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Overview: Trade Policy and Gender-based Analysis Plus

The Government of Canada has made advancing gender equality a top priority. To this end, the government has mandated that Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) be undertaken on all policies and proposals. In Budget 2018, the government committed that more free trade agreements (FTAs) would be subject to GBA+.

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What is GBA+?

GBA+ is an analytical process that policymakers use to examine the potential impacts (both intended and unintended) and opportunities of a policy, plan, program or other initiative on diverse groups of people, taking

into account gender and other identity factors. The plus (+) indicates that gender-based analysis goes beyond considerations of sex and gender to include a range of intersectional identity characteristics, such as:

- Indigenous heritage
- age
- education
- language
- religion
- culture
- ethnicity
- geography (urban, rural, remote, Northern)
- socio-economic status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- mental or physical disability

GBA+ challenges assumptions and puts the lived experiences of diverse peoples at the forefront of a particular issue. GBA+ prompts officials to consider the full impact of government initiatives and to identify potential challenges at an early stage so that they can be addressed in policy design and implementation.

To conduct a GBA+, here are the key steps and considerations that should be addressed:

- Integrate GBA+ throughout the life cycle of the initiative.
- Identify and look broadly and deeply at key issues from an economic, social and cultural point of view.
- Challenge assumptions on whether there are any gender or diversity/inclusivity implications, and whether various groups are affected differently.

- Conduct research and consult with experts and, when possible, affected populations.
- Develop options and recommendations.
- Monitor and evaluate the initiative for its effects over time.
- Document findings and use GBA+ when considering how to communicate the initiative.

To learn more about GBA+, Women and Gender Equality Canada provides a [free online course](#) and [several short videos](#).

GBA+ in trade agreements

When GBA+ is applied to trade agreements, its results can help inform negotiators and policymakers of the best ways to address gender and inclusivity considerations. This can help in the identification of potential negative effects and opportunities created through the application of an FTA. The end goal is to mitigate potentially negative impacts and to ensure that all Canadians benefit from trade.

Essentially, GBA+ helps develop more gender- and inclusivity-responsive trade policies and related measures.

For example, in conducting a GBA+ of free trade agreements, it was revealed that women, Indigenous peoples, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been traditionally under-represented in international trade. This assessment showed that while there are many SMEs owned by women and Indigenous peoples in Canada, they face unique barriers to accessing export opportunities and do not benefit from free trade agreements as much as they otherwise could.

Some potential solutions to help address this problem could include the:

- inclusion of dedicated Trade and Gender, Trade and Indigenous Peoples, and SME Chapters that remove the barriers and enhance opportunities these groups face and that seek to mitigate or enhance them through co-operation activities; and
- development of targeted provisions in other chapters of an FTA to address issue-specific barriers and opportunities experienced by under-represented groups in trade.

A critical factor in conducting a quality GBA+ is collecting and assessing gender disaggregated data. This data provides the evidence base for understanding the effects of policies, including trade policies, on population groups. For Canada, data comes from Statistics Canada's Census, Labour Force Survey and other surveys such as Women in Canada, as well as through stakeholder consultations. Global Affairs Canada's Office of the Chief Economist uses this data for economic modeling that help highlight the effects of FTAs on gender and other sub-groups in the population.

GBA+ recognizes the diversity and multiplicity of identity factors and how diverse groups of Canadians may be impacted by government initiatives. GBA+ puts people at the heart of policy development and helps deliver on innovation as it encourages officials to think outside of the box. GBA+ will help ensure that Canada's FTAs are more gender responsive and inclusive so all members of Canadian society can benefit more from free trade and continued economic growth.

GBA+ will also help Canada deliver on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality.

Canada's Gender Equality Laws

Canada has many domestic laws, policies and programs already in place to support gender equality and economic empowerment for traditionally under-represented groups. These federal, provincial and territorial laws, policies and programs will serve to mitigate any potential negative effects of free trade agreements.

For more information visit [Federal gender equality laws](#).

Canada's internal system to integrate GBA+ into trade policy and negotiations

In order for GBA+ to be fully integrated into the policies and practices of an organization, it is necessary to build a support structure within the organization, as well as demonstrate its value and build capacity among the staff.

The Trade Policy and Negotiations Branch of Global Affairs Canada created an ecosystem favorable to the systematic application and implementation of GBA+ by:

- **appointing a GBA+ Champion at the Senior Management level to:**
 - promote the importance of GBA+ in day-to-day work in the branch, including mainstreaming of GBA+ into branch work;
 - promote the Trade Branch [Gender Pledge](#) on International Women's Day and everyday;
 - support capacity building by promoting GBA+ training and making GBA+ online training mandatory for all staff; and
 - promote requirements to integrate GBA+ considerations into all consultations, policy development, implementation, and evaluation, including trade policy and negotiations.
- **appointing a Gender Focal Point at the senior official level to:**

- support GBA+ Branch Champion;
 - develop and implement an annual GBA+ Action Plan which would identify and address gaps, and enhance and leverage opportunities further advance and strengthen GBA+ application to trade policy and negotiations;
 - support development of a GBA+ and Trade Policy training and provide advice, guidance, coaching to employees, including customized guidance for their specific area of trade policy expertise;
 - develop a comprehensive and iterative process to apply GBA+ thinking to trade agreements on an ex ante and ex poste basis, and keep the ex ante analysis evergreen so that it can influence ongoing trade negotiations;
 - look for opportunities to advance women's economic empowerment and gender equality through trade policy; and,
 - lead GBA Branch Advisor Network.
- **establishing a Trade Branch GBA+ Advisors Network**, which is a collaborative network of individuals throughout the Branch who are the designated GBA+ experts within their division. Their role is to ensure that GBA+ knowledge and skills are shared in their divisions. The Network also serves as a forum to share challenges, best practices and lessons learned.

The Trade Policy and Negotiations Branch has been able to address internal barriers by offering several capacity building workshops, training, and tools to its employees. Examples include:

- Developing customized trade policy focused GBA+ training and case studies;
- Developing a GBA+ trade data and resource bank and offering training on how to navigate the gender and diversity data portals at Statistics

Canada;

- Establishing a new internal Trade and GBA+ Wiki site with a range of new resources including a guidance questionnaire for conducting GBA+ for trade negotiations and trade agreements;
- Conducting extensive outreach across the branch and to other government departments and agencies that support trade negotiations; and,
- Tracking and enforcing mandatory online GBA+ training.

With this training and resources in place, employees were able to effectively integrate GBA+ into their everyday work, including producing the initial GBA+ on the ongoing Canada-Mercosur trade negotiations.

GBA+ for Canada-Mercosur FTA negotiations

Canada conducted a comprehensive chapter-by-chapter GBA+ of its ongoing FTA negotiations with Mercosur and released the summary of the initial GBA+ for stakeholder review and comments in August 2019.

The application of GBA+ to the Canada-Mercosur FTA negotiations has realized important benefits:

- it has provided officials with a richer understanding of the effects and opportunities of FTAs and specific trade policy provisions on the Canadian population
- it has helped officials to develop new and innovative gender-responsive and other provisions (e.g. SMEs), and
- it has effectively informed Canada's FTA negotiation strategy while deepening the knowledge and skills of officials regarding gender-related considerations.

The GBA+ has also served to highlight some data and knowledge gaps that need to be addressed going forward in order to do an even better job of conducting GBA+ on FTA chapters.

GBA+ of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement

Following the conclusion of Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) negotiations, the Government of Canada undertook a GBA+ process to evaluate the final outcome and its potential effects and opportunities for people in Canada. Overall, the CUSMA GBA+ found that Canada was successful in including a number of innovative gender responsive and inclusive provisions that will advance Canada's goals of benefiting women, SMEs, Indigenous peoples and other diverse populations in Canada. These provisions can be found across several areas, including in the cross-border trade in services, labour, and environment chapters of CUSMA. The GBA+ also found that that the Agreement provides opportunities for the further integration of GBA+ perspectives through the work of committees and by leveraging other cooperation provisions set out in the Agreement.

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