

An interesting [blog](#) on the World Bank website explores the role of women in cross-border trade. The authors comment that, often, trade facilitation initiatives are mainly aimed to support large companies, while the reality is that at many borders, especially in developing and less developed countries, a significant share of such trade is generated by small-scale and informal trade activities that in many cases are conducted by women and that not always are accurately captured by official statistics, as described in another [article](#) published by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), that points out as cross-border trade has a strong gender dimension, being the majority of small-scale cross border traders women.

The article observes that although the nature of barriers and obstacles that women face in trading across borders have not yet been exactly determined by research and studies conducted on this particular topic, women are generally confronted to problems and impediments that are bigger than those to which their male counterparts are subject to, being women more vulnerable (e.g. trading across borders often involves going to the border at odd hours, including in the middle of the night, and it's not safe for a woman to go alone to the border at night), and more exposed than men to phenomena of harassment, abuse, request of payments of unofficial fees, and thefts of goods.

For example, in Africa's Great Lakes region, women traders have frequently reported that they have been threatened by or pressured to bribe the mostly male customs agents. At the crossing of Lao PDR and Cambodia, data show that female traders pay higher taxes than their male counterparts, are delayed longer than men by quarantine at border crossings, and spend more on transportation just to get through the border crossing.

The article concludes that to optimize the benefits of trade, trade facilitation efforts should aim to reduce the cost of trading across borders for everyone, not just large corporations.

Within the [Trade Facilitation Support Program](#) (TFSP), the World Bank is currently conducting a global survey of women-owned, -managed, and -operated firms that engage in cross-border trade. The goal is to identify the above gender-specific constraints that women face in trading across borders and to better understand women's challenges in undertaking such a kind of activity

