



Trade and Gender Volume 1: Unfolding the Links

Module 4

Trade and Gender Linkages: An Analysis of COMESA

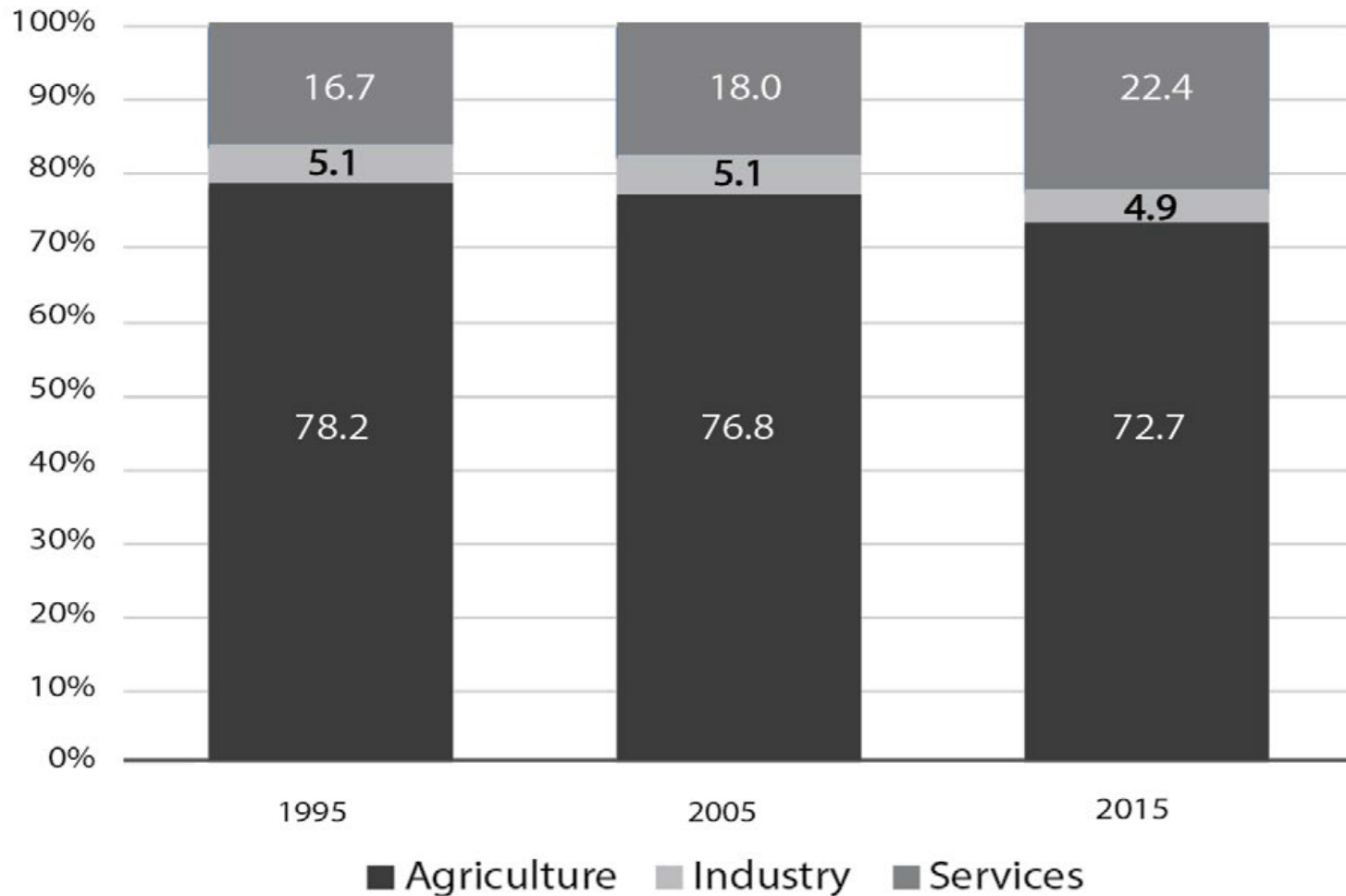


The COMESA Region: Overview

- 19 member countries at different levels of socioeconomic development
- Largest Free Trade Area in Africa
- Purpose: To strengthen regional development among its members through enhanced cross-border trade and investment
- Gender inequalities in key indicators such as gross national income (GNI), labour force participation, and the numbers of education years received by male and female are evident.



Composition of the Female Workforce in COMESA





Agriculture

- Agriculture is the main source of employment for the region's labour force.
- Feminization of agriculture
- Gender wage gap
- Vulnerability of employment for women
- Burden of domestic care work, limited educational attainment, gender inequality in control over land, and limited access to resources are main factors holding back rural women



COMESA strategy for agriculture

- Geared towards transforming the traditional/subsistence agriculture sector with forward and backward linkages to other sectors
- Staple food → food security through self-sufficiency at the regional level
- How to reach these goals?
 - Increased productivity → mechanization, commercial inputs, extension services, agronomic research, credit infrastructure
 - Freer flows of intra-COMESA agricultural trade



Which kind of policy interventions is needed?

- Child-care centres
- Enforcement of women's land rights
- Tools & equipment to reduce farm labour
- Extension services
- Agricultural knowledge
- Women's associations
- Raising education
- Global value chains and public procurement



Trade and Gender in the manufacturing sector

- Export oriented policies and export processing zones
- The impact of trade liberalization on women in COMESA



Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

COMESA EPZs:

- EPZs and female employment → Feminization and defeminization of labour
- EPZs and women's working conditions: Concerns about working conditions in EPZs are:
 - Weak enforcement of labour laws
 - Interdiction of collective bargaining and freedom of association
 - Overtime → increases women's work burden
 - High rates of turnover → low quality of employment
 - Precarious and short-term jobs



The impact of trade liberalization on women in COMESA

- COMESA trade agreements:
 - The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU
 - Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA) with the East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC)



The gender impact assessment of EPA and TFTA

- To assess the effect of trade liberalization on female employment outcomes, we analysed how tariff changes, differentiated by the partner countries, have impacted women in a sample of COMESA countries
- Findings:
 - The negative correlation of trade liberalization with the female employment as opposed to male in blue-collar jobs
 - Women in white-collar jobs benefit more than men from trade liberalization



Women in Services in COMESA region

Challenges for women's participation in the services sector:

- Employment concentrated in more traditional, non-tradable and low productivity jobs
- Women have limited time to improve their education
- Legal obstacles
- Social norms ≠ National laws



Services in COMESA

- The COMESA treaty recognizes removal of obstacles for the free movement of services
- The Committee on Trade and Services
- At the 5th meeting of the Committee (2013), four priority sectors are stated as transport, ICT, tourism and finance



Implications of services liberalization and gender outcomes

- Service sector is critical to improving competitiveness of countries, regions and industries
- Predominant source of jobs for women
- Plays a key role to increase member's integration into the regional and global market
- Potential gains from more open services trade > Gains from liberalization of goods
- Sectors such as tourism, finance, and IT are necessary for enhancing agriculture and other sectors in the economy