

ITC SHETRADES INITIATIVE

Why involve women in agricultural public procurement?

Contents

PAGES

- 02 **RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO INVOLVE WOMEN IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS**
- 03 **INCREASING GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CAN DELIVER IMPACT AT SCALE**
- 04 **IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN FACE IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS**
- 06 **THE WAY FORWARD FOR GOVERNMENTS AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**
- 08 **CHAMPIONING GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**
- 09 **ENGAGING IN THE AGRICULTURAL GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROJECT**

ABOUT US

The International Trade Centre (ITC)

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and least developed countries to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development.

The SheTrades Initiative

The SheTrades Initiative is ITC's flagship women and trade programme. ITC SheTrades targets all stakeholders across the trade and business ecosystem to create the right conditions and capacities for every woman, everywhere, to realize their full economic potential.

We provide women entrepreneurs and producers with access to key knowledge, resources, and networks, support policymakers on inclusive policy reforms, and leverage public and private partnerships to amplify the impact of our work.

For more information, visit www.shetrades.com

What is gender-responsive public procurement?

Through gender-responsive public procurement (GRPP), governments can increase the participation of women-led/-owned businesses in public procurement markets. Policymakers and procuring entities can design targeted assistance strategies and implement measures that effectively reduce the many barriers that women entrepreneurs face when competing for public tenders. Through proactive efforts, GRPP can create a more equitable and enabling environment for women entrepreneurs to participate in public procurement and contribute to economic growth and as well as gender equality.



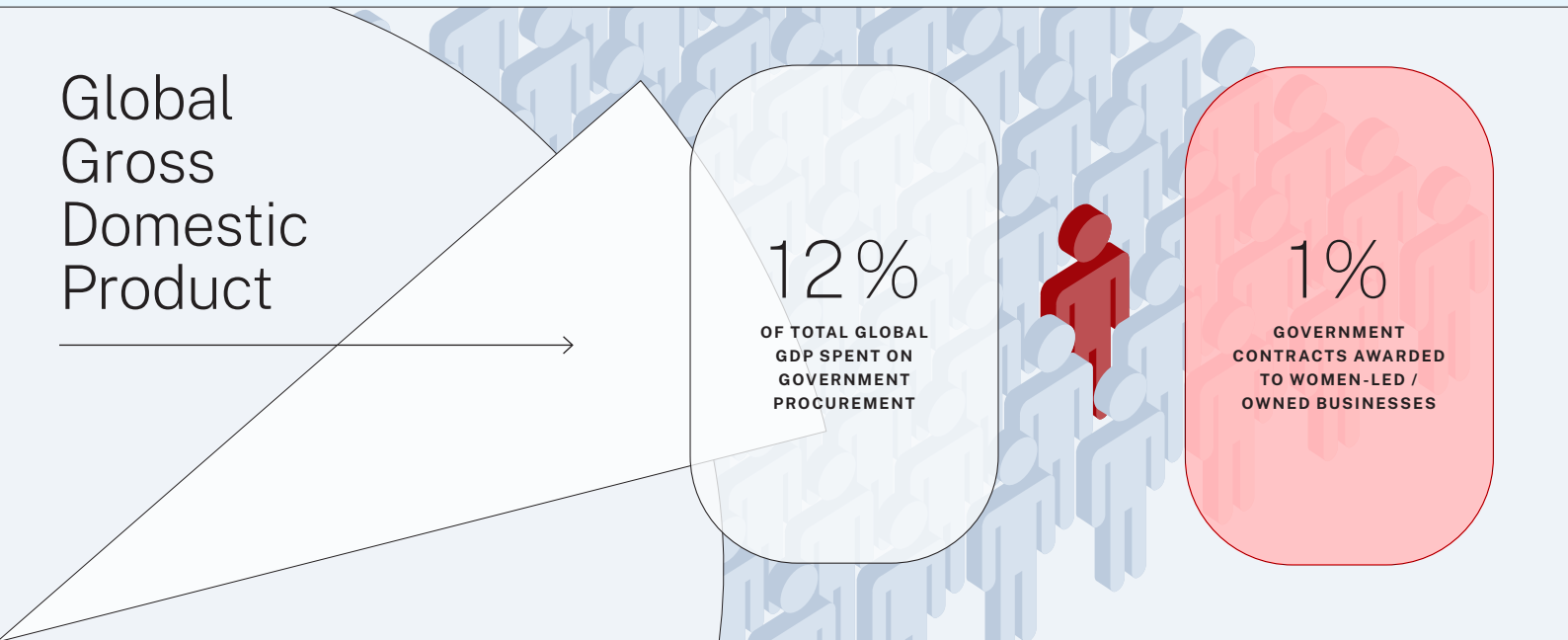
Recognizing the need to involve women in public procurement process



Women account for almost half of the global agricultural labour force.² Despite this, they face significant discrimination and barriers related to limited access to land and livestock ownership, equal pay, decision-making, and credit and financial services.

In agriculture, the challenges for women are even more pronounced. Women tend to hold menial jobs such as harvesting or packaging, which yield little to no opportunity to attain a respectable income. The more profitable segments, such as processing or marketing, are oftentimes dominated by men.

INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



Governments play an important role in increasing women’s involvement in public procurement. Despite spending 12% of their global gross domestic product (GDP) on public procurement, with some developing countries even reaching up to 30%, women-led/-owned businesses are still left out and account for only 1% of this spending.³

Moving the needle on this 1% will leapfrog women’s businesses and transform livelihoods at an unprecedented scale. This is why a growing number of countries have embraced the concept of ‘gender-responsive public procurement’ (GRPP), which aims to increase participation of women-led/-owned businesses in public procurement processes. These countries have adopted targeted strategies to enable more women entrepreneurs to benefit from large government procurement markets.

² <https://www.fao.org/reduce-rural-poverty/our-work/women-in-agriculture/en/>
³ <https://unctad.org/news/public-procurement-powerful-tool-sustainable-development-un-report>

Increasing gender-responsive public procurement can deliver impact at scale



HOW PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POSITIVELY IMPACTS GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

The benefits of awarding more government contracts to women-led/-owned businesses go beyond the firm. Apart from facilitating the growth of women's businesses, **GRPP can be transformative at three levels:**



Benefits from a **development perspective**

Including more women in the agricultural sector brings a wide range of skills, experiences, and perspectives ultimately advancing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5: Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Women's participation not only enriches the sector with their diverse capabilities but also directly supports the goal of gender equality and empowerment outlined in SDG 5.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) form the cornerstone of the global economy, particularly in developing and least developed countries. A significant proportion of these businesses is led or owned by women. By enabling the growth of these businesses through GRPP and moving the needle on the 1%, governments can achieve sustainable and widespread impact⁴.



Benefits from an **economic perspective**

Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and the wage gap in agricultural employment can lead to an increase in global GDP by nearly \$1 trillion and reduce the number of food-insecure people by 45 million⁵.

When women-led/-owned agribusinesses win more contracts, they have more resources to grow and increase farm productivity. At the country level, this creates jobs in the agricultural sector.



Benefits from a **public procurement perspective**

Encouraging the participation of more women entrepreneurs in public tenders fosters competition that is both fierce and diverse.

Women entrepreneurs tend to operate smaller businesses that are more agile and flexible. This means that they are better positioned to adjust to new requirements and provide innovative solutions that align with public needs.

When quality is an important criterion for an award, diverse competition yields better results and value for money for the procuring entity.⁶

⁴ UNDP. (2022). Inclusive Public Procurement Playbook. <https://bit.ly/3RKBDTt>

⁵ FAO. (2023). The status of women in agrifood systems. <https://www.fao.org/3/CC5060EN/online/CC5060EN.html> <https://www.fao.org/3/CC5060EN/online/status-women-agrifood-systems-2023/chapter1.html>

⁶ ITC. (2023). Making public procurement work for women. <https://intracen.org/resources/publications/making-public-procurement-work-for-women>

Identifying challenges that women face in agricultural value chains

BARRIERS FACED IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESSES

GRPP strives to effectively **tear down the barriers** that still make it difficult for women-led/-owned agricultural businesses to fully engage in the public procurement process.

These include:



Insufficient time to compete in a public tender



Limited tender opportunities and markets closing due to few long-term agreements



Little experience to fall back on regarding tendering and to show a track record



Inaccessible digital technologies, including internet connection



Biases on capacity and capability of women entrepreneurs



Complex administrative requirements for tenders; excessive/burdensome financial, bureaucratic, or quality-related requirements set by public authority



Lack of tendering skills and insufficient networks or connections to reach out to for help



Gender-related challenges in agricultural value chains

KEY BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN AGRIPRENEURS

01

Lack of access to transportation or time to transport

Women often have difficulty accessing transportation, have less time to travel from farms to business centres due to disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and often face additional risks when carrying money to perform transactions. For this reason, many business transactions are often exclusively assigned to and performed by men.

02

Disadvantaged position in the agricultural value chain

Small-scale women farmers, who find themselves at the tail end of a complex value chain, often capture only a fraction of the final price that the end consumer pays.

This diminished return is the result of several intermediaries (e.g., processors, wholesalers, retailers, and other transportation and intermediary links) standing in between these farmers and the final consumer.

03

Lack of access to agricultural advisory and upskilling services

Most agricultural advisory workers are men and may not consider women a primary target group for trainings. Other constraints related to safety, time, proximity to training locations, and prevailing social or cultural norms can also limit women's participation.

04

Lack of rights to own or inherit farmlands

In various places, women are not allowed to access, use, inherit, control, and/or own farmlands and other productive resources.

05

Lack of access to credit and financial institutions, benefits, and networking opportunities

Women often encounter restrictions when opening bank accounts, the latter which is a prerequisite for accessing loans to establish or expand their agribusinesses.

Furthermore, numerous women face challenges when attempting to formalize their businesses, with some operating within the informal sector. This informal status creates an additional barrier to accessing social benefits and networking opportunities, as some government assistance programmes are exclusively available to formal businesses.

The way forward for governments and gender-responsive public procurement



GOVERNMENT'S POWER FOR CHANGE



Policymakers

As a policymaker, the government can design rules that put women on equal footing, rather than at a disadvantage.



Buyers

As a buyer, women-led/-owned businesses can be brought into the fold of government procurement processes.



Societal Institutions

As a leading societal institution, the government has the power to set an example.

As government entities, you can...

Governments bear significant responsibilities in bolstering the participation of women-led/-owned businesses in agricultural public procurement. As the primary policymaking bodies, governments possess the potential to exert a profoundly positive influence and impact on women entrepreneurs, whether as buyers or contracting parties.



If you are affiliated with local government units, the following steps can be taken to promote the participation of women entrepreneurs in public tenders for agricultural value chains.



You can **design and use policies** to achieve and ensure implementation of GRPP. Policies can include direct purchasing from women entrepreneurs to supply to government-owned institutions and government led initiatives such as hospitals, school food programmes, the army or state prisons.



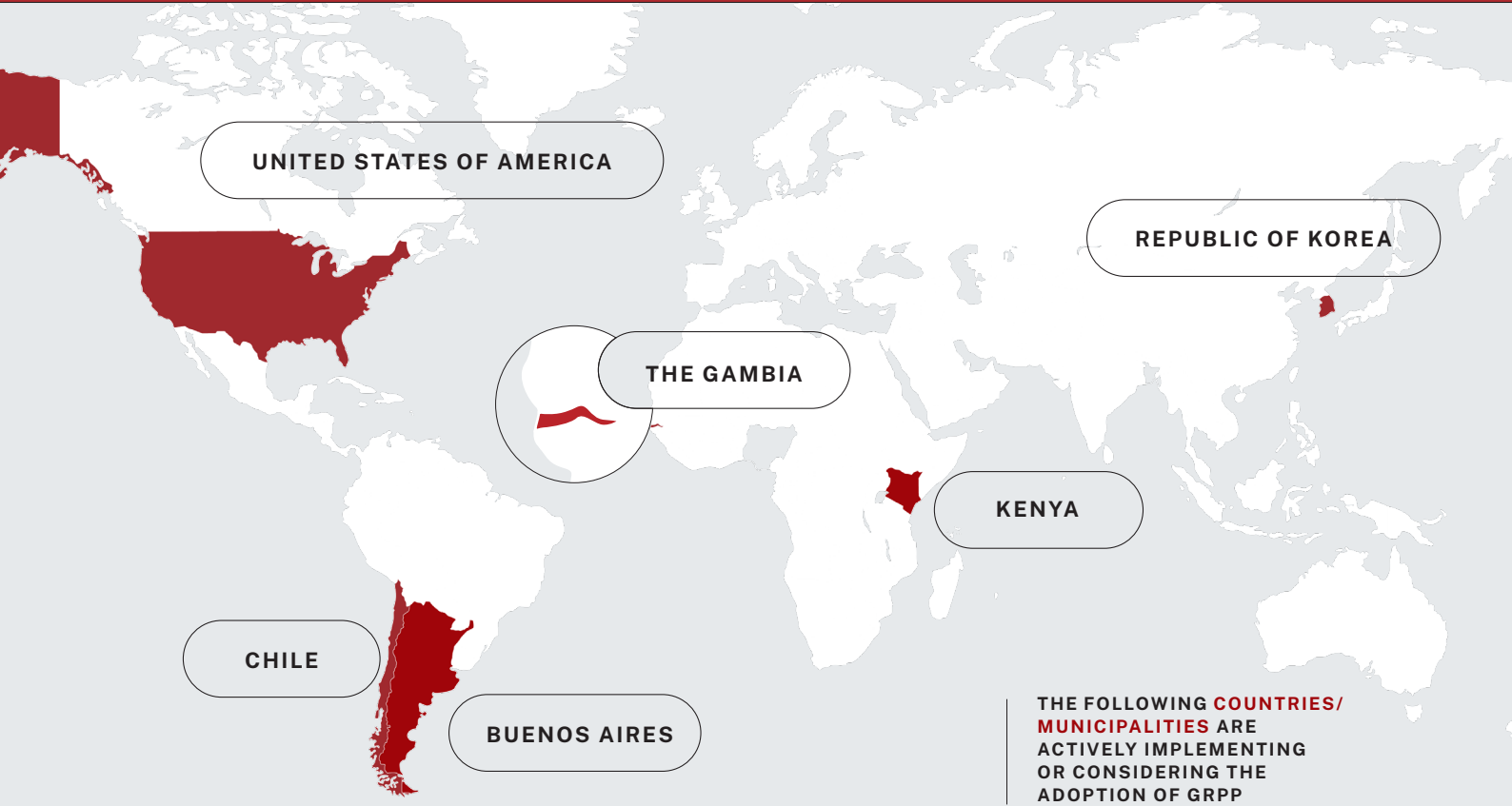
You can **set the example in engaging with women entrepreneurs** and encourage both public and private organizations to buy agricultural products from them.



You can **ease the restrictions** to effectively remove the barriers that women entrepreneurs face when participating in public tenders.



You can **lead market information campaigns** and **offer upskilling programmes** for women producers and entrepreneurs.



<p>BUENOS AIRES</p> <p>Buenos Aires created the Sello Empresa Mujer, a voluntary certification that aims to boost women's participation in the public market, enhance socioeconomic impact, and strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises in procurement. A company must meet criteria, like having 50% of its capital owned/controlled by women, to qualify.</p>	<p>CHILE</p> <p>Chilean contracting authorities, per the ChileCompra Directive, can use gender equality as a tie-breaker in public bidding. The directive also permits integrating gender equality criteria into bidding conditions and allows direct procurement based on gender criteria for purchases under 10 Unidad Tributaria Mensual.</p>	<p>THE GAMBIA</p> <p>The Gambia is working towards gender-inclusive public procurement. Key stakeholders are involved, and regulating authorities are considering incorporating specific targets in the existing procurement act.</p>
<p>KENYA</p> <p>In Kenya, women, youth, and people with disabilities are allocated 30% of public procurement opportunities by virtue of the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) programme. Though this programme, entrepreneurs are exempt from the need to compete with established firms in public bidding processes.</p>	<p>REPUBLIC OF KOREA</p> <p>Korea's Public Procurement Service (PPS) Regulation Article 90 allows preferential selection for contracts under KRW 20 million, favouring women or persons with disabilities. PPS directly awards these contracts to a woman-owned business recommended by the Review Committee, which comprises four women's associations.</p>	<p>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</p> <p>The U.S. mandates a 5% target for federal procurement spending on eligible women-owned small businesses annually. Qualifying businesses must be majority-owned (at least 51%) and controlled by U.S. citizen women, with women overseeing daily operations and long-term decisions.</p>

ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

01	02	03	04
<p>CONSIDER THIS:</p> <p>In your country, what difficulties do women agripreneurs face?</p>	<p>CONSIDER THIS:</p> <p>What is being done to overcome these difficulties in your country? Is that enough?</p>	<p>CONSIDER THIS:</p> <p>What other changes can your government make to remove barriers for these women and boost the national economy?</p>	<p>CONSIDER THIS:</p> <p>What is the situation in your country when it comes to including women in public procurement?</p>



Championing gender-responsive public procurement

In the pursuit of GRPP, it is essential to recognize that the responsibility for its success extends beyond governments alone. While governments play a pivotal role as primary policymakers, several key stakeholders converge to create a conducive environment for women-led/-owned businesses to thrive in the realm of public procurement.

THE NEXT STEPS ON HOW TO CHAMPION GRPP



Finance Ministry

If you are a **finance** or **economic affairs ministry** overseeing public procurement, you can adopt laws and regulations and can enforce targeted assistance strategies for women entrepreneurs.

Public Procuring Entity

If you are a **public procuring entity**, your institution can ensure compliance with GRPP-related laws, regulations, and policies and the awarding of (more) contracts to women entrepreneurs.

Chambers and Statistics Bureaux

If you are **chambers of commerce** and **national bureaux of statistics**: you may help with gathering data on GRPP, such as the registered number of women entrepreneurs. You may also help legislators decide on adequate terms for and definitions of businesses run or led by women.

Trade Institution

If you are **trade support institutions** with a focus on women entrepreneurs, you can share data, offer training programmes, and provide agricultural advisory services to women agripreneurs.



Engaging in the agricultural gender-responsive public procurement project

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is a joint agency of the United Nations and World Trade Organization, based in Geneva. The ITC flagship Women and Trade Programme – i.e., the SheTrades Initiative – is implementing the project, ‘SheTrades: Promoting Gender-Responsive Public Procurement for Agricultural Products’.

The project which started in December 2022 and will continue until the end of 2025 – was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It is part of the Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag) and is being carried out by ITC on behalf of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The project aims to deliver innovative solutions to help women in agricultural value chains benefit from government procurement opportunities. Target beneficiaries and partners include women producers and entrepreneurs, governments, women’s business associations and chambers of commerce, and research partners.



Engage with ITC SheTrades

To express your interest in future workshops, we encourage you to get in touch with our team for more information and opportunities related to GRPP.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

CONTACT US



**Judith
Fessehaie,**
Head of the SheTrades Initiative



**Inês
Aguar Machado,**
GRPP Focal Point



**SheTrades
Headquarters**
General Inquiries

WOMENANDTRADE@INTRACEN.ORG



@ITCNEWS
#SHETRADES



FACEBOOK.COM
/ITCSHETRADES



@INTERNATIONTRADECENTRE
#SHETRADES

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The SheTrades Initiative is the International Trade Centre's (ITC) flagship women and trade programme. Established in 2015, ITC SheTrades Initiative aims to remove barriers to women's participation in trade by working with governments, the private sector, and entrepreneurs to build the business capacities of women and to create a fairer, more sustainable global economy.

ITC SheTrades provides women entrepreneurs and producers with access to key knowledge, resources, and networks, supports policymakers on inclusive policy reforms, and leverages public and private partnerships to amplify the impact of our work.



SheTrades

