

The report will also be disseminated to the wider trade facilitation community.

**Survey participants are not identified in any subsequent reporting in order to preserve confidentiality.**

#### **Where can further information be obtained?**

Please contact project lead June Ghimire for further details ([jghimire@worldbank.org](mailto:jghimire@worldbank.org)) or via the SARS leads Claudette Davis ([cdavis2@sars.gov.za](mailto:cdavis2@sars.gov.za)) and Mandisa Motha-Ngumla ([MMotha-Ngumla@sars.gov.za](mailto:MMotha-Ngumla@sars.gov.za))

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<sup>3</sup> Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu