



SheTrades

Name: SheTrades

Organization: International Trade Center (ITC)

Year launched: 2015

Countries: Global

Users: 15,000 women entrepreneurs

The International Trade Center's mission is to work towards creating trade impact for good. However, half of the population in 2018 had a much more difficult time winning the business bids and getting the jobs that created this trade impact. ITC's Women and Trade program was launched to help companies and governments increase the share of products procured from this half of the population – women entrepreneurs.

Corporations increasingly caught the vision for prioritizing women-led bids and began to approach ITC for help in sourcing products from women-owned companies. While some large companies had already begun to stack supply chains with small female-led businesses, many did not know how to develop inclusive trade programs that targeted these businesses. In 2015, ITC's Women and Trade held a stakeholders' consultation to explore whether an initiative could be launched that brought together a network of women entrepreneurs with trade and investment support organizations, governments, and the private sector. The goal was to jointly create an ecosystem of solutions to increase the participation of women in trade.

The initiative started as a research paper, but quickly transitioned into the beginning of a movement for women's economic empowerment. Simultaneously, ITC was developing its Innovation Lab, a flexible, volunteer-based group of ITC staff who were given office space, time, and resources to develop innovative ideas. ITC management was very supportive of nurturing such a culture and allowing staff to think outside the box. "It was quite an organic process in how it started," explains Anna Mori, SheTrades Program Officer. At the time, the small team within the Women and Trade program, led by Vanessa Erogbogbo, did not yet know what a large-scale initiative they were about to launch, but they did agree that new ways of working were essential to making real impact on beneficiaries in emerging markets. "We wanted to go beyond traditional support and services," Anna acknowledged. As a way to branch out and try a new product, Anna and the team reached out to contacts at Google Brazil to create a prototype of an application that would enable women business owners to interact with each other and with corporations to facilitate selling their products to markets.

ITC then launched a one-week global application for IT developers to crowdsource the best ideas to take the initiative to the next level. ITC received 200 applications, and announced the winner, a Kenyan IT firm.

The development phase started with a tiny budget – only \$3,000 – but soon picked up both in budget and in scope. The initiative was also given a name during this phase in a staff meeting and

SheTrades was official. It took a while for SheTrades to develop the proper platform and find the right IT supplier, but eventually the platform took shape.

At the time of this case, SheTrades' online platform and mobile application provided women with e-training, connected them to potential supply chain links, and shared information about upcoming training and events. Streamlining women's experience with the app was an important task for



A business owner connects to the SheTrades platform

SheTrades, making it as user friendly as possible so that it was a real asset to business owners. The application was also an important data gathering tool for ITC, making it easy to track the women they are trying to reach and better understand their needs.

The platform had three types of registered users: sellers (women entrepreneurs and business owners), buyers (companies), and verifiers (contacts who vouch for the buyers and sellers' legitimacy).

SheTrades' online platform was just one facet of the initiative. The key to the program's success, explained Anna, was the vision: "We tried to put together an ecosystem of integrated solutions for women entrepreneurs." However, an ecosystem was inherently

more difficult to measure than a typical development project, and this new approach required a lot of time, testing, and explanation before all donors saw the value in the initiative. Similarly, even though ITC management had been extremely supportive of the initiative from the early days, it took time for all staff to catch on to this ecosystem vision.

SheTrades provided a platform for stakeholders to work together across this ecosystem. In terms of global support, SheTrades worked to create an enabling ecosystem for women to thrive by promoting equitable policies (e.g. working towards the creation of an eventual standard for the International Organization for Standardization on the definition of a Women Business Enterprise; Trade Impact Group work plan and implementation of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment; and the EQUALS Global Partnership on Bridging the Gender-Digital Divide). ITC also provided online training and mentoring for women entrepreneurs. SheTrades also worked to build the capacity of local institutions, including trade promotion organizations, and incorporated government priorities to ensure long term sustainability of ITC's support.

As of summer 2018, SheTrades was present in 25 countries, including a regional hub in Dubai that supported women in the Middle East and North Africa. Several countries have adapted SheTrades to their local context through the creation of national chapters.

SheTrades used integrated solutions to address the complex and wide-ranging challenges that women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses face to trade. SheTrades created a framework for interventions which allowed for collaboration with partners who provide their expertise to achieve greater impact and scale. Some of the initiative's core private sector partners included eBay, Maersk, UPS, and Barclays Bank.

At SheTrades' annual event in June 2018, Anna observed that women entrepreneurs were beginning to take a more active approach to building their own business ecosystems. By mid-2018, SheTrades was on track to reach its ambitious three million mark and continually improving the elements of their service delivery. The online platform is set to receive a makeover by the end of 2018, facilitating potential business deals directly on the platform by enabling companies to post floating tenders on the platform and collect bids from women entrepreneurs.

Key success factors: diverse partners engaged to support the initiative; direct alignment to mandate; supportive organizational structure that provided resources for project

Key challenge: effectively measuring impact

Summary	Tech		Scale	Partners	Impact	Success Factors	
Ecosystem that connects women entrepreneurs to market	MID TECH	Tech used: Online platform & app	SCALED	Private sector, government	SOCIAL INTERNAL	Initiative: Diverse partners, linked to mandate	Organizational: Dedicated staff time and resources

