

Women's Participation in Trade in Uganda: Tapping into New Market Opportunities through Public Procurement and the AfCFTA

A Survey of
Women-Led Enterprises

About the paper

This report provides insights to decision makers on women's participation in trade and challenges they face. It provides quality data from women-led businesses in Uganda; outlines the barriers to domestic and international trade; and provides testimonies and experience stories from Ugandan women entrepreneurs.

With the aim to promote gender-inclusive policies to unlock market opportunities for women entrepreneurs, this report captures the links between women entrepreneurs and access to markets with priority areas of enhancing women's participation in public procurement and preparing women-led businesses to benefit from the opportunities resulting from the African Free Continental Trade Area (AfCFTA).

This version of the report has not been formally edited.

Publisher: International Trade Centre

Title: Women's Participation in Trade in Uganda: Tapping into New Market Opportunities through Public Procurement and the AfCFTA - A Survey of Women-led Enterprises

Publication date and place: Geneva, June 2021

Language: English

Citation: International Trade Centre (2021). Women's Participation in Trade in Uganda: Tapping into New Market Opportunities through Public Procurement and the AfCFTA - A Survey of Women-led Enterprises. ITC, Geneva.

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ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

Acknowledgements

This report is based on the data from the International Trade Centre (ITC) business survey on women-led businesses in Uganda. The survey was conducted in the framework of the Netherlands Trust Fund IV (NTF IV) project, funded by the Netherlands Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), and was conducted at the request of, and with support from the ITC SheTrades Initiative.

The report was prepared by Josephine Brauner under the supervision of Samidh Shrestha. Abdellatif Benzakri and Paula Castaneda Verano contributed to data quality control and provided statistical support.

Mario Filadoro led the design and implementation of the survey. Nydiane Razafindrahaingo managed the project coordination and stakeholders' consultations. We thank Ursula Hermelink and Judith Fessehaie for their leadership, guidance and various contributions to the survey implementation and analysis.

ITC expresses appreciation to the representatives of women-led firms who agreed to be interviewed and share their experience. ITC is also grateful to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development; the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives; and the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority for their participation in the stakeholders' consultation and for their continuous support during the survey design and implementation phases. We also thank the national consultant for collecting the data from women-led businesses in Uganda and for the ongoing contribution to the survey, including the provision of valuable feedback on the questionnaires.

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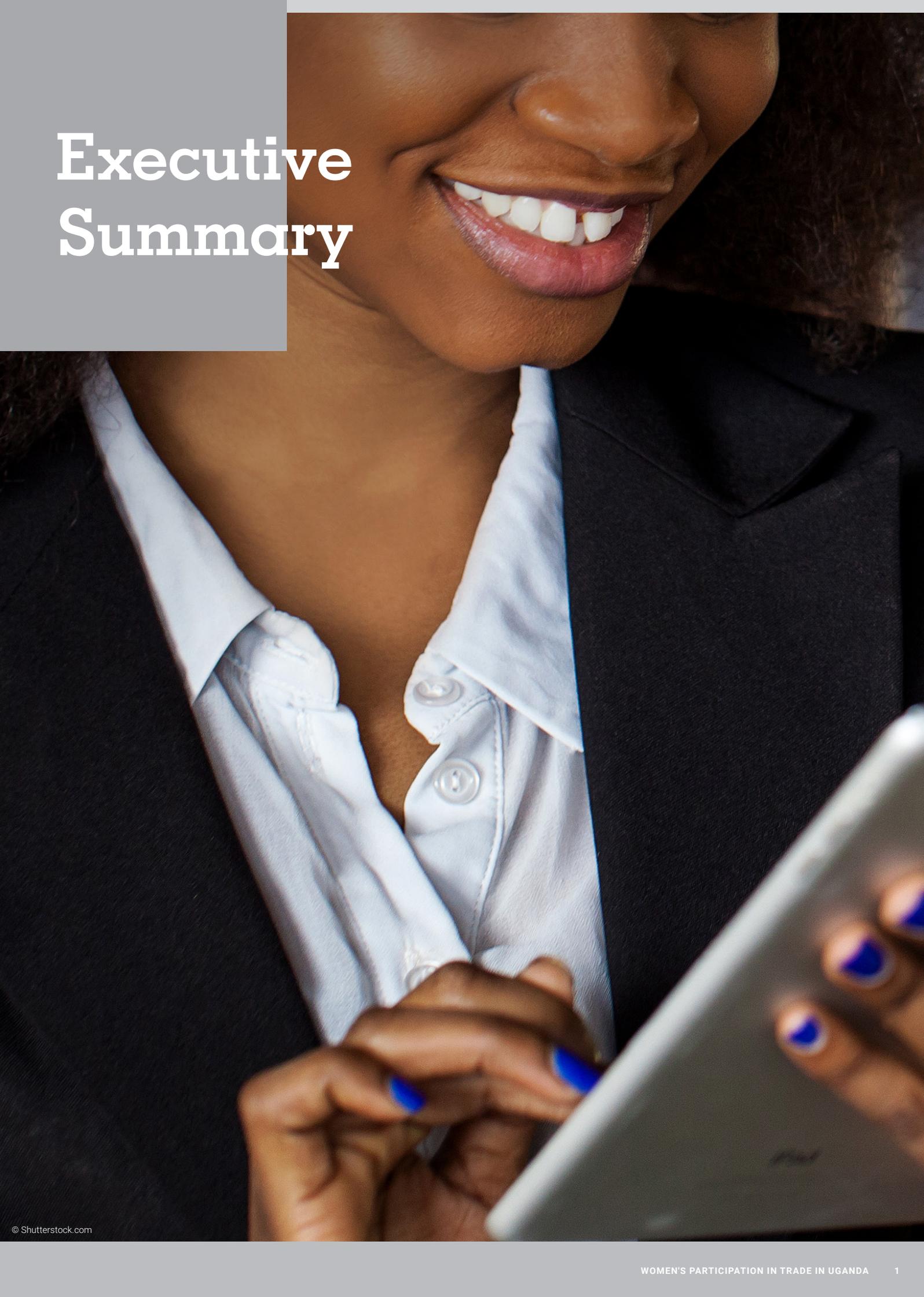
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Executive Summary



A survey of women-led companies in Uganda

This survey conducted by ITC focused on trade in goods and three services sub-sectors. Three themes were investigated through the research: (i) the characteristics of women-led companies in Uganda; (ii) their participation in international and regional trade; (iii) and their participation in public procurement. Women leadership in Ugandan enterprises is presented at both, the ownership and management level. Most women-led companies in Uganda are simultaneously owned and managed by women.

Most Ugandan businesses led by women are small-sized

More than 90% of women-led businesses in Uganda are micro or small in size with less than 50 employees. The share of micro-sized firms is higher among businesses engaged in goods trade compared to services trade.

Female employment rate is high among women-led businesses in Uganda

Ugandan companies led by women are likely to open opportunities for women. Among women-led businesses in the goods sector, female employees make up 68% of the workforce, while in the services sector 55% are employed in the workforce.

Ugandan women-led firms are concentrated in the computer and related services sector

Within the scope of the survey, women-led businesses in selected services sub-sectors are mostly present in computer related services (32%). Overall, half of the companies led by women engaged in services trade supply professional, scientific and technical services (49%).

Women-led companies in Uganda are largely domestic owned, with a significant number of family-owned businesses among traders of goods

Most women-led businesses in Uganda are owned by locally registered investors. Almost 95% of women-led firms are domestically owned with no foreign investors. Just under a third of the companies surveyed are family-owned businesses. Family-owned companies are particularly more common among women-led companies trading goods.

Ugandan women-led firms are relatively young

Overall, 44% of the firms have been in operation for less than five years. In fact, more than half of companies in the goods sector have been in operation for less than five years, compared to 37% in the services sector.

Client referrals and online marketing are the main marketing channels for women entrepreneurs in Uganda

The main marketing channels used by women-led businesses in Uganda to market their goods and services offerings to potential clients are client referrals and online marketing methods including social media platforms.

Few companies have a gender equality policy

Most companies led by women do not have a gender-specific policy in place aimed at promoting women's employment. Less than one-third of women-led businesses put in place such policy.

Women-led businesses are active in cross-border trade in goods and services and are relatively young

More than half of women-led businesses are involved in the international trade of goods and services. Exporting women-led businesses trading services and goods are relatively young with 74% of firms exporting for less than 5 years.

Women-led exporting businesses derive significant income from foreign sales

On average, 41% of annual revenues of women-led exporting businesses are derived from export operations. These businesses use exports to boost their bottom line and continue to build their competitiveness by selling to world markets.

Cross-border trade is the most common mode of supply for services exports

Cross-border trade (mode 1) is the main mode of supply used by women-led exporters of services. That is to say women-led firms mainly have company employees provide services electronically or on the phone to markets outside Uganda.

Few women-led exporters utilize trade preferences and participate in consultations preceding the adoption of trade agreements

Overall, only 22% of women-led companies engaged in international trade utilize trade preferences available through trade agreements such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). And only 12% of companies in goods sector and 20% in services sector participated, either directly or through a business association, in consultations preceding the adoption of trade agreements.

There is interest in exporting outside the AfCFTA region

Survey findings show around one-third of Ugandan women-led firms interested in expanding their business outside the AfCFTA region. The United States of America and the United Kingdom are among the top markets of interest for companies in the goods sector. Among companies in the services sector the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are the markets of interest outside the AfCFTA region.

Women-led businesses are optimistic about the benefits of the AfCFTA

Overall, women-led companies are optimistic about the benefits of the AfCFTA. Seven out of ten companies expect the AfCFTA to create new opportunities for their business operations.

Half of women-led exporters face obstacles complying with trade regulations and procedures

Charges, taxes, and price control measures are the main obstacles for women-led businesses trading goods. Taxes, licenses and monopolies or exclusive rights are the main trade obstacles for women-led firms trading services.

Few companies are requested to comply with additional private standards, even when exporting

Few women entrepreneurs trading goods or services are requested to comply with additional private standards. This is the case even when exporting outside Uganda.

Information on internal taxation, licenses and certification requirements, information on market size and market prices forecasts, as well as standards required by foreign clients are key for business operation

The categories of trade obstacles encountered correlate in large parts with the types of trade information needs expressed by Ugandan companies led by women. Women-led firms in Uganda report not to be able to find information, particularly on licenses and certification requirements, investments in foreign markets and taxation.

Women-led companies principally turn to national institutions and search for relevant information online

Websites of national institutions dominate as consulted source by women entrepreneurs in Uganda. Exchange with other companies in the sector is a further common way for women-led firms to obtain information about business operations.

Women tend to be member of national and sector specific trade networks and value its membership as beneficial

Women tend to be members of national and sector specific associations and business-related networks. Benefits received through membership in business networks are creating visibility and reputation, training and mentoring opportunities and new business opportunities for matchmaking

Over half of women-led companies face difficulties in applying for sources of finance

Almost half of the companies surveyed have applied for external financing in order to start or scale up business operations. The most important source of funding for women-led companies in Uganda is derived from commercial banks or credit institutions.

Participation in public procurement process is high for companies trading services, but limited in companies trading goods

Only one-third of women-led businesses involved in trade in manufactured goods participated in a public procurement process. More than half of companies involved in trade in services participate in public procurement process.

Challenges for women in public procurement processes are significant, more so for women-led businesses trading services significant

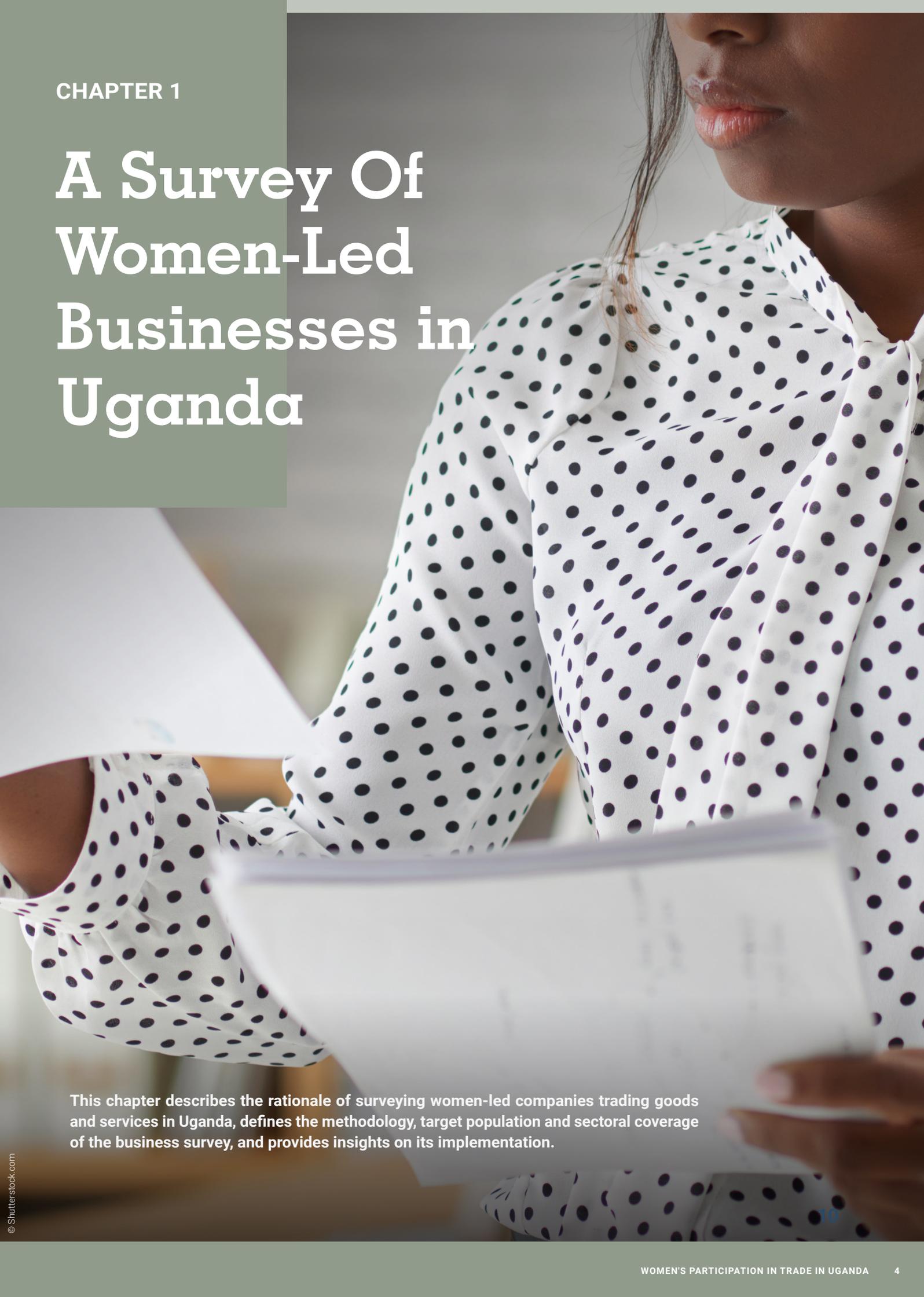
Challenges for women in public procurement processes are significant. 72% of women-led firms providing services report having faced problems related to the participation in a local, national or regional public procurement process.

Lack of information, lack of technical capacity and perception of corruption are the main barriers for women in public procurement participation

Most women entrepreneurs in Uganda trading goods and services lack information about the tender, holding them up from participating in any public procurement process. Lack of technical capacity and the perception of corruption play a key role for women to rule out the participation in public procurement.

Improve transparency, embrace online procurement, and provide more opportunities for MSMEs are call outs from women entrepreneurs to enable women's procurement participation

`A fair and equal competition`, `embrace online procurement`, `improve transparency`, and `more opportunities for small and micro enterprises`, are among the most compelling testimonies from women leaders in Uganda to highlight ways of enabling a better procurement participation.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark skin, wearing a white blouse with black polka dots. She is looking down at a white document she is holding. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an office or professional setting. The lighting is natural and soft, highlighting the texture of her blouse and the focus on the document.

CHAPTER 1

A Survey Of Women-Led Businesses in Uganda

This chapter describes the rationale of surveying women-led companies trading goods and services in Uganda, defines the methodology, target population and sectoral coverage of the business survey, and provides insights on its implementation.

Survey rationale

Mapping women entrepreneurs in Uganda

The COVID-19 pandemic affected men and women differently.¹ The economic repercussion of the pandemic threatens to reverse the last decades' hard-earned gains in terms of gender equality as women and women-owned business are likely to be more impacted than men-led businesses.

In light of new challenges and new trends in global markets, supporting women's economic empowerment is more important than ever. Trade can be an effective engine to empower women. As opportunities on the global market shrink, there is a need to identify new market opportunities for women.

Efforts by women entrepreneurs to enter global value chains and upgrade into higher-value activities are 'complicated by limited access to key inputs such as land, finance and market information'.² For women to expand their businesses, become more productive and innovative, they need greater access to domestic, regional and international markets. Entering markets by participating in public and private sector supply chains offers women-led businesses immense opportunities.

Public sector markets constitute one of these potential opportunities. Public sector procurement represents substantial untapped market potential for women entrepreneurs. Although it accounts for over 30% of GDP in developing countries and some 10-15% of GDP in developed countries, only 1% of public procurement contracts worldwide are won by female entrepreneurs.³ Uganda is no exception as its women-led companies have limited access to public sector markets.

At the regional level, the new African Free Continental Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its market of \$1.3 billion people with a combined Gross Domestic Product of \$3.4 trillion will also expand market opportunities for SMEs led by women. AfCFTA is expected to boost intra-African trade by more than 50% and to increase Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035.⁴ Ugandan women entrepreneurs need to strengthen their capacities and enhance their competitiveness to effectively benefit from trade opportunities under the AfCFTA.

Nonetheless, Uganda's ability to formulate and effectively implement gender-inclusive policies in these areas has been limited by the lack of data. Data availability was identified as one of the main challenges in supporting women's participation in trade and public procurement in particular, by key stakeholders during a consultation organized by the ITC in July 2020. For instance, data on women's participation in trade, such as the types of goods and services that they produce, the sectors in which they are active, the markets that they serve, were not available, while these information are critical for the formulation of the gender-responsive policies and strategies.

Under the Netherlands Trust Fund IV project, ITC SheTrades Initiative partnered with Uganda's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, Uganda's Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, and Uganda's Public Procurement and Public Assets Disposal Authority, to create a more inclusive policy ecosystem for women in trade.

ITC's SheTrades Initiative and the Non-Tariff Measures Programme brought their technical expertise on data collection on women-led businesses' participation in trade to support the Government of Uganda in building a solid evidence base to inform its policy-making process. ITC's Business Survey in Uganda aims to identify barriers Ugandan women-led businesses face when engaging in trade, assesses their awareness of international procurement opportunities and how to improve their participation in tenders. It is hoped that insights from this firm level data will help in the formulation of Uganda's national AfCFTA strategy, and the implementation of gender-responsive public procurement policies and regulations.

While both the AfCFTA and public procurement policy have incorporated gender equality issues, the lack of sex-disaggregated data is identified as a critical constraint in putting in place specific measures to support women-led businesses. Therefore, the survey findings contribute to strengthening and mainstreaming gender considerations in trade agreements and policy interventions to address trade obstacles faced by women in their different roles as company owners and/or managers.

This survey is a direct contribution to SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and to the

1. WBG (2020): Gender dimensions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/618731587147227244/pdf/Gender-Dimensions-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

2. World Bank Group (2013): Global Value Chains, Economic Upgrading, and Gender: Case Studies of the Horticulture, Tourism, and Call Center Industries

3. ITC (2020): Making public procurement work for women, https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/ITCGuide%20WOR%20PP_20201106_web.pdf

4. World Bank (2020): The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects, Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34139/9781464815591.pdf>

Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, particularly on closing the gap in gender-disaggregated trade statistics, highlighted by the Declaration. Furthermore, the survey methodology is aligned with the recently launched [International Organization for Standardization's IWA 34:2021](#) on women's entrepreneurship.

Methodology, target population and sectoral coverage

A tailor-made approach

This project builds on ITC's experience in carrying out large-scale surveys of exporters and importers. Under the ITC programme on non-tariff measures, surveys in over 70 countries have been carried out capturing the voices of over 35,000 companies.⁵

The surveys are based on a global methodology developed by ITC and are implemented in close collaboration with national and regional authorities. They identify at product, sector and partner country-level the predominant obstacles that the country's business sector faces when complying with trade regulations and related procedures. Through the inclusion of gender-sensitive variables, the surveys have contributed to a better understanding of women's participation in trade, particularly in developing countries.

The target population in this survey include Ugandan women-led (managed and/or owned) companies, in the goods and services (ICT, tourism and business services) sectors. For the survey of women-led businesses in Uganda, ITC adapted the global methodology of the surveys on the participation of women in goods and services trade to ensure capturing specific barriers to women's participation in regional trade and public procurement markets.

Both questionnaires, for goods and services traders, maintain the modular structure of previous trade and gender surveys, namely, a first section capturing and measuring the participation of women in trade and a second section focusing on challenges related to access to information, participation in associations and business networks, access to finance, intellectual property rights, public procurement, and private standards. In a final section, the impact of COVID-19 on business operations, expected Brexit impacts and environmental risks play a role.

Questions were adapted to include specific features to gender-responsive trade policy-making, namely, experience with the EAC and COMESA trade agreements and participation in consultations, implementation of the AfCFTA and potential opportunities for women-led businesses, and existing barriers for women-led businesses' participation in public procurement processes. The questionnaire was refined with feedback received from sectoral associations.

Five case studies were also collected to illustrate experiences and challenges faced by Ugandan women-led businesses trading goods or services. These stories from women owned and/or managed businesses illuminate the views on what can be done to improve the participation of women in these sectors and ways to increase the participation of women-led companies in public procurement at the local and national level. Whenever possible, a special emphasis was made on companies with a specific gender equality policy, programme or initiative. Some case studies also capture the views on the impact of COVID-19 on business operations.

5. These include a survey exporters and importers on regulatory and procedural trade obstacles in Uganda (2018), a survey on Women traders of goods in the EU (2018), and EU women service traders (2020). For details on these survey and other surveys conducted by ITC please refer to www.ntmsurvey.org/publication

A survey of Ugandan women-led businesses in the goods and services sector

The survey covers women-led businesses in Uganda trading goods and selected services exporting or operating in the domestic market. Women-led businesses from all goods sectors, exporters and non-exporters, are included.⁶

Given the limited size and timeframe of the survey, choices had to be made in the selection of services sectors to be covered. Ultimately in consultation with ITC's SheTrades Initiative, the three service sectors and corresponding sub-sectors described below were selected.⁷ These services represent priority sectors for the AfCFTA, namely, financial, communications, transport, tourism and business services.⁸

	<p>Tourism services</p> <p>Covers tour operators and travel agents, tourist guides, accommodation service providers and passenger transport services</p>
	<p>Telecommunication and computer related services</p> <p>Covers the provision of the means to transmit information (voice, data, text, sound and video) and the activities of providing expertise in the field of information technologies.</p>
	<p>Professional, scientific and technical services</p> <p>Covers specialized activities that require a high degree of training, knowledge and skills. Providing these services in other countries often implies holding country specific sectoral licences and certifications</p>

Scope and coverage of the survey

This survey uses a survey-based data collection method designed to obtain quantitative data on the extent and nature of women's participation in Uganda and the obstacles they face. It aims to provide insights on the sectors and types of companies in which women work, which types of firms are women-led, and which challenges they encounter. The method can also serve as a model for other countries to contribute to a solid evidence base for better-informed trade policy decision-making.

The sample covers formal exporting and non-exporting women-led (managed and/or owned) companies, in the goods and services (ICT, tourism and business services) sectors in Uganda. The survey is designed to provide results that are representative of the sector in question, either goods or services.⁹

6. The survey excludes companies trading in arms and minerals.

7. A detailed description of the classification of sub-sectors is included in Annex I.

8. ITC (2018). A Business Guide to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. Available at: https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/AfCFTA%20Business%20Guide_final_Low-res.pdf

9. A more detailed explanation to the sampling approach is included as Annex II to this report.

Sample frame

There were 458,106 businesses operating in Uganda among which 44% are owned by women (219,863).¹⁰ In the case of businesses engaged in cross-border commodity trade, the share of women-led is lower (20%).¹¹

ITC compiled a business registry of more than 8,000 Ugandan companies trading in goods and services, either domestically or internationally, which served as a basis for the sampling and survey implementation.¹² The dataset was divided by sector and company location whereby the majority of companies listed are based in Uganda’s capital and largest city Kampala.

Additional company data were obtained from ITC’s SheTrades Initiative¹³ that shared a list of women-led companies from their network as well as a list of MSMEs that are beneficiaries of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) IV project.¹⁴

Women-led businesses in Uganda

The survey of women-led businesses in Uganda interviewed 185 companies out of which 100 are engaged in goods trade, 42 companies provide professional, scientific and technical services, 30 companies operate in telecommunications and computer related services, and 13 companies offer tourism related services. The majority of companies interviewed are located in the Kampala area.



Survey respondents are typically managers or CEOs

ITC trained interviewers to identify respondents who are able to respond to the survey questions thoroughly. These are typically individuals taking decisions related to international trade operations.

Most respondents of the survey take over a high executive position such as chief executive officers (CEOs), company owners and/or general managers. Other job functions held by respondents include creative designer, researcher, and technical head.

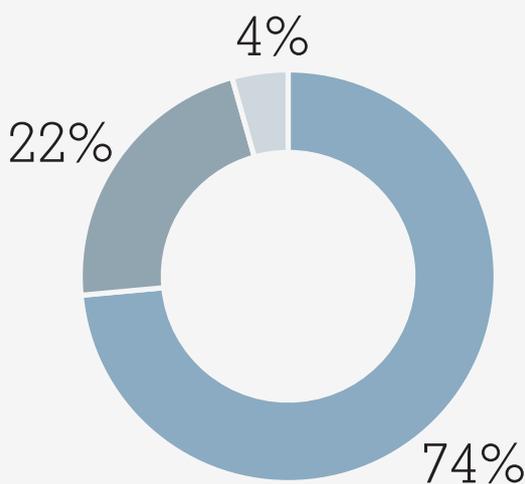


FIGURE 1 | SURVEY RESPONDENTS, BY JOB FUNCTION

- CEO, Chairman, proprietor, GM/ED Manager
- Specialist officer
- Other job function

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

10. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, UBOS (2011). Census of Business Establishments 2010/11.

11. ITC (2016), NTM Survey in Uganda. Available at www.ntmsurvey.org/uganda

12. The business registry has been constructed from data received from Dun and Bradstreet, a data provider ITC used in previous exercises of this nature.

13. For more information on ITC’s SheTrades Initiative, please refer to: <https://www.intracen.org/itc/women-and-trade/SheTrades/>

14. For more information on Netherlands Trust Fund Phase IV (NTF IV), please refer to: <https://www.intracen.org/NTF4/>

The survey implementation

Implementation period and mode

The key research questions and targeted sectors were agreed upon consultations with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MoTIC), the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA), the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and women's business associations.

The survey covers Ugandan technology companies which stand to benefit from regional regulatory alignment and trade in services liberalisation. The information and communications technology (ICT) sector has been growing by about 20% a year.¹⁵ According to the Overseas Development Institute (2017)¹⁶, Uganda is one of the top 10 low-income countries with the highest share of service exports from the ICT sector. ITC's Netherlands Trust Fund IV (NTF IV) project aims to strengthen small and medium-sized information technology (IT) enterprises.¹⁷ Regional trade, including through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), is at the core of the recommendations emerging from this report.

Between December 2020 and March 2021, ITC adjusted the survey questionnaire, contacted relevant sectoral associations to provide feedback, refined the questionnaire, compiled the business registers, and hired and trained the team of interviewers. The interviews with women-led businesses were conducted between March and June 2021.

15. ITC (2019), Indicative Evidence From a Company Survey in the Ugandan ICT sector, available at: <https://www.intracen.org/nouvelles/Regulatory-and-procedural-constraints-hinder-Ugandan-ICT-exports-en/>

16. Overseas Development Institute (2017). E-Commerce: the implications of current wto negotiations for economic transformation in developing countries. Available at: <https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/SET-WTO-Negotiations-E-Commerce.pdf>

17. Netherlands Trust Fund – Phase IV (NTF IV). More information available at <https://www.intracen.org/NTF4/>

Engagement with business associations

ITC’s SheTrades Initiative engaged with sectoral business associations, including those focusing on women entrepreneurship, before and throughout the survey process. Prior to the survey implementation, ITC consulted trade support institutions and sectoral associations to identify business registers of women-led businesses, raise awareness about the survey initiative across their membership, and provide feedback on the questionnaire design.

The following national level sectoral associations helped refining and validating the questionnaire and encouraged their members to respond, e.g. using internal newsletters or social media posts:

<p>Women - focused associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uganda Women Network (UWONET) • Business and Professional Women in Uganda • Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd (UWEAL) • Women in Technology Uganda • Zimba Women
<p>General business associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Uganda (ICTAU) • Innovation village • Startup Uganda • Employers association • Enterprise Uganda • Uganda Export Promotions Board (UEPB) • Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU)



COVID-19: A major challenge during survey implementation

COVID-19 caused a slowdown in the implementation of the survey as several businesses were closed or not reachable. Other businesses were unwilling to participate, particularly the time of data collection caused disruption as in response to an uptick in community spread of the virus, Uganda re-entered a partial lockdown starting on June 7, 2021.

Furthermore, interviewers with childcare responsibilities faced difficulties in conducting their work from home or were even personally affected by COVID-19. This resulted in a drop in response rates, between mid-May and early June.

Mapping Women's Participation in Business

A comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and profiles of women-led companies is critical to address challenges they may face and to ensure a level playing field for their businesses.

This chapter presents survey findings on the participation of women in Uganda as business owners and/or managers in domestic and international trade of goods and selected services. It also analyses these company characteristics in terms of sectoral concentration, export and import markets as well as other attributes to women entrepreneurship.

KEY FINDINGS

Company characteristics

- Most women-led businesses in Uganda are both owned and managed by women.
- Women-led businesses in Ugandan services sector covered by the survey are mostly involved in computer and engineering related services.
- Women open opportunities for women. Female employment is high in women-led firms, particularly those involved in trade and manufacturing goods.
- More than 90% of women-led businesses in Uganda are micro or small sized.
- Women-led companies are largely domestic owned, with a significant number of family-owned businesses in the goods sector.
- Around 45% of women-led businesses in Uganda have been in operation less than five years. Exporting companies, in particular, are relatively young.

- Client referrals and online marketing are the main marketing channels.
- Less than one-third of companies have a gender equality policy or initiative in place.

Experience with international trade

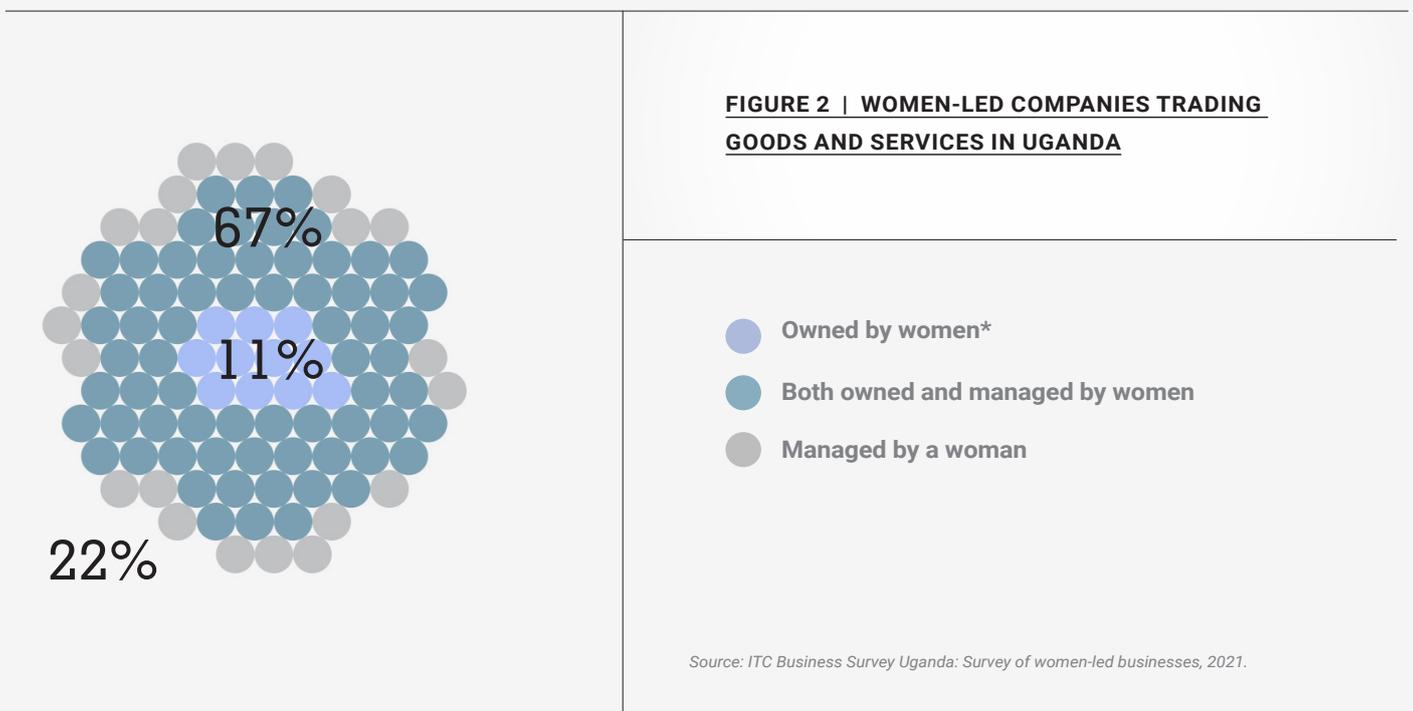
- More than half of women-led businesses are involved in the international trade of goods and services.
- Exporting firms are relatively young.
- Businesses trading in goods and services have different export and import markets.
- Women-led business involved in cross-border trade generate 41% of their annual revenues from exports.
- Cross-border trade is the most common mode of supply for services exports.

Company characteristics

Most women-led companies in Uganda are both owned and managed by women

For the purpose of this survey, the definition of women-led businesses encompasses all the firms owned and/or managed by women.¹⁸ The survey contributes to the research on women's ownership and management in Uganda.¹⁹ Through firm-level analysis, the survey is able to identify potential policy implications in relation to trade and investment promotion and beyond, for instance access to finance and business networks. In doing so, it provides a valuable picture of the underlying factors within the ecosystem influencing women entrepreneurs in Uganda.

Among women-led companies in Uganda, 22% of the companies are managed by women and another 11% are owned by women. The largest share of women-led businesses (67%) are both owned and managed by women.



Most women-led companies are small-sized

More than 90% of women-led businesses in Uganda are micro or small in size with less than 50 employees. Share of micro-sized firms²⁰ is higher among businesses engaged in goods trade (40%) compared to services trade (22%).

18. Women-led companies are defined as companies where more than 50% of company owners are women and/or the highest-ranking executive (CEO/president) is a woman. Women-owned companies are defined as companies where more than 50% of company owners are women.

19. This definition is aligned with the recently launched International Organization for Standardization's IWA 34:2021 on Women's entrepreneurship, Available at <https://www.iso.org/standard/79585.html>.

20. Micro-sized firms employ less than five employees.

FIGURE 3 | UGANDAN WOMEN-LED COMPANIES BY SIZE²¹

Each dot represents a percentage point

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



2%

Large



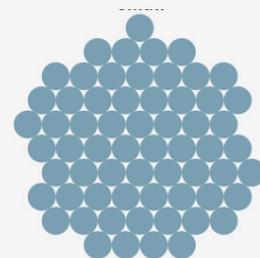
4%

Medium



31%

Micro



62%

Small

Women open opportunities for women

The female employment rate is high among women-led businesses in Uganda. Among women-led businesses in the goods sector female employees make up 68% of the workforce, while in the services sector this figure is 55%. Survey results suggest that companies led by women are likely to open opportunities for women in the workforce.

FIGURE 4 | SHARE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN WOMEN-LED BUSINESS IN UGANDA

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021

Companies in goods sector



68%

Female employees



32%

Male employees

Companies in services sector



55%

Female employees



45%

Male employees

This holds true especially in companies with less than five employees. In micro companies led by women 74% of the workforce are female. Among larger companies, the share of female employees is comparatively lower – 56% in small-sized businesses, 49% in medium-sized companies and 62% in larger companies.

Similar results were observed from the ITC NTM Business Survey in Uganda in 2016. The survey revealed that female employees make up 67% of the workforce in women-led firms. In sharp contrast, women make up only 16% of the work-force in men-led businesses.²²

21. Company size definition by Uganda Investment Authority (UIA): micro: < five employees; small: 5-49 employees; medium-sized: 50-100 employees; large: 101 employees or more. Available at <http://www.unido.or.jp/files/Small-and-Medium-Enterprises-SME-Division.pdf>.

22. ITC (2016), NTM Survey in Uganda. Available at www.ntmsurvey.org/uganda.

FIGURE 5 | AVERAGE SHARE OF WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN TRADING COMPANIES, 2016

Source: ITC NTM Business Survey in Uganda, 2016



Ugandan women-led firms are largely engaged in computer and related services sector

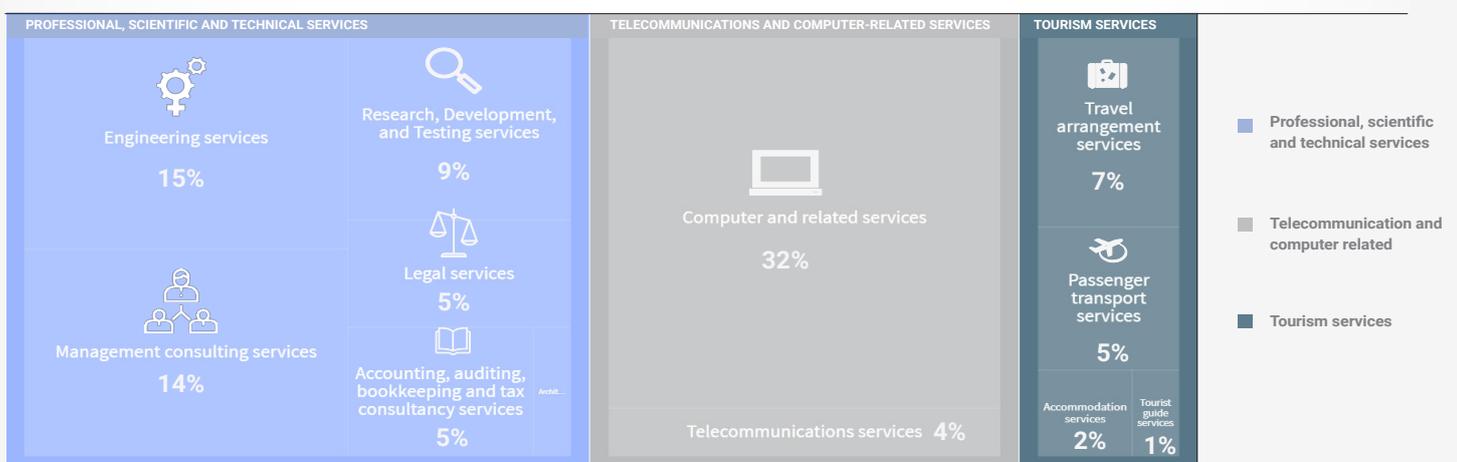
In the scope of the survey, women-led businesses in selected services sub-sectors are mostly present in computer related services (32%). Overall, half of the companies led by women engaged in services trade supply professional, scientific and technical services (49%).²³

The ICT sector is one of the most competitive and fastest growing sectors in Uganda, largely driven by the telecommunications sub-sector. Growth in this sector has also enabled growth in other sectors. IT products and services, as well as IT enabled services, form an important part of Uganda’s export diversification effort.

IT products and services, as well as IT enabled services, form an important part of Uganda’s export diversification effort .

ELLY TWINEYO KAMUGISHA,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UEPB

FIGURE 6 | WOMEN-LED COMPANIES IN SERVICES, BY SUB-SECTOR AND ACTIVITIES



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021

23. ITC (2020) Uganda: export development of IT and IT enabled services, Article published in the context of intermediary outcomes of NTF IV programme. Available at: <https://www.intracen.org/NTF4/Uganda/IT/>

Ugandan ICT companies that export are the main focus of the report, Firms' characteristics and obstacles to ICT services trade: Indicative evidence from a company survey in the Ugandan ICT sector'. As Elly Twineyo Kamugisha, executive director of UEPB, noted: 'IT products and services, as well as IT enabled services, form an important part of Uganda's export diversification effort.'

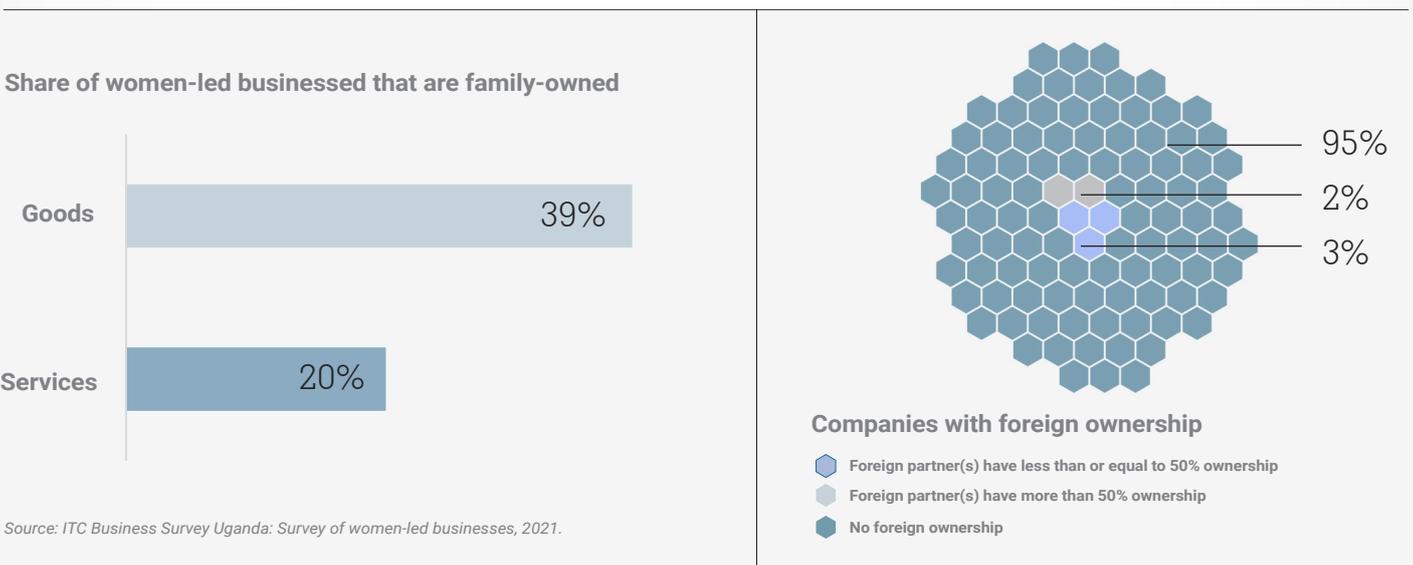
In the scope of the survey, women-led businesses in selected services sub sectors are mostly present in computer related services (32%). Overall, half of the companies led by women engaged in services trade supply professional, scientific and technical services (49%).

Women-led companies in Uganda are largely domestic, family-owned businesses

Most women-led businesses in Uganda are owned by locally-registered investors. Almost 95% of women-led firms are domestically owned with no foreign investors. Only 5% of the companies have foreign investment with 2% of the companies with majority foreign share.

Just under a third of the companies surveyed are family-owned businesses. Family-owned companies are particularly more common among women-led companies trading goods. Family-owned businesses play a significant role in East African economies, and include both some of the largest conglomerates and a large number of small-sized companies. Family businesses that tend to have women at top leadership positions offer role models to other women.

FIGURE 7 AVERAGE SHARE OF FAMILY AND FOREIGN OWNERSHIP AMONG WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES

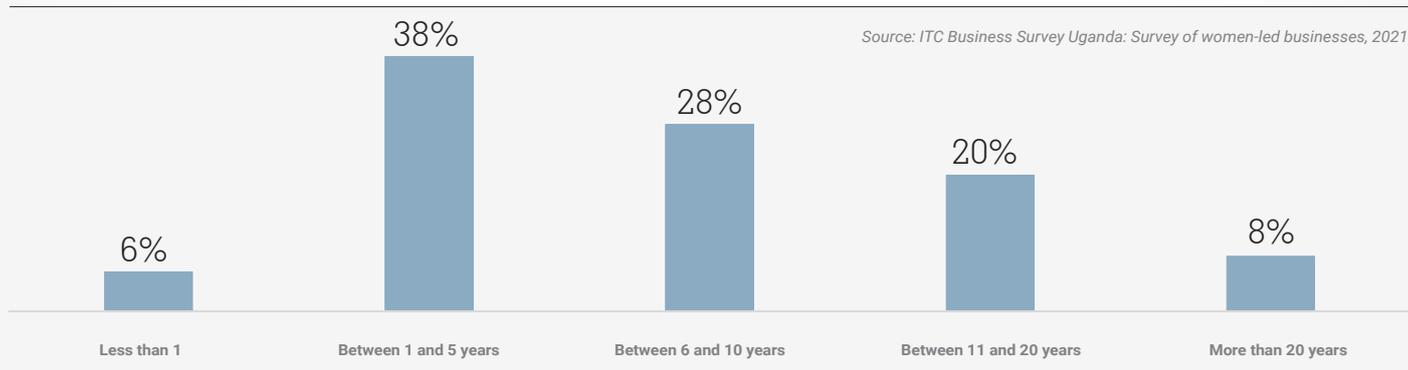


Ugandan women-led firms are relatively young

Women-led businesses in Uganda are relatively young with an average age of eight and nine years in the goods and services sector, respectively. Overall, 44% of the firms have been in operation for less than five years. In fact, more than half (51%) of companies in the goods sector have been in operation for less than five years, compared to 37% in the services sector. These results complement findings of other studies²⁴ which highlight high mortality rate of small businesses in Uganda.

24. For example see Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development - MFPED (2011). Development of a National Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Policy and Strategy

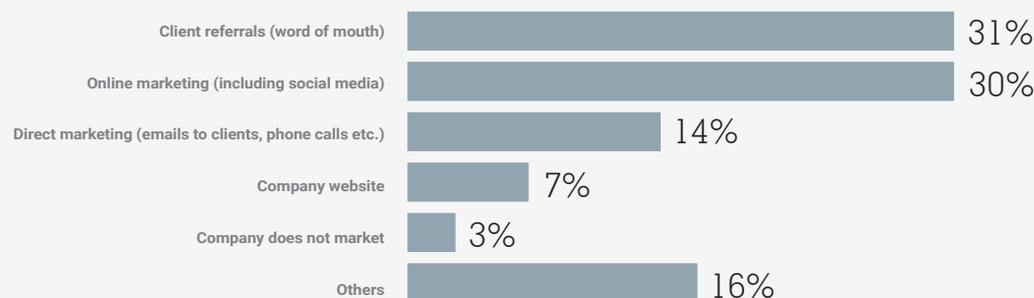
FIGURE 8 | NUMBER OF YEARS WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN IN OPERATION



Client referrals and online marketing are the main marketing channels

The main marketing channels used by women-led businesses in Uganda to market their goods and services offerings to potential clients are client referrals (31%) and online marketing methods including social media platforms (30%). Marketing mechanisms available online and the flexibility offered by digital technologies is levelling out the playing field. It has enabled a new generation of women who tap into the power of community and conversation to grow their businesses. Other marketing channels reported (16%) include selling points, marketing via local distributors or agents, tender and bidding processes.

FIGURE 9 | MOST IMPORTANT CHANNELS USED TO MARKET GOODS AND SERVICES OFFERINGS



Note: Respondents were requested to refer uniquely to the most important marketing channel

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Few companies have a gender equality policy

Most companies led by women do not have a gender-specific policy in place aimed at promoting women's employment. Less than one-third of women-led businesses put in place such policy.

When asked details on the type of policies, women-led firms reported measures such as ensuring gender balance in the hiring of personnel, adherence to principles of non-discrimination based on gender, development programs aimed at instilling discipline, leadership and financial independence, training sessions for women staff, adoption of flexible working hours and remote working, and promoting women to management positions.

Embedded in the company policy is the call to adhere to principles of non-discrimination based on gender.

WOMEN-LED EXPORTER OF COMPUTER AND RELATED SERVICES

FIGURE 10 | COMPANIES WITH A GENDER POLICY



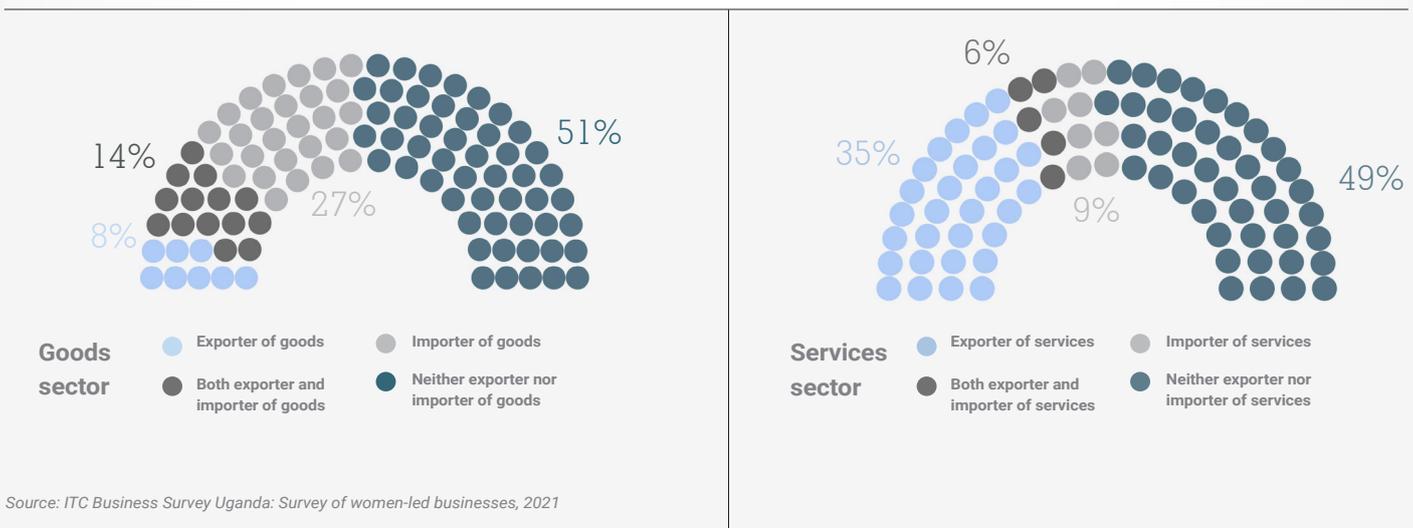
Experience with international trade

Trade can expand women's role in the economy, decrease inequality, and improve women's access to skills and education. Building on gender-disaggregated data, this survey aims to advance understanding on trade profiles of women-led businesses in Uganda and identify a series of trade opportunities women can benefit from.

Women-led businesses are active in cross-border trade in goods and services

More than half of women-led businesses are involved in the international trade of goods and services. Companies in the services sector in particular are active exporters with 41% of them doing business with foreign clients. The share of exporters in the goods sector is comparatively lower at 22%. In contrast, a large proportion of companies in the goods sector are importers (41%) compared to companies in the services sector (15%).

FIGURE 11 | AROUND HALF OF WOMEN-LED COMPANIES ARE INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE



Exporting women-led businesses trading services and goods are relatively young

Exporting women-led businesses trading services and goods are relatively young with 74% of firms exporting for less than five years.

Pairing this observation with the survey finding that 44% of women-led firms are still in their first five years in operation, suggests that firm size and international business experience play a critical role in determining a firms' performance. Larger firms with greater resources and capabilities will be able to compete more efficiently and effectively than smaller firms, while more experienced firms have deeper understanding and knowledge about foreign markets. However, in the scope of this survey, statistical evidence does not lend conclusive support for these findings.

FIGURE 12 | NUMBER OF YEARS WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN EXPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES



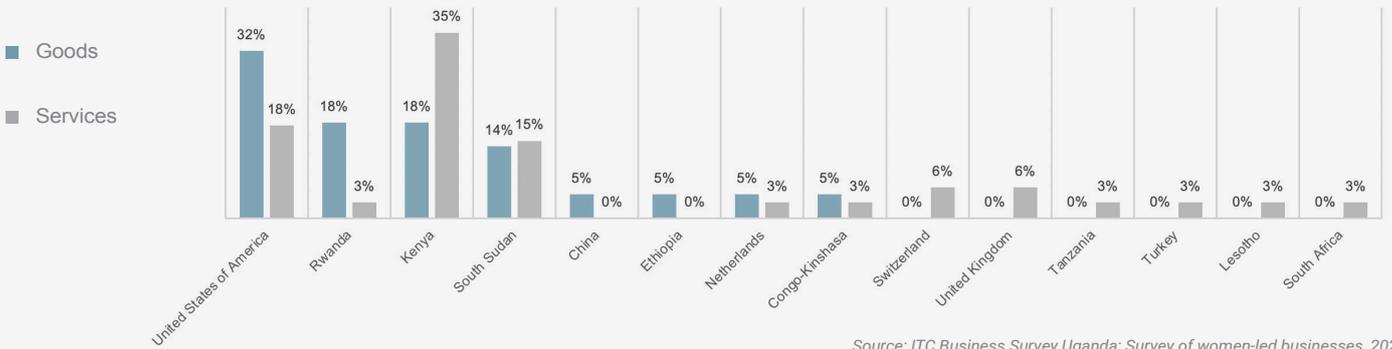
Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Key export and import markets differ for companies from goods and services sectors

The top export and import markets differ between businesses trading goods and enterprises in the services sector. For companies exporting goods, the United States, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Sudan are the most important export markets. For women-led services exporters, Kenya, the United States and South Sudan are the key markets. This suggest that the regional East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) trade agreements that promote harmonized trade and transport facilitation guidelines are of key importance to Uganda.



FIGURE 13 | MAIN EXPORT DESTINATION MARKETS FOR WOMEN-LED FIRMS SELLING GOODS AND SERVICES



Ugandan importers focus on different countries for import of goods and services. Importers of goods see China, United States of America, and the United Kingdom as their most important source market. In contrast, services traders mainly import from neighbouring Kenya, India and South Africa.

FIGURE 14 | MAIN IMPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR WOMEN-LED FIRMS

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

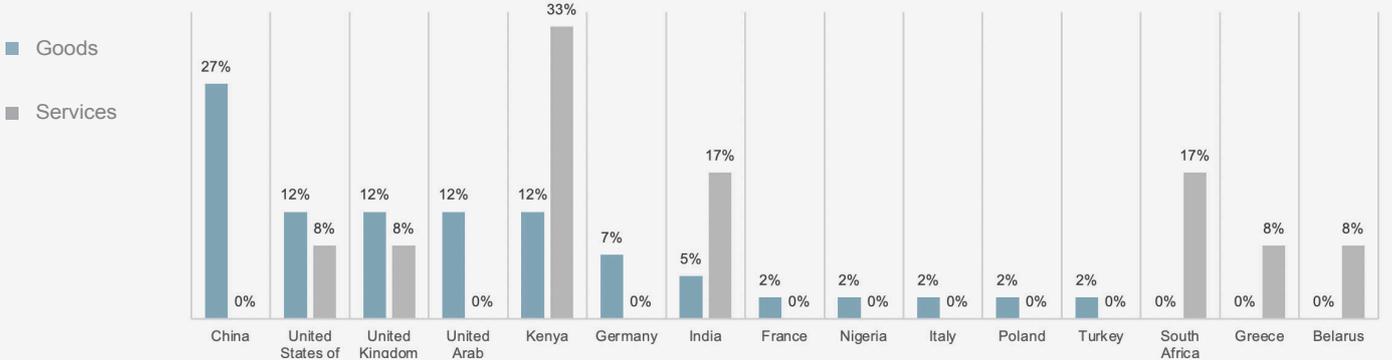
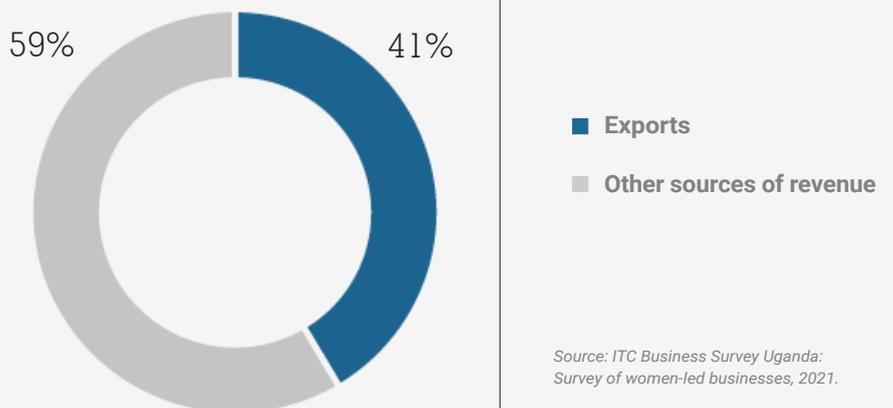


FIGURE 15 | SHARE OF ANNUAL INCOME OF WOMEN-LED EXPORTING BUSINESSES FROM DOMESTIC SALES AND EXPORTS

Women-led exporting businesses derive significant income from foreign sales

On average, 41% of annual revenues of women-led exporting businesses are derived from export operations. These firms use exports to boost their bottom line and continue to build their competitiveness by selling to world markets.



Cross-border trade is the most common mode of supply for services exports

Data on trade in services by mode of supply aim to answer the question of how and where services are supplied to foreign customers.

The WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) defines the four modes of services supply as the following:

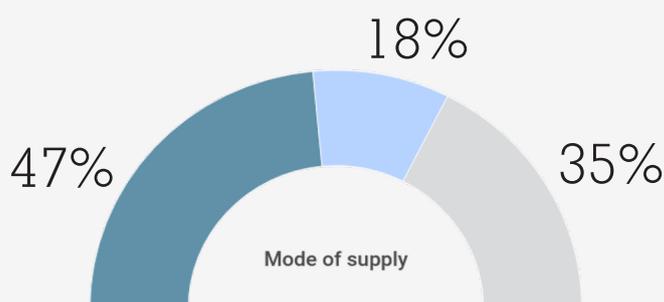
Mode 1	Cross-border trade: from the territory of one country into the territory of another country
Mode 2	Consumption abroad: in the territory of one country to the service consumer of another country
Mode 3	Commercial presence: by a service supplier of one country, through a commercial presence or foreign affiliate in the territory of another country
Mode 4	Presence of natural persons: by a service supplier of one country, through the presence of natural persons of that country in the territory of any other country.

Cross-border trade (Mode 1) is the main mode of supply used by women-led businesses in Uganda (47%). That is to say women-led firms mainly have company employees provide services electronically or on the phone to markets outside Uganda. Just over a third of women-led companies also provide services to its clients abroad through (employees of) foreign affiliates or subsidiaries (Mode 4).

Cross-border supply (Mode 1), where both the supplier and the consumer remain in their respective territories, including IT-enabled services such as international transactions that are delivered remotely in an electronic format, using computer networks specifically designed for this purpose.

FIGURE 16 | MAIN MODE OF SUPPLY OF WOMEN-LED EXPORTERS OF SERVICES

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



- **Mode 1:** Company employees provide services electronically or on the phone
- **Mode 2:** Clients travel abroad to benefit from the services (Consumption abroad)
- **Mode 4:** Through (employees of) foreign affiliates-sub-sidiaries of interviewed company

Women's Access to Markets

This chapter highlights how women-led businesses in Uganda use trade preferences and analyses their participation in consultation processes. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates obstacles to trade these businesses face and other challenges with regards to access to information, access to funding from commercial banks and access to associations and business networks.

KEY FINDINGS

Free Trade Agreements and participation in consultations

- Only a small share of women-led exporters utilizes trade preferences.
- One-third of women-led firms are interested in exporting outside the AfCFTA region.
- Women-led businesses are optimistic about the benefits of the AfCFTA.

Obstacles to trade encountered by women-led businesses

- Half of the exporters face obstacles complying with trade regulations and procedures.
- Charges, taxes and price control measures are the main obstacles for businesses trading goods.
- Taxes, licenses and monopolies or exclusive rights are the main trade obstacles for those trading services.

- Most firms do not report the obstacles they face.

Other challenges for women entrepreneurs in Uganda

- Information on internal taxation, licenses and certification requirements, information on market size and market prices forecasts, as well as standards required by foreign clients are key for business operation.
- Women-led companies principally turn to national institutions and search for relevant information online.
- Women-led businesses experienced difficulties due to lack of information.
- They tend to be member of national and sector specific trade networks.
- Commercial banks are the most important source of funding for women-led companies in Uganda.

Free Trade Agreements and participation in consultations

Few women-led exporters utilize trade preferences

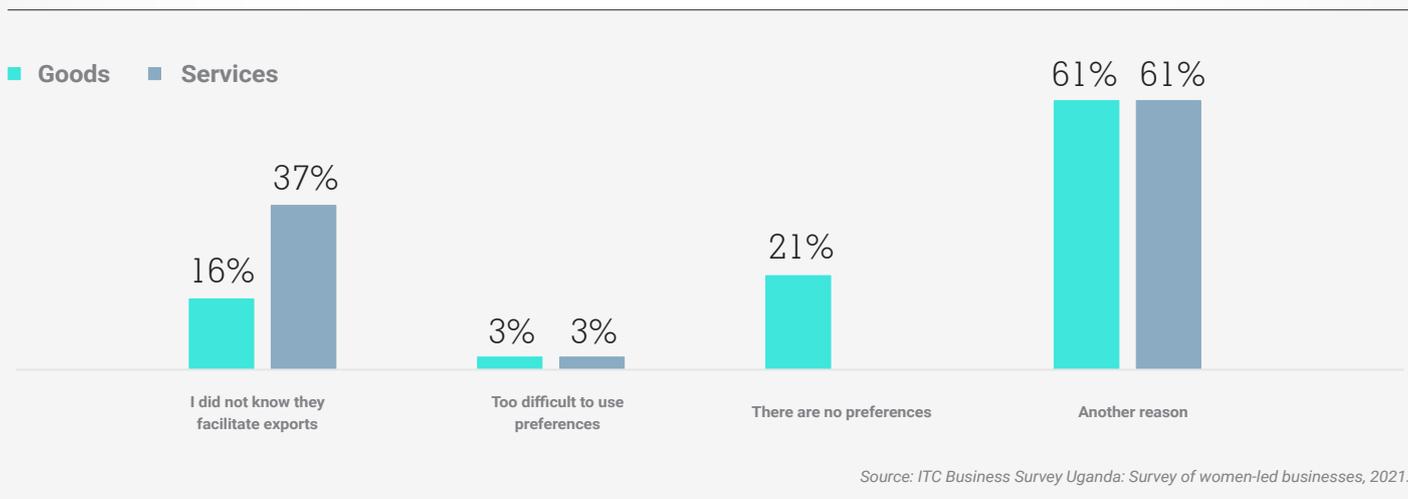
Overall, only 22% of women-led companies engaged in international trade utilize trade preferences available through trade agreements such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Exporters of services, in particular, seem to be less aware of the benefits of trade preferences.

FIGURE 17 | UTILIZATION OF TRADE PREFERENCES AMONG WOMEN-LED TRADING COMPANIES



Anecdotal evidence indicates that women-led companies believe trade preference benefit only large enterprises or the inexistence of a trade agreement between Uganda and the company's export destination market.

FIGURE 18 | REASONS WHY WOMEN-LED ENTERPRISES ARE NOT UTILIZING TRADE PREFERENCES



Companies that do make use of trade preferences report EAC and COMESA to be the most commonly used agreements. Over 90% of women traders from the goods sector used EAC preferences. In the services sector, over half of the surveyed companies benefit from COMESA preference schemes.

FIGURE 19 | MAIN TRADE AGREEMENTS USED BY UGANDAN WOMEN-LED EXPORTERS

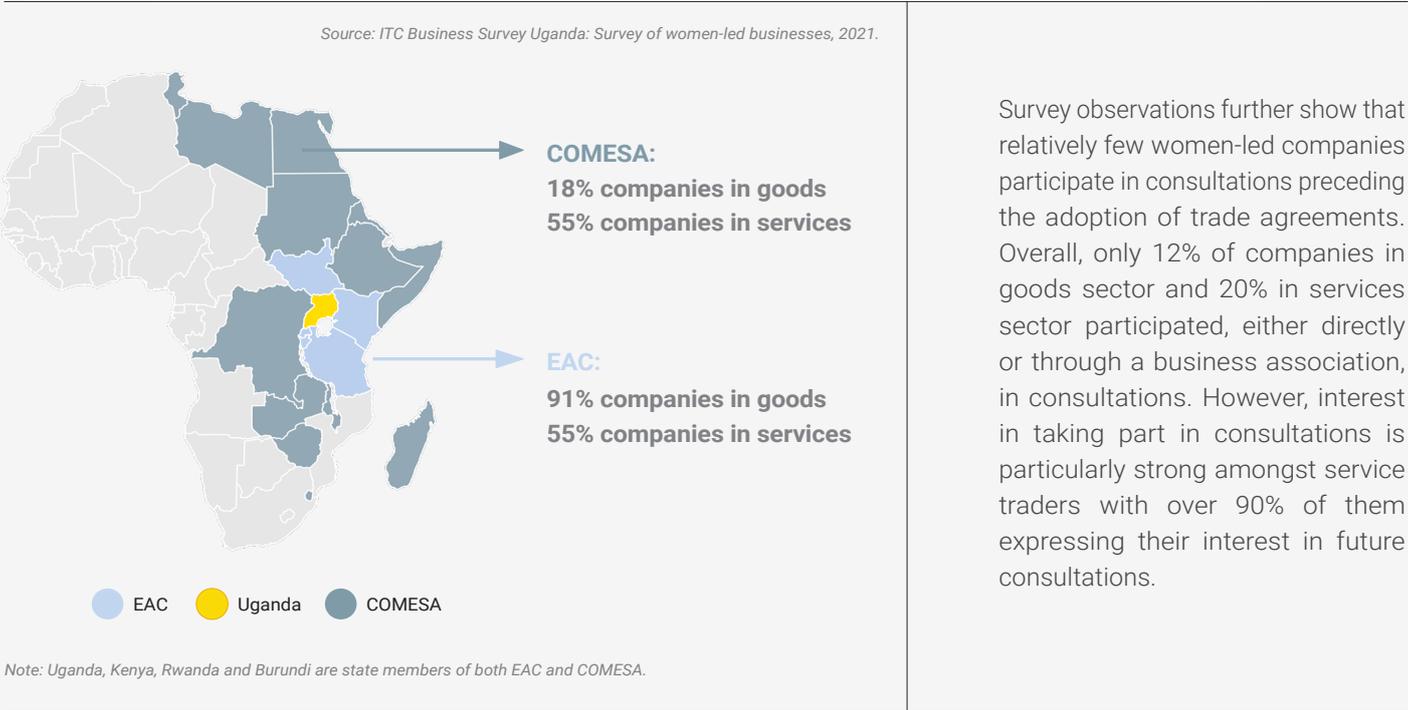
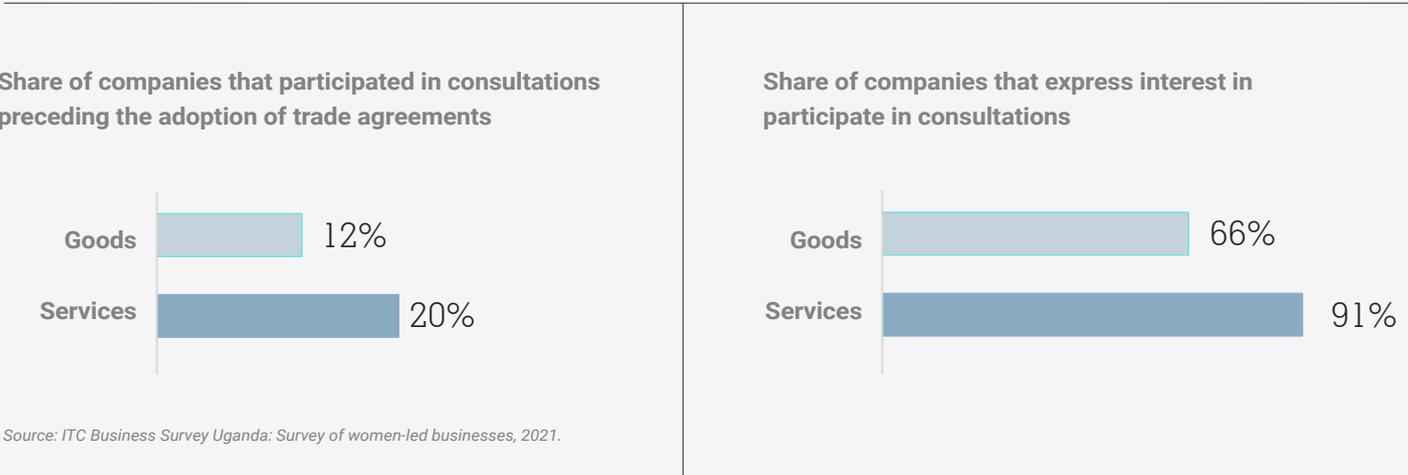


FIGURE 20 | PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN-LED COMPANIES IN TRADE AGREEMENTS RELATED CONSULTATIONS

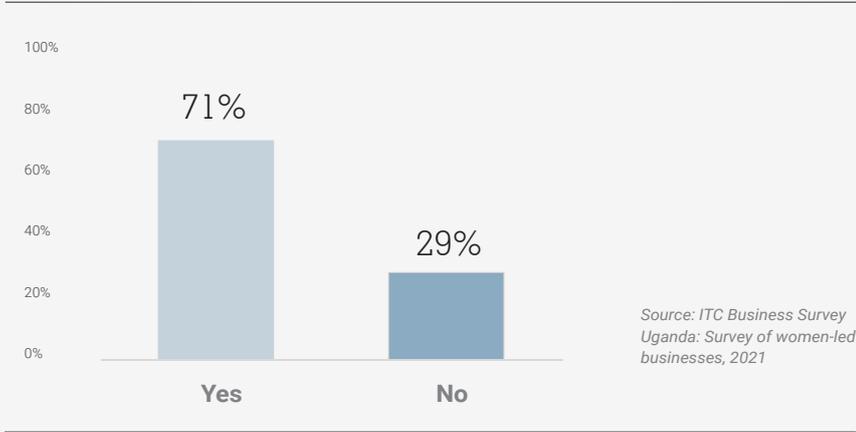


Women-led businesses are optimistic about the benefits of the AfCFTA

Overall, women-led companies are optimistic about the benefits of the AfCFTA. Seven out of ten respondents to the survey expect the Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to create new opportunities for their business operations.

Women entrepreneurs in Uganda perceive the AfCFTA and deriving opportunities as positive for their business operations. The opportunity of a wider market reach, the possible economic empowerment of women in rural areas, the business focus on the African continent and its easier market access are just a few examples of women's perception of benefits to the AfCFTA.

FIGURE 21 | OPPORTUNITIES EXPECTED FROM THE AFCFTA



Africa is our main market for the software we are developing so any agreement on that would be good for expanding our business.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF COMPUTER AND RELATED SERVICES

The AfCFTA will open up the African continent to Africans.

WOMEN-LED COMPANY SELLING AGRICULTURAL GOODS

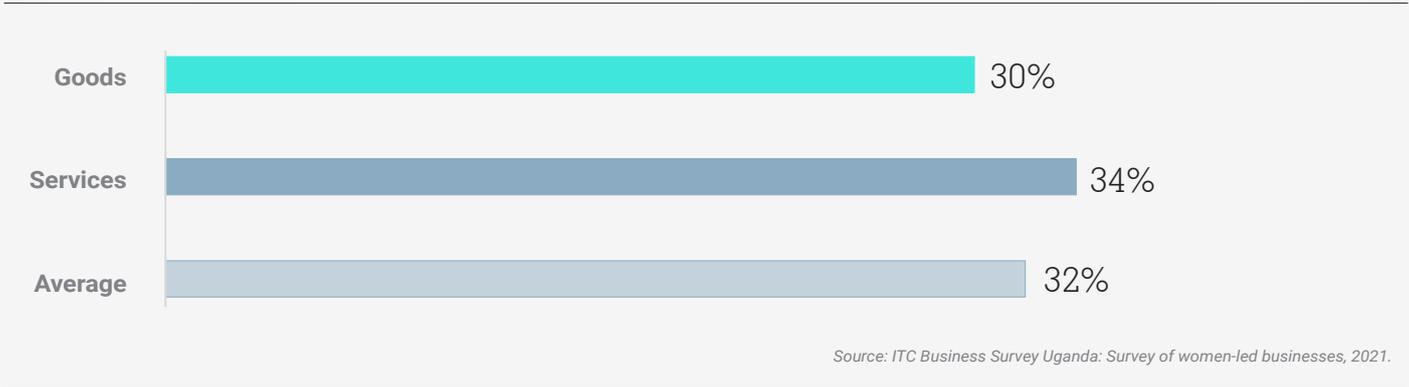
The AfCFTA provides possible economic empowerment of rural women.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND TESTING SERVICES

There is interest in exporting outside the AfCFTA region

Following the launch of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in January 2021, the expectations are high among women-led businesses to expand their business prospects. AfCFTA recognises the need to build and improve the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in which women actively participate.

FIGURE 22 | INTEREST OF UGANDAN WOMEN-LED COMPANIES IN EXPORTING OUTSIDE AFCFTA



Survey findings show around one-third of Ugandan women-led firms interested in expanding their business outside the AfCFTA region. The United States of America and the United Kingdom are among the top markets of interest for companies in the goods sector. Among companies in the service sector the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are the markets of interest outside the AfCFTA region.

While 31% of companies from the goods sector find the United States as a potential market, only 4% of services providers see it as market of interest. The United Arab Emirates is the most attractive export market outside AfCFTA among services providers (28%).

FIGURE 23 | INTEREST IN EXPORTING OUTSIDE AFCFTA, BY DESTINATION MARKET



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Anecdotal evidence suggest limited experience, lack of information, small sized business and the products' nature as reasons why over two-thirds of Ugandan women-led firms rule out an extra-AfCFTA exports.

We are still so small, we couldn't afford the expense. The taxes levied on us are way too high, its not attractive to export and import especially for small businesses.

WOMEN-LED COMPANY TRADING MANUFACTURED GOODS

Maybe as our company grows, we could consider exporting outside the AfCFTA region, but our products are solely directed to African hair and skin.

WOMEN-LED EXPORTER OF COMPUTER AND RELATED SERVICES

Obstacles to trade encountered by women-led businesses

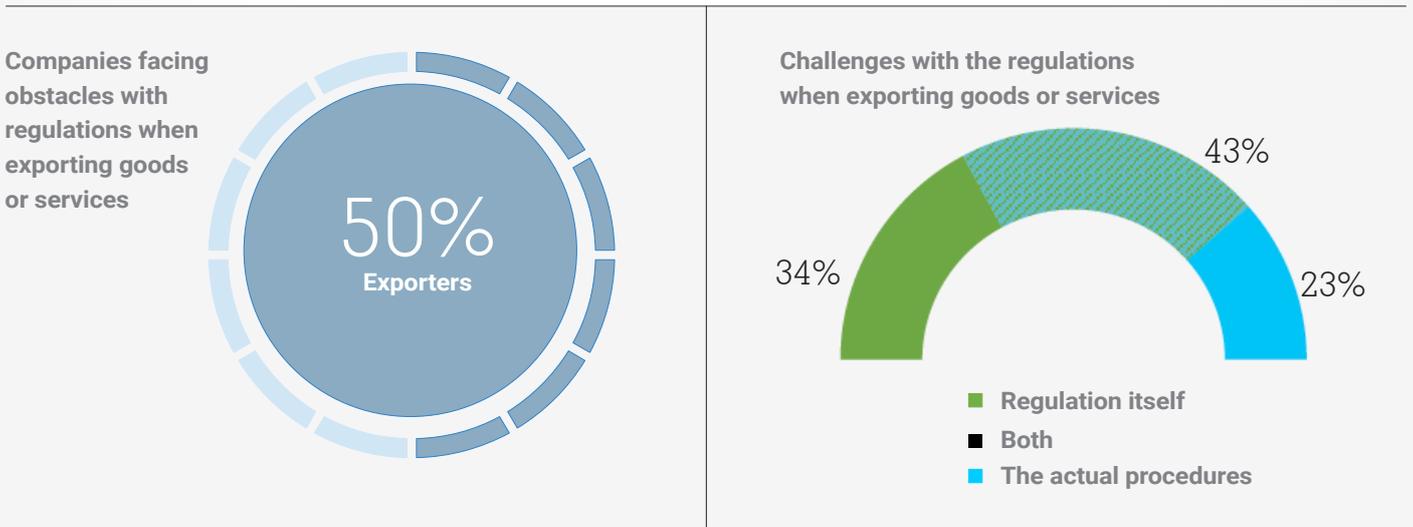
Results from the survey provide an insight on challenges Ugandan women entrepreneurs face as they seek to trade and compete in the global economy.

Half of women-led exporters face obstacles complying with trade regulations and procedures

Half of women-led businesses exporting goods and services face obstacles complying with trade regulations and procedures. These difficulties pertain to regulations and procedures in Uganda or in foreign markets. In fact, 71% of the burdensome regulations exporters report are regulations in destination markets while the remaining 29% are Ugandan domestic regulations.

Both, burdensome regulations and tedious procedures are concerns for Ugandan women exporters. Roughly 34% of the difficulties exporters report are due to regulations itself being too strict or difficult to comply with. Another 23% of the difficult are due to procedural obstacles such as long waiting time, administrative red-tapes or lack of facilities. Around 43% of the difficulties exporters report are related to both regulatory and procedural obstacles.

FIGURE 24 | COMPANIES FACING OBSTACLES WITH REGULATIONS WHEN EXPORTING GOODS OR SERVICES



Origin of burdensome regulations business face

■ Partner country ■ Uganda



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Main obstacles for exporters trading in goods

Charges, taxes and price control measures are the main obstacles to trade faced by women-led goods exporters. Roughly 44% of cases reported by exporters relate to these measures which are implemented to control or affect the prices of imported goods in order to: support the domestic price of certain products when the import prices of these goods are lower.

Because of their small size, women-led companies suffer disproportionately from the fixed costs of trade. These costs hit MSMEs and women-led businesses harder because these firms tend to trade in lower volumes than large firms do. Other export related measures which hinder women entrepreneurs in their international trade operations include culture-based gender roles. An overview on the classification of trade related obstacles for the international trade of goods is included in the Annex IV.

South Sudan charges are very unclear, we had to pay visa fees while we were not supposed to under EAC, then they don't give information early enough so the costs seem random for taxes and other charges.

WOMEN-LED EXPORTER OF DATA-PROCESSING MACHINES

Certification costs of the product is expensive for the small quantities that I am currently producing. It makes more sense when you're a big company.

WOMEN-LED COMPANY TRADING ESSENTIAL OILS

Tax valuation is inconsistent and rather high too.

WOMEN-LED EXPORTER OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES

FIGURE 25 | COMPANIES FACING OBSTACLES WITH REGULATIONS WHEN EXPORTING GOODS

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



In several instances where applications we made for work permits of our clients were rejected without proper reasons provided. The criteria was not explained to us so we had to reapply and that also meant that we paid twice or that the clients had to wait for the second application to go through

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTING SERVICES

Main obstacles for exporters trading in services

Women entrepreneurs in Uganda trading services are mainly confronted with measures that increase the price of the service provided through the imposition of additional fees. Roughly 27% of the hurdles reported are tax related obstacles in the trade of services outside Uganda.

Another 20% of the obstacles relate to measures requiring licenses or permits in order to provide the service. These measures aim to ensure the ability of the provider to supply the service or to guarantee that the service provider will respond to any damages caused by the activities. When licensing or permits are not justifiable, increased costs and bureaucracy act as significant barriers to women.

Trade hurdles due to monopolies or exclusive rights make up another 10% of the reported obstacles. These measures may be applied in sectors prone to national monopolies due to network characteristics or to ensure universal access and availability of the service provided. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure abuse of a monopoly position.

Work visas and other requirements in the provision of services pose further obstacles to the trade of services for women in Uganda. These restrict or hinder the movement of women entrepreneurs or foreign company employees for the provisions of services on a temporary basis and also include limits on the decisions of the company on pricing strategies.

The government imposed tax on software which makes our products more expensive and clients then prefer pirated products

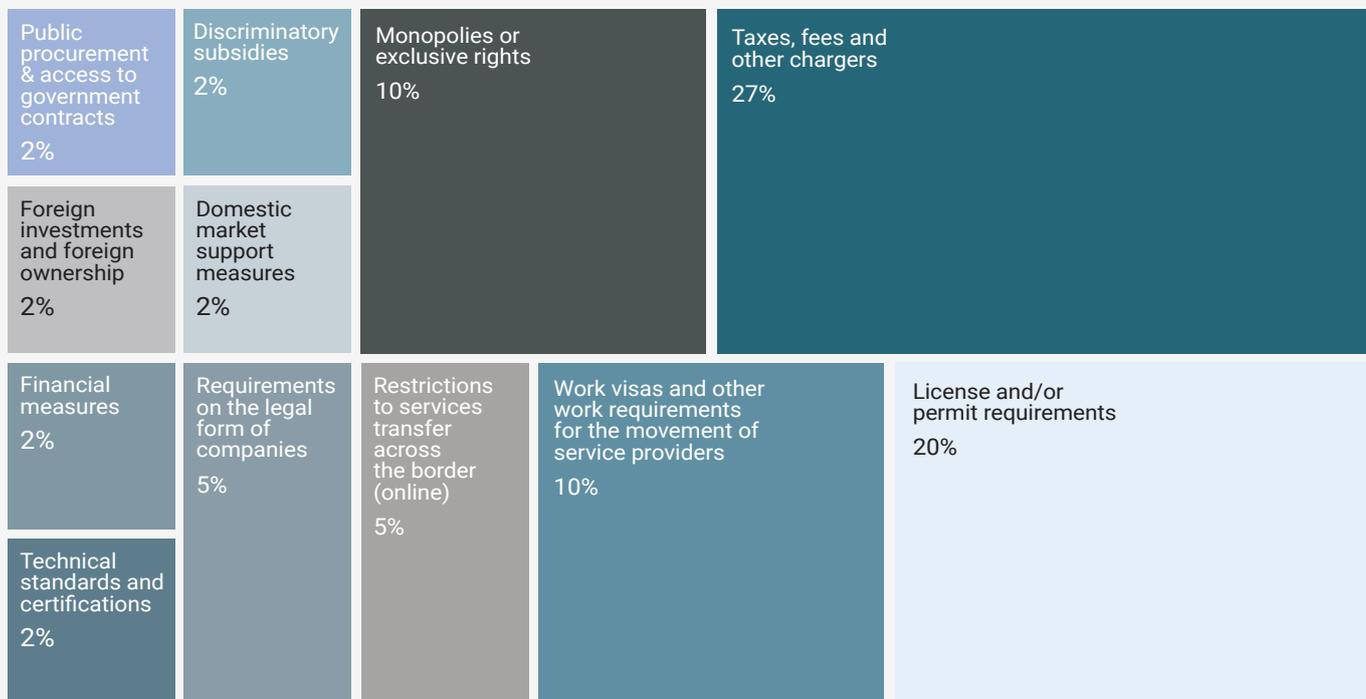
WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF COMPUTER AND RELATED SERVICES

Even after going through the lengthy visa process to attend a tourism expo in Russia, the staff were denied visa.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES

Other hurdles in the provision of services for women-led businesses include language barriers and information transparency.

FIGURE 26 | COMPANIES FACING OBSTACLES WITH REGULATIONS WHEN EXPORTING SERVICES



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Most of the companies do not report the obstacles they face

Despite the hurdles, most women-led businesses in Uganda do not report obstacles they face related to their business activity. 84% of the respondents say they do not report their obstacles anywhere. Only 11% of the respondents turned to national institutions to flag obstacles encountered as part of their business operations. Relatively few women entrepreneurs benefit from online means of reporting challenges. Only 4% make use of reporting options on websites.

FIGURE 27 | REPORTING OBSTACLES TO TRADE

Where do you usually report the obstacles related to your business activity?



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Other challenges for women entrepreneurs in Uganda

Other aspects of challenges for women entrepreneurs trading goods and services include limited access to productive resources like finance and land, as well as to information and business networks, which make it easier to identify and seize business opportunities.

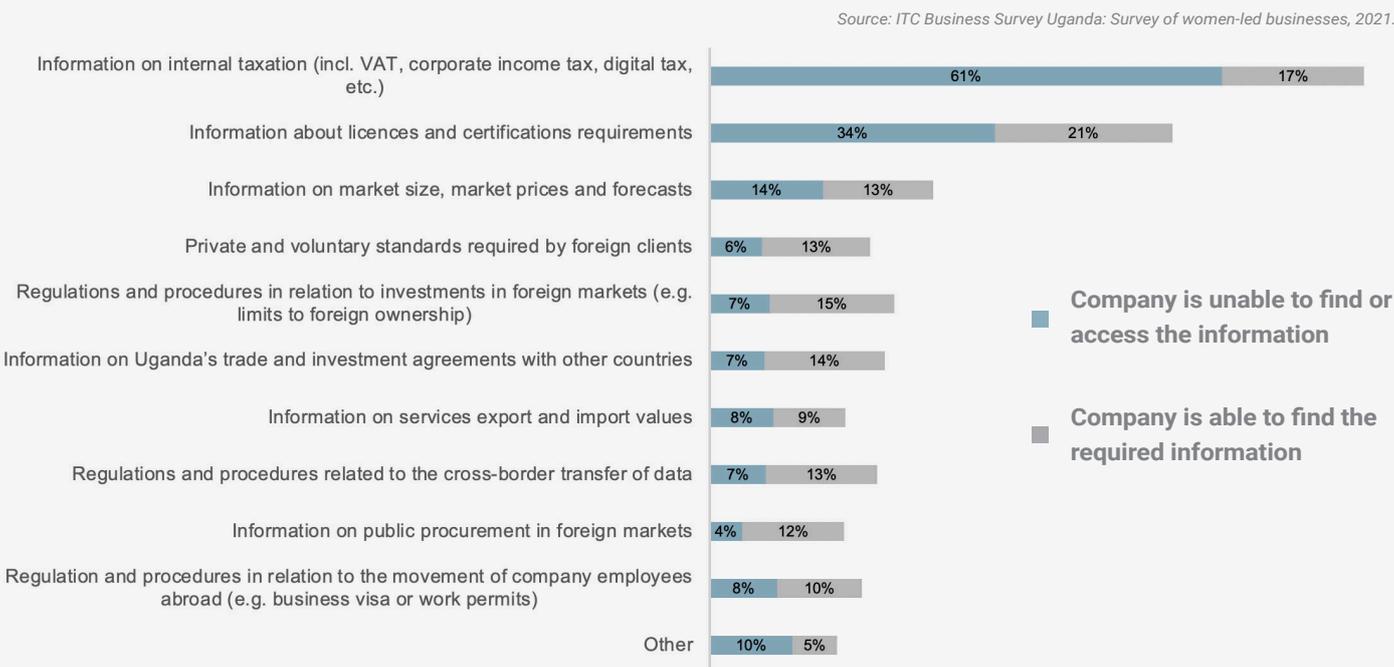
Access to information

The types of trade obstacles encountered correlate in large parts with the types of trade information needs expressed by companies, suggesting that better information could go at least some way to alleviate the problems encountered.

Some of the key types of information needed by women entrepreneurs for business operations in Uganda include information on internal taxation, licenses and certification requirements, information on market size and market prices forecasts, as well as standards required by foreign clients.

Companies have difficulties in finding and/or accessing information on licenses and certification requirements, investments in foreign markets and taxation.

FIGURE 28 | MAIN INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMPANIES AND THEIR ABILITY TO ACCESS IT

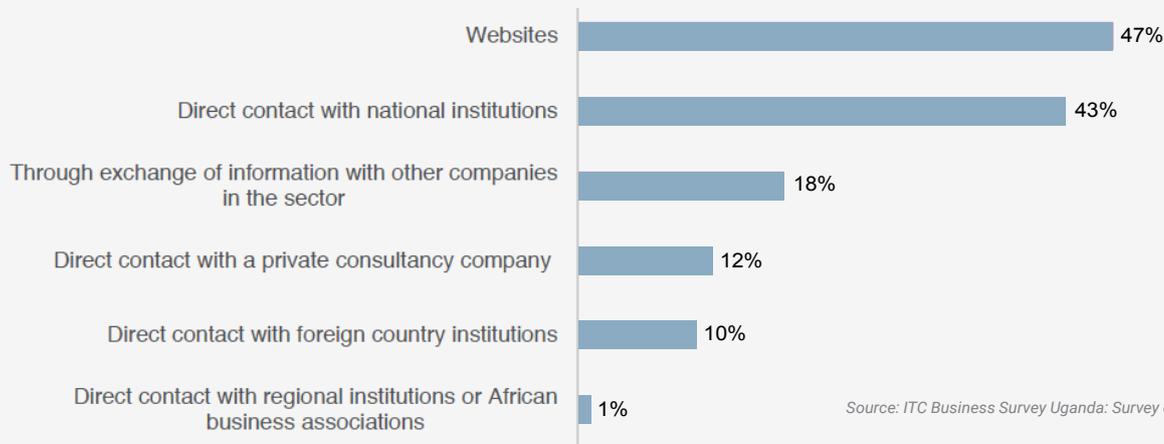


National institutions are important sources of information for women entrepreneurs

Websites of national institutions are an important source of information for women entrepreneurs in Uganda. Interaction with other companies in the sector is also a common way for women-led firms to obtain information about business operations.

Governments can play an active role to improve the connectivity of women entrepreneurs. ICT has the potential to facilitate connectivity and increase women's access to markets.

FIGURE 29 | SOURCES OF INFORMATION CONSULTED BY WOMEN-LED COMPANIES



Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Difficulties due to the lack of information

Just under a third of women-led firms report to have faced difficulties related to the lack of information.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that information on websites is often incomplete and even direct contact with national institutions often results in incomplete trade-related information. This is true especially for start-ups that mainly rely on information from other businesses in the same sector.

Most information that is pertinent for businesses is not available online, and when the institutions are contacted directly, they tend to give the bare minimum information.

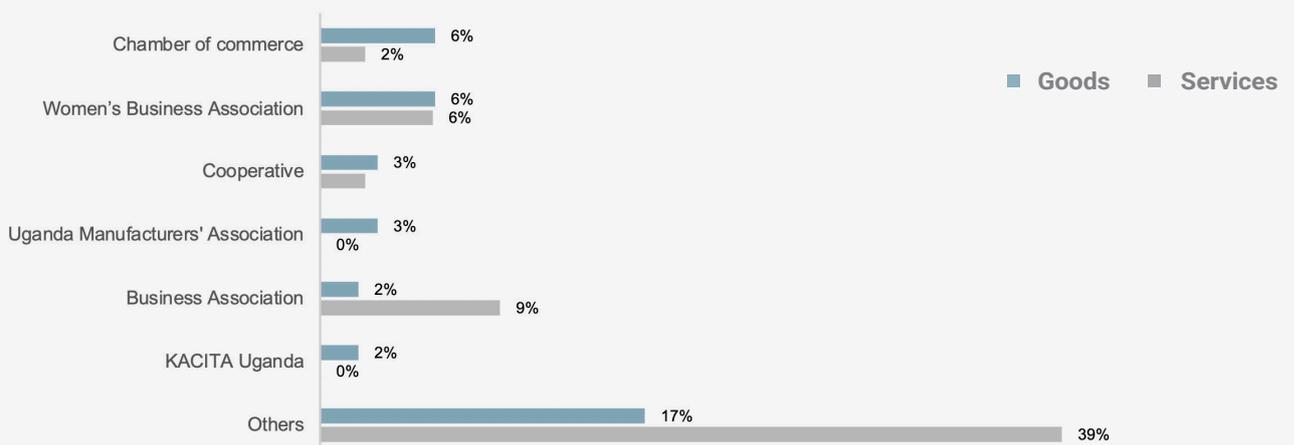
WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES

Women entrepreneurs are members of national and sector-specific trade networks

Business networks offer formal training, information, advice, access to markets, partnerships and policy advocacy, as well as encouragement and support. However, social norms and barriers may keep women from joining business networks.

FIGURE 30 | MEMBERSHIP IN BUSINESS-RELATED NETWORKS

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



Ugandan women businesses tend to be members of national and sector specific associations and business-related networks. Women's Business Associations are certainly relevant to both services and goods traders among women. Chambers of Commerce are relevant especially to goods trading firms, while services-oriented companies belong to business associations.

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor's '2010 Women's report', women entrepreneurs in a range of countries had smaller, less diverse networks and tended to rely more on personal contacts.²⁵

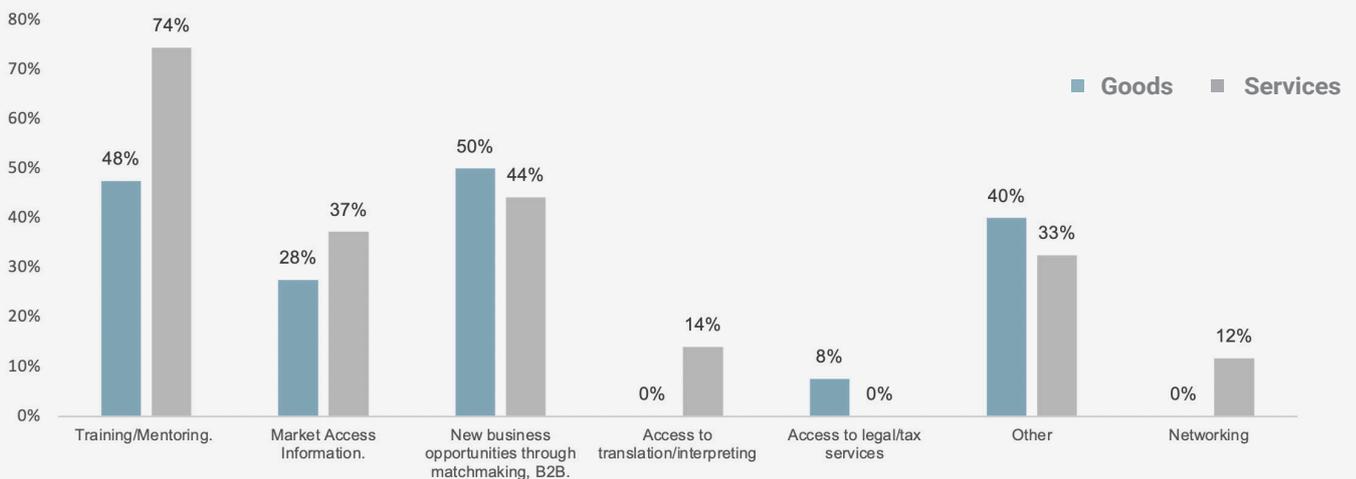
Balancing home and work responsibilities was seen as a challenge of women business owners in Uganda. Women in higher-executive positions are especially affected by this challenge. Some respondents to the survey requested the events to be held over lunch or at other times during the work day to include women who could not meet after business hours.

Benefits from the membership of trade networks and associations

Women-led firms value their benefits received through membership in business networks as in creating visibility and reputation, training and mentoring opportunities and new business opportunities for matchmaking.

Other types of benefits reported include the opportunity to review and input to laws, policies or regulations that affect the sector.

FIGURE 31 | BENEFITS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERSHIP IN TRADE NETWORKS Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



Survey results further reveal that women perceive informal networks as important as formal business networks. Informal networks include word of mouth, social occasions or personal contacts.

The membership gives our company an image as a reputable company and we can use it for review and input into new laws, policies or regulations that affect the

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTING SERVICES

With the trade network we mainly use it as a platform to lobby for policy change against high taxation.

WOMEN-LED EXPORTER OF GOODS

25. (GEM) Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2011) - <https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/gem-2010-womens-report>

FIGURE 32 | WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' VIEWS ON INFORMAL NETWORKS

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



Over half of women entrepreneurs face difficulties in applying for funding

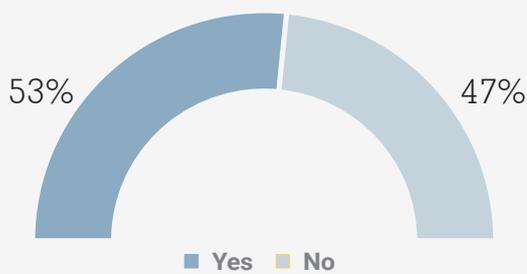
Over half of women-led businesses report having faced difficulties in applying for sources of finance. Access to finance is essential for business and export development. As a business becomes more competitive and productive, it may transition from servicing only the domestic market to selling internationally.

The survey also revealed that limited access to capital pose constraints to women-led firms as they have less physical and reputational collateral. Almost half of the companies surveyed have applied for external financing in order to start or scale up business operations. The most important source of funding for women-led companies in Uganda are derived from commercial banks or credit institutions.

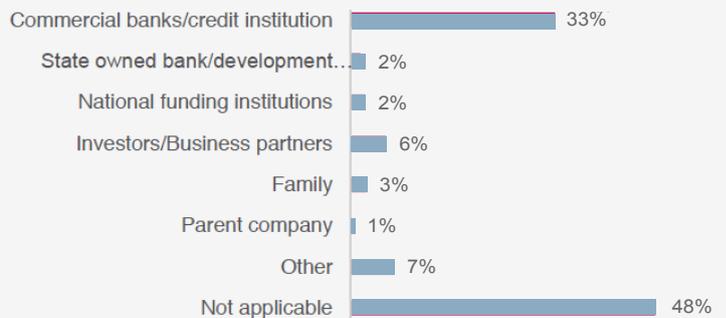
FIGURE 33 | FUNDING ISSUES OF WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Share of businesses that have faced difficulties applying for funds



Most important source of funding for women-led businesses



From testimonies of survey respondents, we learn from the difficulties when turning to commercial banks as source of funding.

Commercial banks rarely want to lend to start-ups, thus imposing many requirements for example depositing bid security (from company's own money) with the bank, which means locking these resources up with the bank for at least 6 months.

WOMEN-LED PRODUCER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS

One of the biggest challenges was to meet the Uganda Development Bank requirements. We have adopted audited books of accounts and other processes in order to qualify. Commercial banks have high interest rates, its really expensive and we need alternatives for it to make sense.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

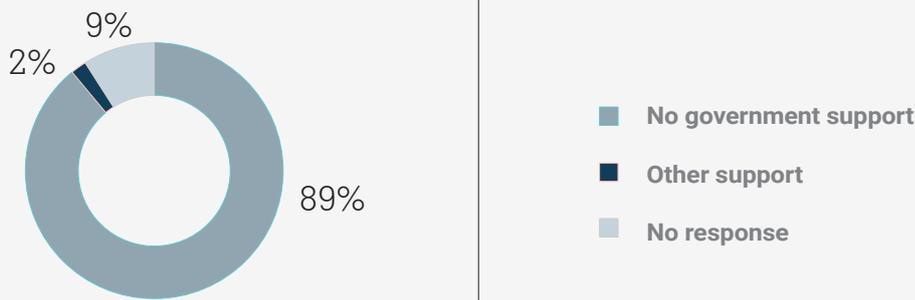
COVID-19 pandemic support & environmental risks

Women-led businesses have not received government support for the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 and restrictions put in place by government all over the world have been harsh on companies. Many governments have put in various schemes to support the private sector. In the case of Ugandan women-led businesses almost none have received any support from public institutions.

FIGURE 34 | SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS THROUGH THE COVID PANDEMIC

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

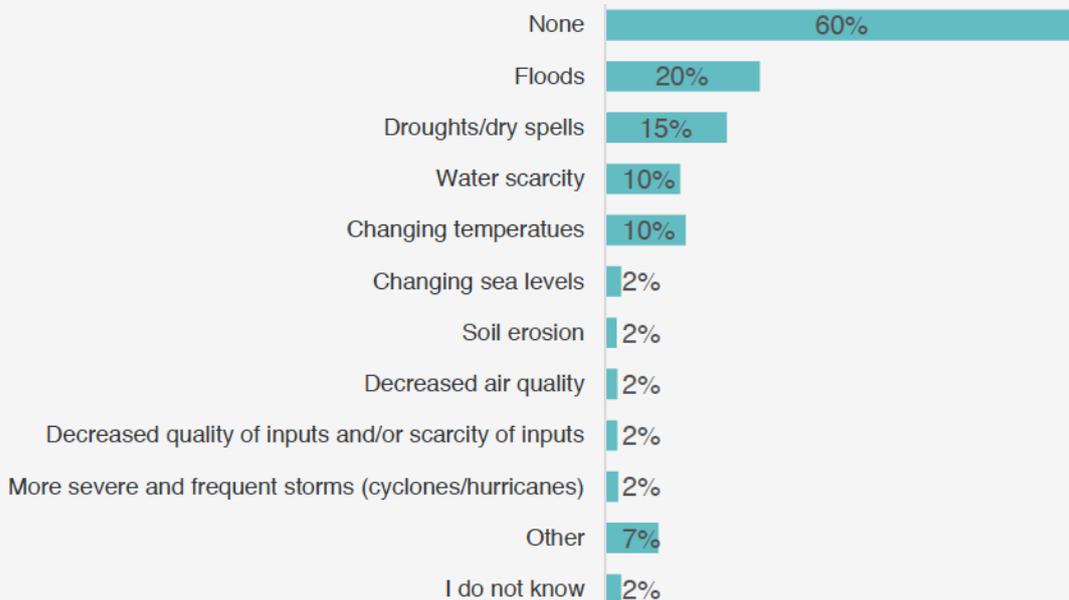


Environmental risks are not an issue of concern to most businesses

Majority of the companies (60%) do not see any major environmental risk to be impacting their business. Among the top environmental risks cited are floods (by 20% of the respondents) draughts (15%), water scarcity (10%) and changing temperatures (10%).

FIGURE 35 | MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS TO BUSINESSES

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



Empowering Women Through Public Procurement

Government procurement offers a unique route to empower women and governments can play an important role to boost the participation of women-led businesses.

This chapter outlines women's participation in public procurement processes, identifies existing barriers Ugandan women entrepreneurs face when participating in local, national or regional public procurement, and suggests enabling factors to increase their participation.

KEY FINDINGS²⁶

Participation of women-led businesses in public procurement processes

—
Participation in public procurement is higher among services traders, but limited among companies trading goods

Existing barriers for women entrepreneurs in Uganda to participate in public procurement

—
Challenges in public procurement processes are significant, more so for women-led businesses trading services

The majority of women entrepreneurs participating in public procurement specify that the bidding process did not include gender-specific provisions

Lack of information, lack of technical capacity and perception of corruption are the main barriers for women in public procurement participation

Ways to enable procurement participation and the submission of tenders

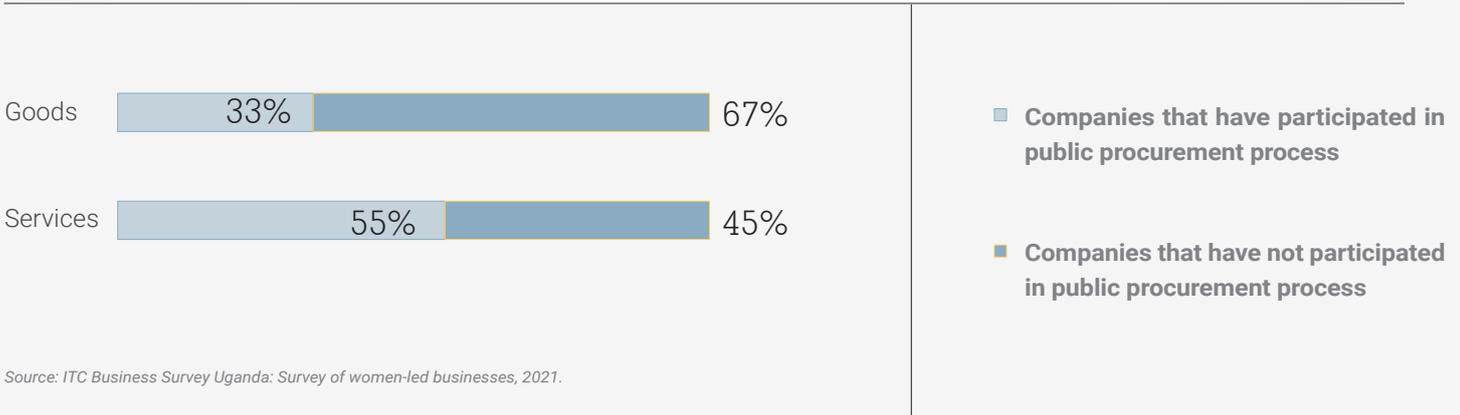
—
Improving transparency, moving to online procurement, and providing more opportunities for MSMEs are the top recommendations from women entrepreneurs

26. ITC (2014) : Empowering women through public procurement, available at: <https://www.intracen.org/publication/Empowering-Women-Through-Public-Procurement/>

Participation in public procurement processes is higher for companies trading services, but limited among companies trading goods

Participation of women-led businesses from the goods sector in public procurement process is low when compared to companies from the services sector. Only a third of women-led businesses in goods sector participated compared to more than a half of companies in services sector.

FIGURE 36 | WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES THAT HAVE PARTICIPATED IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESSES



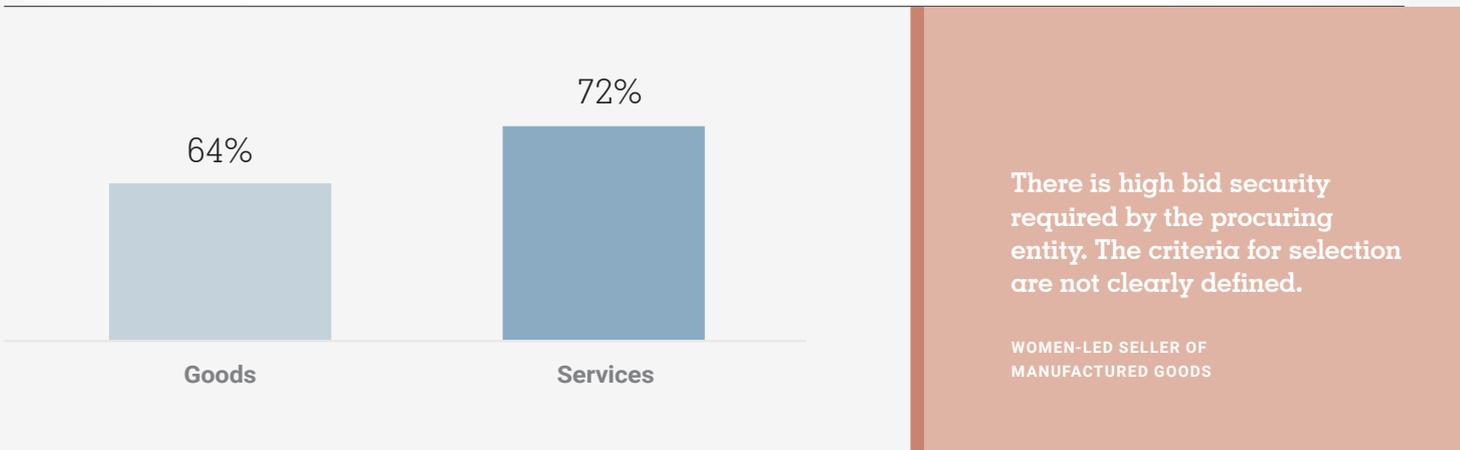
Challenges remain for women in public procurement processes

Challenges for women in public procurement processes are significant. Roughly 64% and 72% of women-led firms from the goods and services sectors respectively report having faced problems related to the participation in a local, national or regional public procurement process.

We always just prequalify and never win tenders because we are not informed of the opportunities, and upon request they are not consistent to answer questions when we follow up.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

FIGURE 37 | SHARE OF WOMEN-LED COMPANIES FACING DIFFICULTIES WITH PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESSES



There is high bid security required by the procuring entity. The criteria for selection are not clearly defined.

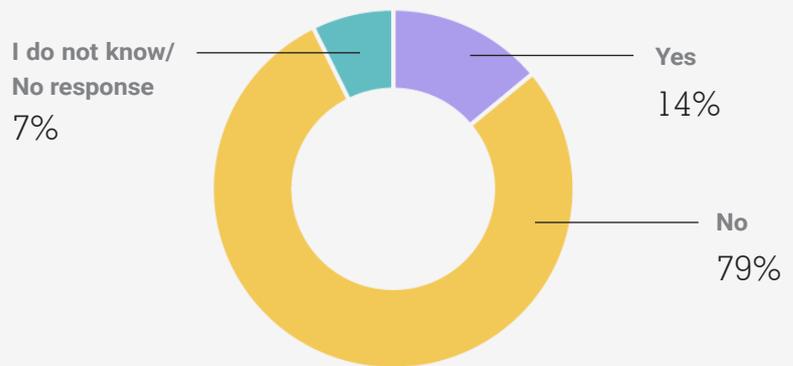
WOMEN-LED SELLER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS

Lack of gender-specific provisions in public procurement processes

In general, Uganda’s public procurement policy framework does not provide sufficient support for women-led businesses. Among the women-led businesses that participate in procurement processes, nearly 80% say the procurement opportunities that they participated in did not have any preferences for women.

FIGURE 38 | BUSINESSES FIND GENDER-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS LACKING IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Source: ITC Business Survey Uganda: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.



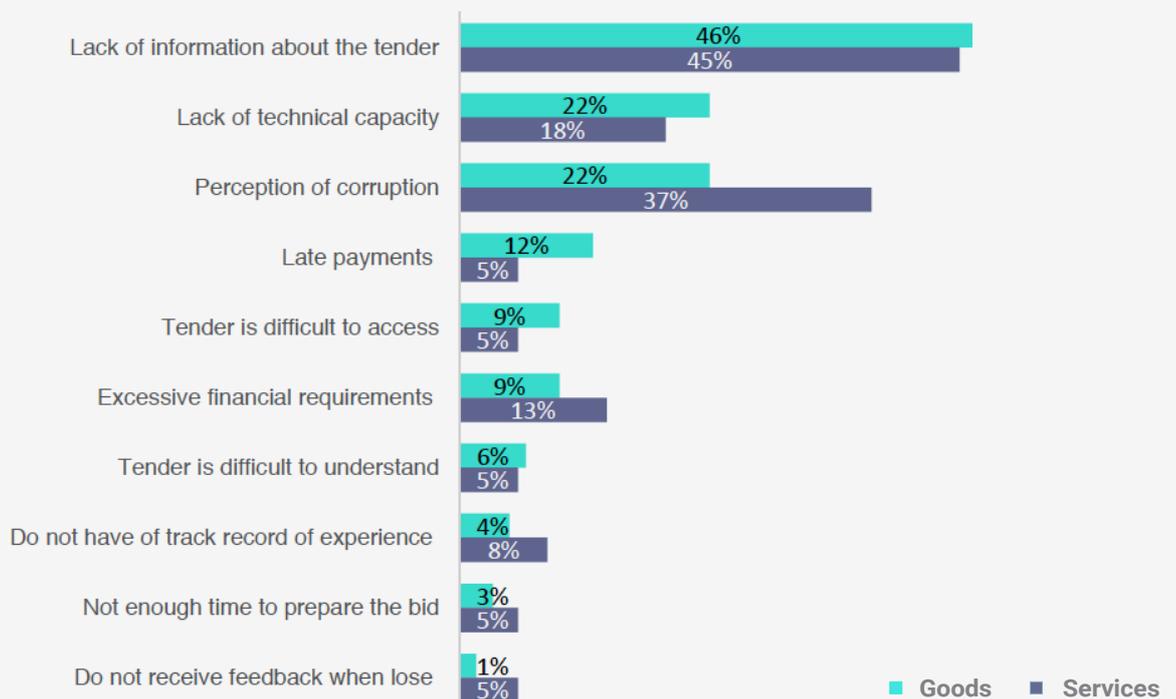
Lack of information and technical capacity are the main barriers

The survey also makes an attempt to better understand the reasons that hinder the participation of women-led businesses in public procurement. Among businesses that did not participate in public procurement in the last 2 years, most cite the lack of information about the tender for their non-participation. For over 45% of the respondents in both sector this is the main hurdle. The lack of technical capacity is a another major barrier.

The procurement processes seem rather complicated and the competition is high with a lot of corruption involved.

WOMEN-LED SELLER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS

FIGURE 39 | EXISTING BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PARTICIPATION





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Among service providers, the perception of corruption, in particular, plays a key role in discouraging participation in public procurement. The integrity of the public procurement system is also an important policy objective in its own right. It also helps to ensure value for money by eliminating the economic inefficiencies inherent in corrupt practices and conflicts of interest.

Enabling women's participation in public procurement

Businesses led by women in Uganda provided suggestions on factors what would enable them to participate in government procurement processes and what women entrepreneurs would like procuring entities do differently to make it easier for them to submit tenders. `A fair and equal competition`, `embrace online procurement`, `improve transparency`, and `more opportunities for small and micro enterprises`, are among the most compelling testimonies from women leaders in Uganda to highlight ways of enabling a better procurement participation.

The processes and the decision-making takes too long and it is frustrating that they prefer international companies and ask for bid security and performance bond, which we cannot afford - all these must change for us to get more involved

WOMEN-LED SUPPLIER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS

Ensure fair and equal competition in as far as product quality is concerned. Procuring entities have in some instances taken lower priced bids, even when there is evidence of poor quality of the company's product

WOMEN-LED SUPPLIER OF MANUFACTURED GOODS

Improve transparency and allow for online submissions of tenders.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF ADVERTISING SERVICES

An online procurement process would be more efficient, more transparent and would save time and stationery.

WOMEN-LED PROVIDER OF RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND TESTING SERVICES

Annexes



Services sectors and sub-sectors classification



Tourism services

Covers tour operators and travel agents, tourist guides, accommodation service providers and passenger transport services

Travel arrangement services

Typically combines tour and travel components to create a package holiday. The operator advertises and produces brochures to promote its own products, holidays and itineraries. A travel agent or agency is a retailer with or without a physical office, selling travel products and services on behalf of a supplier (tour operators, airlines, car rentals, hotels and similar) and providing tailored client advice. Includes online travel agencies (OTAs).

Tourist guide services

Provides direction and commentary on tourist attractions, typically of a cultural, historic, archaeological or natural type.

Accommodation services

Include hotels, youth hostels, dormitories, private room rentals, bed and breakfasts, agrotourism facilities and campsites.

Passenger transport services

Need to own or operate a fleet (road trucks, rail wagons, air or sea fleet) and a crew. Make sure the company owns a fleet. A company that subcontracts another company to provide fleet and crew is not considered a transport company to the extent of this survey. Passenger transport equipment rental companies are businesses leasing or renting passenger cars, minivans, buses, aircraft or watercraft without operator.



Telecommunication and computer related services

Covers the provision of the means to transmit information (voice, data, text, sound and video) and the activities of providing expertise in the field of information technologies.

Telecommunication services

The transmission of content (voice, data, text, sound and video), without being involved in its creation, through telephony, internet and other facilities that may be based on a single technology or a combination of technologies.

Computer and related services

The provision of services in the field of information technologies, including: a) Computer programming activities (writing, modifying, testing and supporting of software); b) computer consultancy and computer facilities management activities (planning and designing of computer systems that integrate computer hardware, software and communication technologies); c) Information services (web search portals, data processing and hosting activities, as well as other activities that primarily supply information); d) other professional and technical computer-related activities.



Professional, scientific and technical services

Covers specialized activities that require a high degree of training, knowledge and skills. Providing these services in other countries often implies holding country specific sectoral licences and certifications

Architectural services

The provision of services that involve: a) the building design and drafting town; b) city planning and landscape architecture

Engineering services

The provision of engineering design (i.e. applying physical laws and principles of engineering in the design of machines, materials, instruments, structures, processes and systems) and consulting activities for: machinery, industrial processes and industrial plant and other projects involving civil engineering.

Legal services

The provision of services that involve: a) legal representation of one party's interest against another party; b) general counselling and advising, preparation of legal documents

Accounting, auditing, bookkeeping and tax consultancy services

The provision of services that involve: a) recording of commercial transactions from businesses or others; b) preparation or auditing of financial accounts; c) examination of accounts and certification of their accuracy; d) preparation of personal and business income tax returns; e) advisory activities and representation on behalf of clients before tax authorities

Advertising services

The creation of advertising campaigns and placement of such advertising in periodicals, newspapers, radio and television, or other media as well as the design of display structures and sites.

Management consulting services

The provision of advice, guidance and operational assistance to businesses and other organizations on management issues, such as strategic and organizational planning. The areas covered include: finance; marketing; human resource policies; production scheduling and control planning.

Research, Development, and Testing services

The provision of innovative work in natural sciences, engineering, social sciences and the humanities. The objective of these activities could be: a) experimental work undertaken without particular application or use in view; 2) experimental development directed primarily to producing new materials, products and devices and; 3) testing (performance of physical, chemical and other analytical testing of all types of materials and products).

Sampling approach and distribution of interviews

Sampling and strata

ITC structured the survey following a stratified random sampling approach to provide results of relevance for each of the selected groups. This required clustering the population units into two homogenous groups, defined as “strata”: the companies in Uganda were divided into one group made of companies selling goods and a second one containing the companies selling services. This division was decided as it is directly related to the type of problems companies are facing and their characteristics in general. The next step was to draw a simple random sample (SRS) in both groups with women led firms only.

Allocation and margin of error

As there is no certainty about the number of women led companies in each stratum, the most conservative sample size was chosen (n=100), which assumes that the actual size of the considered population (women led companies) is infinitely large, i.e. ensuring statistical significance irrespectively of the actual population size. The quotas achieved in the two strata - 100 observations in goods and 85 in services – allow us to have a margin of error of approximately 10% in each of them. At the global economy level, when merging goods and services, the Uganda survey of women led companies has a margin of error close to 7%.

Aggregation of the results

In each group, the survey was carried out following a simple random sample. Through this method, we can assume the sample is representative of the real population in terms of sectors and sizes. Therefore, there is no need to compute weights to adjust the results in each group. To aggregate goods and services however, we need to take into account the relative size of each one. According to the “Report on the census of business establishments 2010-2011”, there are approximately five times more companies in services than in goods. Keeping this ratio would inevitably hide all results on women led companies in goods when providing information at the global level. As the goal is to take into account equally all parts of the economy of Uganda, the results are weighted to give equal importance to companies in goods and services in the final results.

Thorough data quality control

Small incoherences in data are normal and to be expected. Interviewers usually capture responses on paper first and digitalize answers after the interview. In this process, errors can occur (e.g. omission to tick a box or providing comments or specifications when requested by a question). ITC’s automatic and manual checks served to detect and address these inconsistencies. In addition, ITC randomly contacted a few companies to verify that interviews indeed took place.

Overall, the data quality was very good and the quality control process did not detect any major problems that would undermine the credibility of the results presented in this report.

To ensure data quality ITC’s control process involves:

An automatic data coherence checks,

Manual control of narratives and answers, and

Random call-backs to companies to verify that interviews have taken place

ITC Classification of services trade obstacles

CODE	OBSTACLE	DESCRIPTION
A	Monopolies or exclusive rights	Measures that entitle only one or few specific operators to provide services in the domestic market. Monopolies or exclusive rights may be granted in sectors prone to national monopolies due to their network characteristics or to ensure universal access/availability of a service. The monopoly/exclusive right must be clearly defined and safeguards should be in place to ensure abuse of monopoly position.
B	Quantitative and geographical restrictions	Measures that restrict the number of foreign service suppliers, amount of foreign services provided or scope of provision in the host country in relation to considerations regarding their impact on the domestic economy. These measures include quotas, economic needs test, zoning requirements and limits on the number of foreign branches.
C	License and/or permit requirements	Measures requiring foreign companies to obtain licences or permits in order to provide the services. The measures aim to ensure the ability of the foreign provider to supply the service, or that the foreign provider has sufficient capital to operate in the industry, or to guarantee that a foreign provider will respond to any damages caused by his activities. These measures may act as significant barriers to enter and/or inhibit competition and increase costs and bureaucracy in sectors, where licensing/permits are not justifiable by the above-mentioned reasons.
D	Technical standards and certifications	These measures are in place to ensure that the quality and specifications of the service provided align with sector or country specific standards. These measures can be applied for a variety of reasons, including to address externalities (such as environmental damage), to ensure interoperability of different equipment/services, to ensure the safety of products/services or to comply with quality, ethical and social requirements. The trade restrictive impact of technical standards arises from the duplication of certifications required by two partner countries and/or national standards deviation from international or regional standards.
E	Taxes	Measures that increase the price of the service provided through the imposition of additional fees. These measures can be restrictive in relation to discriminatory treatment of foreign operators or double taxation.
F	Discriminatory subsidies	Measures that restrict access of foreign services suppliers to support granted to domestic suppliers. Various forms of support exist for various policy objectives, including offsetting market failures, enhancing employment and exports, supporting activities in certain regions, encouraging access to certain services (e.g. education), encouraging R&D, promoting cultural diversity and protecting the environment. Overall, subsidies may be required to encourage activities, which would not happen in purely competitive markets. The rationale for limiting access to subsidies only to domestic services suppliers can be due to avoiding transfer of public funds abroad.
G	Financial measures	Measures that might restrict the movement of payments across borders. Such measures might be in place for example to ensure sufficient reserves of foreign exchange (e.g. to avoid Balance of Payments difficulties) or to ensure that foreign companies pay all the taxes in their home country. These measures might take the form of government or central bank approvals for transfers abroad or limits on the amount of funds allowed to be transferred.

H	Public procurement and access to government contracts	Measures that restrict the ability of a foreign provider to compete for government contracts or concessions. The rationale for these measures is that government might tend to favour domestic companies and employment.
I	Domestic market support measures	Measures imposed on foreign firms with commercial presence or foreign services suppliers that aim at safeguarding local companies by limiting the adverse impact of foreign competition or extending to them the benefits of foreign investments and foreign operations in the domestic market. These measures might include the requirement for technology transfers or local sourcing.
J	Foreign investments and foreign ownership	Measures that restrict the share of foreign ownership and foreign investments that is allowed and/or imposed specific authorizations. These measures might affect mergers and acquisitions operations and the purchase of domestic assets needed to deliver a services (including land).
K	Requirements on the legal form of companies	Measures that require (or restrict the possibilities of) foreign companies to adopt a specific legal form in order to provide services in the domestic market. These measures might be discriminatory for foreign companies and can involve the obligation to partner with local companies (e.g. joint ventures). They can affect the capacity of a foreign company to choose the most effective form of establishment for its business and to compete in the market.
L	Work visas and other requirements for the movement of services suppliers	Measures that restrict or hinder the movement of individual professionals or foreign company employees for the provisions of services on a temporary basis
M	Restrictions to services transfer across the border (online)	Measures that prohibit the cross-border provision of specific services in the destination market. These requirements might for example take the form of imposing commercial presence in the destination market (pre-establishment requirements) or require that data are stored locally for security reasons.
N	Nationality or residency requirements	Measures that require an individual service provider or part of the service suppliers' owners or senior managers to be nationals or residents of the country where the service is provided.
O	Intellectual property rights (IPR)	Measures related to the use, protection and transfer of intellectual property such as patents, copyrights and trademarks.
P	Restriction on internet neutrality	Measures that allow internet services suppliers to apply discriminatory treatment to the users of internet communications.
Q	Data transfer restrictions	Measures that impose controls on the way data are exchanged, collected or stored in the framework of a service trade transaction
R	Customs formalities and measures related to merchandise trade	Measures that regulates the movement of goods across the borders (export or imports) in relation to the provision of a specific service. These measures include the certificates, licences and controls needed at the customs in order to import or export goods.
S	Other limits or requirements in the provision of services	These measures might include limits on the decisions of a foreign company on pricing strategies, advertising strategies, etc.

ITC Classification of trade obstacles for goods

CODE	OBSTACLE	DESCRIPTION
A	Technical requirements	<p>Technical requirements refer to product-specific properties. They are legally binding and set by the country where the product is exported to (or imported from) – as opposed to voluntary standards.</p> <p>Technical requirements define product characteristics, technical specifications of a product or the production process and post-production treatment. They also include the applicable administrative provisions, with which compliance is mandatory.</p>
B	Conformity assessment	<p>Conformity assessments refer to control, inspection and approval procedures - such as testing, inspection, certification and traceability - which confirm and control that a product fulfils the technical requirements and mandatory standards imposed by the importing country, for example to safeguard the health and safety of consumers.</p>
C	Pre-shipment inspection and other entry formalities	<p>Pre-shipment inspection refers to a physical inspection of goods before shipment or at entry into the destination country (customs), which establishes the exact nature of the goods: the inspection assures that the goods are in accordance with the accompanying documents that specify their customs tariff code, quality, quantity and price. Often, pre-shipment inspections are required for shipments above a certain value. Some countries require pre-shipment inspection for all imported products regardless the value, others for specific products.</p>
D	Trade remedies (antidumping, countervailing and safeguards)	<p>Measures implemented to counteract particular adverse effects of imports in the market of the importing country, including measures aimed at "unfair" foreign trade practices, contingent upon the fulfilment of certain procedural and substantive requirements. They are also known as trade contingent protective measures.</p>
E	Quantity control measures (e.g. licences, quotas, prohibitions)	<p>Measures restraining the quantity of imports of any particular good, from all sources or from specified sources of supply, either through restrictive licensing, fixing of a predetermined quota or through prohibitions. Quantity control measures are non- technical and do not refer to specific product characteristics.</p>
F	Charges, taxes and price control measures	<p>Measures other than tariffs measures that increase the cost of imports in a similar manner, i.e. by fixed percentage or by a fixed amount: they are also known as para-tariff measures. This category also includes measures implemented to control or affect the prices of imported goods in order to: support the domestic price of certain products when the import prices of these goods are lower; establish the domestic price of certain products because of price fluctuation in domestic markets, or price instability in a foreign market; or to increase or preserve tax revenue.</p>
G	Finance measures	<p>Measures that regulate the access to and cost of foreign exchange for imports and define the terms of payment. They may increase the import cost in a fashion similar to tariff measures. Advance payments include advance import deposit, cash margin requirement, advance payment of custom duties, or refundable deposits for sensitive product categories. Multiple exchange rates and regulations on official foreign exchange allocation (bank authorization) as well as regulations concerning terms of payment for imports are also included.</p>
H	Anti-competitive measures	<p>Measures to grant exclusive or special preferences or privileges to one or more limited group of economic operators. These include the requirement that all imports, or imports of selected commodities, have to be channeled through specific enterprises or agencies, sometimes state- owned or state-controlled. Or the requirement that imports must be insured/carried by a national insurance/shipping company.</p>
I	Trade-related investment measures	<p>Trade balancing measures limiting the purchase or use of imported products by an enterprise to an amount related to the volume or value of local products that it exports.</p>
J	Distribution restrictions	<p>Distribution of goods inside the importing country may be restricted. Geographical restriction: to limit the sales of goods to certain areas within the importing country. Restriction on resellers: to limit the sales of imported products by designated retailers.</p>
K	Restriction of post-sales services	<p>Measures restricting producers of exported goods to provide post-sales service in the importing country.</p>

L	Subsidies	Financial contribution by a government or government body to an industry or company, such as direct or potential transfer of funds (e.g. grants, loans, equity infusions), payments to a funding mechanism and income or price support.
M	Government procurement restrictions	Measures controlling the purchase of goods by government agencies, generally by preferring national providers.
N	Intellectual property	Measures related to intellectual property rights in trade: intellectual property legislation covers patents, trademarks, industrial designs, lay-out designs of integrated circuits, copyright, geographical indications and trade secrets.
O	Rules of origin and related certificate of origin	Rules of origin set out the criteria which determine the country of origin of a product. They are applied by governments of importing countries and are needed to assess the eligibility of a product for preferential treatment within the framework of a bilateral or regional free trade agreement. Rules of origin are important in implementing such trade policy instruments as preferential market access, anti-dumping and countervailing duties, origin marking, and safeguard measures.
PA1	Export inspection	Export inspection refers to the control over the quality or other characteristics of products for export. <i>Example: Exports of processed food products must be inspected for sanitary conditions.</i>
PA2	Certification required by the exporting country	Requirement by the exporting country to obtain sanitary, phytosanitary or other certification before the goods are exported. <i>Example: Exported live animals must carry individual health certificate.</i>
PA9	Other export technical measures	Other export technical measures (please specify)
PB1	Export prohibitions	Prohibitions of exports of certain products. <i>Example: Export of corn is prohibited because of shortage of supply to meet in domestic consumption requirements.</i>
PB2	Export quotas	Quotas that limit value or volume of exports. <i>Example: Export quota of beef is established to guarantee adequate supply in the domestic market.</i>
PB3	Licencing or permit to export	A requirement to obtain licence or permit by the government of the exporting country to export products. <i>Example: Export of diamond ores are subject to licensing by the Ministry.</i>
PB4	Export registration	A requirement to register products before being exported (for monitoring purposes). <i>Example: Pharmaceutical products need to be registered before being exported.</i>
PB9	Other export quantitative restrictions	Other export quantitative restrictions (please specify)
PC0	Export taxes and charges	Taxes collected on exported goods by the government of the exporting country: they can be set either on a specific or an ad valorem basis. <i>Example: Export duty on crude petroleum is levied for revenue purpose.</i>
PD0	Export price control measures	Measures implemented to control the prices of exported products. <i>Example: Different prices are applied for the same product depending on whether it is sold domestically or exported (Dual pricing schemes).</i>
PE0	Measures on re-export	Measures applied by the government of the exporting country on exported goods which have originally been imported from abroad. <i>Example: Re-export of wines and spirits back to producing country is prohibited: the practice is common in cross-border trade to avoid imposition of domestic excise tax in the producing country.</i>
PF0	Export subsidies	An export subsidy is a benefit conferred on a firm or industry by the government that is contingent on exports. Note: Export subsidy is different from domestic subsidy which is a benefit not directly linked to exports. <i>Example: Exports of beef, dairy product, fruit and vegetables are subsidized.</i>
PZ0	Other export related measures	Other export related measures (please specify)

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SECTOR

Management Consulting Services

SIZE

5-10 Employees



Expat Assist Uganda – Management Consulting Services

Expat Assist is the first company in Uganda specialising in relocation, immigration and business registration services that offers a wide range of assistance, in the form of customised packages.

We know the hurdles and challenges that people and organisations face when coming to Uganda, and use our own experiences in dealing with service providers and government agencies to ensure a smooth stay in Uganda for all relocating persons.

Experience in trading services and challenges faced

We basically offer services which are not easy to trade given that our target clients are expatriates who are coming in or leaving the country. However, our principal goal is efficiency so that we can work with global partners in the mobility sector.

We offer business registration services to both local and international persons that are establishing their companies in the country. However, local business persons operate without a formal registration more so a lot of women are involved in unskilled informal businesses due to little finances and education on the benefits of registering a formal business. This has been due to lack of good women networks and sensitisation information hence we face a challenge of limited market as local people are not actively engaged in business registration.

Improving the participation of women in the management consulting services sector

We believe that there is a huge knowledge and skills gap for women to join business coupled with low finances and illiteracy especially in the technology platforms. This can be bridged by putting in place policies, education, financial support and dealing with extreme gender cultures that undermine women's involvement in the formal sector to positively reflect on their improved lives.

Women can be competitive at all levels, fair representation in public procurement

Women today have the potential for a fair representation in the public procurement if only there are easy and flexible networks, associations and trade institutions that support women businesses with access to financial services, policies, skills and information, innovation and monitoring of product standards so that women can be competitive at all levels.

Impact of COVID-19 on business operations

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected our income, as we work in the mobility sector the travel bans and lockdowns left us home with no income generation at all until recently when the airport was opened. This meant that we had to retain our staff on a half salary for survival and we could not renew their social benefits such as insurance and social security which was devastating.

We have not received any support so far throughout the COVID period and we are on a natural recovery basis where we cannot even go for financial support from institutions to high interest rates yet the pandemic situation is still uncertain.

Women-led businesses need to be educated on how to sustain their businesses especially in trying times since they support the whole family; ICT inclusion as most businesses are going online; and education in dealing in a formal business which gives them leverage to networks, policies and skills.

Company support to gender equality

We promote gender equality through our employment system where 80% of our employees are young qualified females. We have a good human resource policy that favours women at the work place involving flexible hours for breast feeding mothers, caretakers and expectant mothers and after birth.

Margaret Nagguja

**Co-Founder /
Executive Director**

Mukusu Motors & Properties Ltd
Kampala, Uganda

SECTOR

Agricultural Machinery Solutions

SIZE

11-15 Employees



Mukusu Motors & Properties Limited – Agricultural Machinery Solutions

Mukusu Motors & Properties Limited offers automotive cars and agricultural machinery solutions through flexible financing options to increase the productivity and income of smallholder farmers in Uganda.

Experience in importing tractors and lease services

The list of farm machinery exempted from import and VAT tax is limited to tractor implements with specific HS codes. For instance, in 2016 we imported a boom sprayer mountable on a tractor to spray herbicides on crops, we had to pay full taxes on it because what appeared in the exempt list was a knapsack sprayer, and yet they both serve a similar purpose in crop production.

Uganda Revenue Authority's e-tax platform goes off, and renders the customs clearance of tractors to delay. We end up paying high storage fees for the tractors at the bonded warehouses. A lack of collateral to access trade finance services, such as letter of credit from our bankers, limits our capacity to import and offer good payment terms to our potential clients.

The exporter of tractors requires a 100% cash payment for tractors before the bill of lading is released, while buyers need flexible payment terms over a period of 24 months. I negotiated with Captain Tractors to extend some credit facility of 50% of the cost which they granted for only 90 days commencing on the date of bill of lading. This means 90 days credit period includes 30 days before we receive the tractors in Kampala.

Tractor spare parts are not exempted for taxes as for tractors. In 2018, we imported spare parts for mini-tractors worth \$2,500. The taxes we paid were 100% of the cost of the spare parts, and we had to incur storage cost of our consignment for 30 days it was kept at the airport. We couldn't use the parts earlier and lost tractor hiring business before we could fit the imported parts.

Farmers are skeptical to use tractors in post land preparation activities such as sowing, weeding, spraying and harvesting. On several occasions we conduct demonstrations to sensitize them about the multiple functions performed by tractors in crop production. The level of adoption is still low and lack resources to increase our sensitization campaigns. Smallholder farmers lack access to crop finance to afford use of tractors in a range of crop production activities. This forces us to rely on seasonal income.

Improving the participation of women in the agricultural machinery sector

Women's participation could be improved by setting up a fund which can subsidize the rate of interest for women who want to buy farm machinery using a hire purchase facility. For instance, John Deere is subsidizing the cost of interest by a minimum of 4% on farm machinery financed by Opportunity Bank.

A fund which allows women to buy modern farm tools at subsidized rate by at least 30% of the cost of machinery. Further, the government should waive import taxes on tractor parts.

Women participation in public procurement processes at the local and national level

To increase the participation of women-led companies in public procurement processes, a law should be passed to allow a certain percentage of public procurements to be awarded to women-led companies. Further, it is important to encourage local and international companies to bid in partnership with a woman-led company.

A further view is to set up a crowd-funding facility for women-led companies engaged in farm leasing activities to generate funds to buy tractor implements. This can enable smallholder farmers to adopt use of farm tools at low rates compared to the current lease fees.

Impact of COVID-19 on business operations

We had no sales and farmers couldn't pay for our tractor or hire services at the same rate as prior to the crisis due to COVID-19. Farmers want to pay shs 70,000 per acre to plough an acre of land instead of shs 100,000 they used to before. As a company we cannot break even at this low rate to plough the land. We are therefore looking for partners to work with that can subsidize the cost of acquiring tractor implements and the cost of hiring per acre by shs 30,000 per farmer.

Company support to gender equality

Our company skills both women and men to operate, repair and maintain farm machinery in partnership with Busitema University.

We established a collective hiring centre in close proximity to farmers in Bugiri farmers, and stocked it with a range of modern farm tools which offer better farming practices. Farmers (men and women) hire these tractors with a skilled operator by only paying user fees per acre and per each specific farm activity.

Faith Akau

Vision Bearer / Managing Director

Brilliant Minds Innovation Limited
Kampala, Uganda

SECTOR

Computer And Related Services

SIZE

5-10 Employees



Brilliant Minds Innovation Limited – Computer and Related Services

Brilliant Minds Innovations Limited is a company that leverages technology to provide simplified access to law across several jurisdictions. The company has developed a platform, in the form of a mobile application that provides a centralized point of access for cases, laws, templates and procedures.

Technology is a budding sphere in the Ugandan legal sector. Digitization of the industry is still low despite many possibilities that technology can bring to the sector. As such, while potential users of the Brilliant Minds Product recognize the value that it adds to their professional lives, there is a general sentiment and perception that the product poses dangers to long standing jobs.

Availability of Information and Intellectual Property Challenges

Information on cases, laws, templates and procedures had to be obtained from both online sources and public offices. A key challenge in sourcing some of the information is that it is not readily available. A number of judges do not publish their decisions. Further to this, not all legislation passed by parliament is easily accessible either from the Uganda Law Reform Commission or the Parliamentary Library.

Brilliant Minds being a software platform is only considered to be eligible for Copy Right protection under the Ugandan Intellectual Property regime. Attempts to patent the product were futile because the law as it currently stands cannot provide patent protection to software.

Encouraging women participation in technology

Brilliant Minds workforce is predominantly female. Two of the co-founders are female. The key data entrants employed by Brilliant Minds are also female. This is no coincidence as it demonstrates a leaning towards encouraging women participation in technology.

Impact of COVID-19 on Brilliant Minds Operations

The COVID-19 pandemic initially affected the preliminary launch of the product to the market. Because some of the target users were law students, closure of schools and universities meant that a key section of the Brilliant Minds market was shut down. Nonetheless, with the reopening of these institutions, greater opportunities are available as a post COVID-19 era encourages centralization of information in a convenient, easy to use and accessible way, which is what Brilliant Minds aims to achieve.

Programme/Initiatives In Place to Support Gender Equality

Brilliant Minds runs a personal development program aimed at instilling discipline, leadership and financial independence of its employees. The root of the program is a book reading and sharing subscription that facilitates access to knowledge from global success mentors, visionaries and business leaders. This initiative contributes to women empowerment by bridging the knowledge gap and leveling the playing field in the business and leadership arena.

Jacquiline Pimer

Co-Founder / Partner

Protrade Africa Consulting
Kampala, Uganda

SECTOR

Computer And Related Services

SIZE

5-10 Employees



Protrade Africa Consulting – Management Consulting Services

Protrade Africa is focusing on trade policy, integration and investment matters for the African continent. It is a young firm (since 2019) whose partners are women and work with a network of experts across the continent.

Firm experience and challenges faced

Being new in the field of trade, one of our biggest challenges is the limited firm experience. We therefore are in competition with giant firms who have many years of experiences and can therefore better qualify for projects that require a considerable number of years for firm experiences. We have however participated as part of consortium and have found interest in partnerships from some of these firms e.g., in South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and we look forward to more partnerships to grow our own firm experiences. So far, it has been through our networks and our team experiences that we have managed to qualify for assignments and hope to continue to overcome this challenge.

Another major problem the firm has is the high and varying taxation rates and forex rates across the region. These variations in tax rates and currency exchange costs means that the cost of working with experts not based in Uganda is higher because the tax deductions for non-foreigners is much higher and so are the transfer costs.

Women must be alert to opportunities

To encourage more women in trade governance and consultancy, first, women must be alert to the opportunities within the sector, and make effort to participate in various activities ranging from capacity building, training, sensitization to research, policy discussions and consulting.

In Uganda Public Procurement does not favor women at all, we therefore think that special consideration should be given to encourage women-owned companies to qualify for these opportunities, they have to be properly advertised and eliminate the lack of transparency in awarding contracts by the government at the local and national level.

Impact of COVID-19 on business operations

The pandemic required a very big adjustment for our business, we were at the start only several months into set up and were doing business development when the borders and lockdown was imposed in Uganda and most other countries which meant that projects in the pipelines stalled while some were canceled. We experienced many delays and attempted to work virtually and from home to implement some as well as cutting costs of rent. No government support to business has been available.

Gender push is core of business outfit

At the core of our business outfit is the gender push, all our partners are female and we pay attention to work with more female experts. We have also benefited from projects such as the ITC Trade and Gender survey that recognized the importance of a female led team. Through this assignment we have had the privilege to learn more and also share knowledge to survey respondents on various aspects such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, the various financing opportunities and other business advise we were able to share with fellow female entrepreneurs.

Moreover, our team is a part of the women in trade group, have mentored and continue to mentor young female professionals to ensure they can thrive in whatever specialization they choose to take.

#SheTrades

Connecting three million women to market by 2021

Women's economic empowerment is not a matter for government policy, the private sector, or social change alone. All have critical roles to play. This is why the International Trade Centre (ITC) launched the SheTrades Initiative, which seeks to connect three million women entrepreneurs to market by 2021.

For more information about SheTrades, please visit www.shetrades.com.



CBI
Ministry of Foreign Affairs