Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation
Evidence from Nepal
Background

• Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal

• Since 2018; led by CUTS International (India) with Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bangladesh) and Bhutan Media and Communication Institute (Bhutan)

• To identify existing barriers that inhibit women entrepreneurs’ participation in international trade and trade-related activities, and provide policy recommendations
The survey

• Survey locations: Pokhara, Kathmandu Valley, Biratnagar, Birgunj, Jhapa and Ilam

• Survey: 50 entrepreneurs; KII: 36 stakeholders (policymakers, chamber representatives, export houses, freight forwarders, customs agents etc); 2 FGDs; 3 workshops

• Respondents: 36% processed food, 22% textiles & clothing; 20% handicrafts; 22% handmade paper, jewellery & beauty products; highly concentrated in the capital

• Limitations: small scale, no control group for comparison
Major findings

• 72% export their products to the foreign market and, among those exporters, 28% export indirectly via third-party exporters

• The reasons for not engaging in trade: unsuitable products, concentration on domestic market, the lack of knowledge about foreign markets and buyers

• Dependent on old and established buyers network and have not diversified their buyers

• Outsource the trade related activities to freight forwarders, while few big ones have designated departments that handle export related documentation and other formalities
Inhibiting factors

- **Inadequate Infrastructure**: transport charges too high; no accredited laboratories; cold storage or warehouses;

- **Limited knowledge about foreign trade procedures and schemes**: face difficulty accessing information, such as trade fairs, subsidies, changes in regulations, grievance redressal mechanism etc

- **Limited access to finance**: 20% availed credit; collateral still an issue; appear risk-averse
Inhibiting factors

• Challenges in scaling business: difficulty in establishing new business contacts in foreign markets; issues with productivity and quality;

• Constraints in digital transactions and logistics: lack of digital payment network; logistical cost for small package delivery high; limited e-commerce footprint

• Gendered societal conditionings: more care burden; limited network; fear of sexual violence, among others

• Lack of female participation: less female presence in trading spaces and policy making (Trade Facilitation Committee, for example)
Way forward

• Build infrastructure: accredited testing laboratories; storage etc, digital infrastructure too; make infrastructure gender sensitive, train staff
• Undertake ex-ante gender assessment of trade policy changes and reforms
• Establish a mechanism to certify women-owned small businesses to make the firms eligible for targeted policy interventions
Way forward

• Address information gap: establish a dedicated desk; mobilize govt orgs, business chambers, civil society
• Increase representation of women in occupations/professions related to cross-border trade; and in policymaking
• Make financing to women-owned businesses effective, special vehicle for that
Thank you

dikshya.singh@sawtee.org
27.04.2021