

Trade Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs:



Findings From World Business Café Workshops: Connecting Women for Export Promotion

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About the CUTIS Project

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Executive Summary



World Business Café workshops were delivered in several regions across Ukraine and in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, from October 2017 to May 2018. In total, 323 participants (298 women and 25 men) took part in the 12 workshops, titled **Connecting Women for Export Promotion** (referred to as World Business Cafés hereafter). Participants were largely women entrepreneurs, but also included staff members from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international projects, government institutions, and regional chambers of commerce.

Discussions held during World Business Café workshops point to a number of challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.¹ The challenges reported fall into two main categories: export-related and gender-related. Participants were also asked about the types of assistance they would like to receive to help them overcome those challenges.

The top export-related challenges mentioned by workshop participants were a lack of information about accessing foreign markets, including information on regulatory requirements and standards, and a lack of relevant skills that enable exporting, such as negotiation skills and foreign-language skills. Other challenges reported by participants included a lack of trade-related tools, a lack of business support services to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) become export-ready; difficulty finding partners in foreign markets; difficulty accessing capital; and a lack of knowledge about business culture in other countries.

To address those challenges, participants would like to receive targeted training on topics such as how to access foreign markets and how to develop an export strategy. They also asked for more online resources to support exporting, including step-by-step guides and information on the regulations and standards of importing countries.

The top gender-related challenges limiting the success of women entrepreneurs noted by participants were gender stereotypes in Ukrainian society, both in general and in business culture specifically. Another major challenge was the double burden: women's typical dual responsibility for home and business.

To overcome these challenges, participants called for more spaces that allow for knowledge transfer among women exporters, and for opportunities to exchange successes and lessons learned. National and regional platforms that facilitate networking among women entrepreneurs, including those who are exporting, would be welcomed.

The following targeted recommendations emerge from the findings:

- For donor agencies: Offer technical and leadership training for women entrepreneurs.²
- For the Export Promotion Office: Help women entrepreneurs become export-ready.

¹ While not all World Business Café participants were women entrepreneurs, they did form the majority of participants. Consequently, the terms “women entrepreneurs” and “participants” are used interchangeably throughout this report.

² CUTIS project and its partners have delivered training to help SMEs develop export strategies, benefiting both women and men interested in exporting to Canada. The project's export resources are available online: <https://cutisproject.org/en/guides/>

- For the Export Promotion Office: Create a positive image of women exporters.
- For business associations: Support networking for and among women entrepreneurs.
- For the Ministry of Social Policy: Undertake public education to reduce women's double burden.
- For the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: Improve access to trade promotion activities for women.

Introduction



The Canada–Ukraine Trade and Investment Support (CUTIS) project co-delivered 12 World Business Café workshops titled **Connecting Women for Export Promotion** in collaboration with regional chambers of commerce and with the participation of Ukraine's Export Promotion Office (EPO). Nearly 300 businesswomen attended in total.

The workshops aimed to define the challenges and the needs of women entrepreneurs that relate to exporting. The idea was to collect baseline information that would be helpful for stakeholders seeking to enhance business support services for women entrepreneurs in future. These workshops targeted women business owners or top managers of businesses that are currently exporting, export-ready but not exporting, and not export-ready but interested in exporting.

During these events, participants were asked to discuss the following questions:

1. Which export challenges have you experienced?
2. What types of assistance do you need to overcome these challenges, and how should that assistance be delivered?
3. Which gender-related challenges have you experienced?
4. Which gender-related assistance do you need to overcome these challenges, and how should that assistance be delivered?

An overview and the detailed results of these conversations are outlined below.

Methodology



The World Business Cafés were set up to emulate a typical café. The format was informal and the setting—round tables covered with paper tablecloths, coffee pots on each table—was intended to promote discussion. Four to five participants were seated at each table and encouraged to take part in a collaborative conversation around the three questions listed above. As participants reflected on the questions, they wrote down key thoughts and ideas, sketching them out on the tablecloths.

After 20 to 30 minutes, participants were asked to change tables and to bring the ideas from their previous table to a new group. Hosts remained at each table to share the insights of the previous

discussion with new arrivals. As participants rotated between tables during the course of a workshop, individual conversations built off one another, and ideas were allowed to cross-pollinate. In doing so, the collective intelligence, focus, and experiences of participants were brought to bear on the issues. After four rounds of table discussions (lasting approximately two hours), participants regrouped in a plenary format and shared actionable ideas and key recommendations.

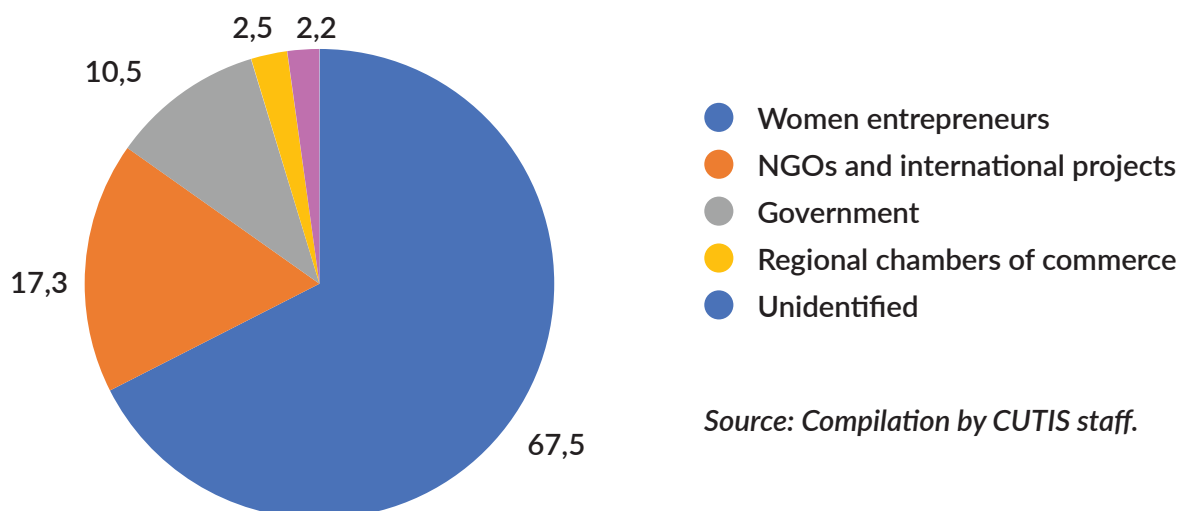


Participants

A significant number of participants (323) took part in the World Business Cafés over the course of eight months. About two-thirds (67.5 per cent) were women entrepreneurs from many different industries, including apparel, footwear, jewelry, handicrafts, confectionery, and professional services. The next largest group (17.3 per cent) were representatives of NGOs (including ones that support women or businesses, as well as international projects). Officials of government institutions with business support programs or services made up 10.5 per cent of participants. A small share of participants (2.5 per cent) were representatives of regional chambers of commerce.

Chart 1

Share of World Business Café Participants by Type (per cent)



Source: Compilation by CUTIS staff.

Summary Results

Export Challenges

Several common export challenges emerged from the World Business Café workshops across Ukraine:

First, women entrepreneurs most often cited a lack of foreign-market intelligence and a lack of information about the regulations of importing countries, including required standards and certifications for specific products. This challenge was raised in 11 of the 12 workshops. Even in regions where participants had some prior experience in exporting, they reported a lack of knowledge about foreign countries' trade-related legislation, tariffs, and/or rules regarding exporting products or services.



Second, participants repeatedly raised the fact that their businesses need to be staffed by employees with more appropriate skills, and in some cases they themselves lacked the skills needed to enter foreign markets, including foreign-language skills, negotiation skills, and cross-cultural skills. This challenge was voiced in nine workshops.

Third, participants in seven regions reported that the trade-related tools they are looking for, such as online trade databases and export guides, were lacking or not readily available. In addition, targeted business services to help Ukrainian SMEs get export-ready were also missing.

Participants in six regions reported that they lacked support to find foreign business partners or distributors in order to engage in international trade. They felt that this should be the responsibility of business associations, chambers of commerce, or the government.

Other issues noted by participants included trouble accessing capital, a lack of knowledge about foreign business culture, an being unaware of the export process, and a fear that it would be too bureaucratic or corrupt. Each of these challenges was reported in five workshops.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what types of assistance they needed to overcome these export-related challenges, and how that assistance should be delivered, workshop participants had diverse opinions.

The most frequent request by participants was for more targeted, export-related training for business owners and their employees (reported in 11 workshops). They mentioned needing the following skills and training to internationalize their business:

- foreign languages
- business negotiation
- marketing and promotion
- market intelligence, certifications, and standards
- cross-cultural communication and public speaking
- export strategy development
- business management

The second most common request was for trade-related tools and resources regarding exporting and foreign markets (reported in nine workshops). Step-by-step export guides, tool kits for businesses considering exporting, and lists of certifications by country were some of the resources participants mentioned they would like to see online.

In Odesa, for example, participants voiced the need for more information about taxation, certifications, and the rules of origin of foreign countries. They suggested that the Ukrainian government create an online help desk for businesses. Kyiv participants supported the idea of a one-stop platform to help their businesses become export-ready. This platform could include practical and technical information, such as information on transportation and packaging suppliers, analytics and trade data on foreign export markets, legal and regulatory issues related to export, financial issues, and analytical resources on the opportunities and risks related to exporting from Ukraine. This type of platform, they argued, would help women entrepreneurs come up with an effective export strategy.

In third place, participants said they need outside expertise before deciding whether to embark on exporting. Participants in six workshops felt that the support of advisors, such as trade experts on specific markets or trade lawyers, would be beneficial, and they acknowledged the difficulty of finding this type of advice.

Other requests made during the course of the 12 workshops were for support with participation in trade fairs or business-to-business meetings (B2Bs), reported in five workshops; and for industry associations or networks to share more information about existing or new trade opportunities open to Ukrainian businesses and offer support finding business partners abroad, reported in four workshops. With respect to attending trade fairs, some participants remarked that financial support specifically for women business owners should be made available.



Gender-Related Challenges



World Business Café participants discussed whether or not they had ever experienced gender-related challenges to exporting or running their business. The most commonly reported answer to this question (noted in seven workshops) was that traditional gender stereotypes can put women entrepreneurs at a disadvantage. They reported a common perception that women are unreliable or weak business partners, and therefore some company owners may avoid doing business with them. In

some regions, such as Dnipro, women entrepreneurs felt they have less influence than men over decision-making in general. The impacts of gender stereotypes in Ukraine not only influence the ability of women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, but also their ability to expand into new markets. A concrete example was raised at the Kyiv workshop: the persistence of “men’s meetings” that are closed to businesswomen. The implication was that women can be excluded from business partnerships or opportunities to trade, likely due to underlying gender stereotypes.

The second most common gender-related challenge, reported in six workshops, was the double burden that many working women face. The double burden refers to the fact that women frequently have reproductive and care responsibilities for their family in addition to the responsibility of earning an income (or, for World Business Café participants, running their own business). This results in women facing a relative time constraint compared to men business owners.

Other gender-related issues reported include a lack of business mentorship and role models for women.

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

The gender-related assistance that participants most often mentioned they would like to see in future was networking and experience-sharing opportunities (noted in eight workshops). Why did participants feel that networking spaces among businesswomen were so important? In Lutsk, participants said that it creates opportunities to hear and share examples of successful or failed export experiences. It may also have to do with the fact that women entrepreneurs based outside the Ukrainian capital are less likely to belong to business networks, whether formal or informal. Odesa participants reported that networking would be most helpful if it facilitated communication among women business owners living in different regions of Ukraine.

Women entrepreneurs in three regions felt that having examples of women who have made it (success stories) would be motivational vis-à-vis the decision to begin exporting. Along the same lines, participants suggested that mentorship programs, whether informal or formal, would be helpful to women considering exporting. This issue was raised in three workshops.

Detailed Results

Kyiv

Date: October 10, 2017

Number of participants: 37

Export Challenges

Kyiv workshop participants mentioned numerous challenges linked to exporting, including:

- lack of negotiation skills;
- inability to build a strong personal brand as a business owner;
- difficulty finding partners abroad;
- difficulty finding outsourced service providers;
- little information about consumer demand for specific products in foreign markets;
- lack of knowledge about the taxation systems of different countries;
- lack of knowledge about required certifications;
- lack of knowledge about the business culture in different countries (e.g., meeting and negotiation etiquette);
- lack of knowledge about market analysis and tools;
- lack of knowledge about trade-related databases and tools for engaging potential clients and distributors.



Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what types of assistance SMEs would like to see in future, participants in the Kyiv workshop proposed the following interventions:

- opportunities for experience-sharing among exporters, such as during trade fairs and digital business-to-business (B2B) meetings;
- business development training for employees, based on the experiences of real businesses;

- support setting up contacts with foreign business associations (both general and women-specific);
- step-by-step/how-to tool kits for businesses interested in exporting;
- consultation on entering external markets;
- country-specific trade information and import/certification requirements.

In addition, Kyiv participants supported the idea of a one-stop platform to help their businesses become export-ready. This platform could include practical and technical information, including information on transportation and packaging suppliers, analytics and trade data on foreign export markets, legal and regulatory issues related to export, financial issues, and analytical resources on the opportunities and risks related to exporting from Ukraine. The result would be an export plan for women business owners. Some participants remarked that this platform could also help women-owned businesses develop export strategies for different scenarios.

Gender-Related Challenges

The gender-specific challenges to exporting mentioned included:

- gender stereotypes that portray businesswomen as weak business partners;
- the fact that partnerships are sometimes secured during informal, closed-door “men’s meetings”;
- perception of lower levels of ambition among women entrepreneurs;
- fear that by accepting new investments, women business owners are “letting someone into their business”;
- absence of mentorship programs to assist women interested in developing their business;
- lack of an entrepreneurial culture among women in Ukraine and the lack of experience in running a business among women who try it.

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in Kyiv mentioned they would like to receive the following gender-related assistance:

- examples of the challenges, successes, and failures of women business owners;
- women-owned business contacts in other countries to enable approaching them about possible partnerships;
- support for women’s participation in trade shows and trade missions;
- support for women’s participation in international grant programs (with a focus on business/export development);
- networking and collaboration for female entrepreneurs from the same industry.

Kharkiv

Date: November 30, 2017

Number of participants: 36

Export Challenges

Kharkiv participants described various challenges linked to exporting. The primary challenge for women owned businesses and owned SMEs was a lack of information on how to access foreign markets and about the requirements of the importing country. Other challenges on this topic were:

- finding skilled employees to work with contacts in foreign markets (e.g., business staff lack adequate foreign language skills or don't know how to assess foreign market potential or financially manage the export process);
- a lack of information about foreign markets, which makes it very difficult to market goods abroad;
- access to capital in order to increase production capacity;
- limited production capacity and a fear of being unable to fulfill production amounts needed to access the Canadian market, in particular;
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine;
- lack of knowledge of other countries' trade-related legislation and tariffs;
- difficulty finding potential clients or buyers abroad;
- little knowledge about participation in trade fairs, shows, and missions.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what type of assistance SMEs require in order to start exporting, the most common answers given were more relevant information on foreign market access and marketing strategies to reach foreign buyers. Participants who were SME owners also indicated that government programs and export assistance should focus on business financing and deregulation. Professional legal advice for SMEs considering exporting was deemed equally valuable.



In addition, participants said they need support to establish contacts with potential distributors and buyers, and to organize their participation in trade missions and business tours. Women business

owners also mentioned the need for online Canadian market intelligence and targeted information on how to access this market: for example, a website containing a list of the certifications required to enter the Canadian market and information on how to establish contact with potential clients in Canada. They also expressed interest in receiving training on these topics.

Gender-Related Challenges

Two gender-specific challenges to exporting were also mentioned in Kharkiv: women's double burden and gender stereotyping. Women's double role as breadwinner and main caregiver at home (hereafter called the double burden) is often perceived to be the top challenge faced by women entrepreneurs to growing their business. At the same time, gender stereotypes limit women's success to some extent, according to participants. For example, women executives or business owners are often underestimated or perceived by men to be unreliable business partners

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

In order to address gender-specific challenges, participants mentioned that they are interested in being mentored or in the opportunity to exchange experiences with other women owners.

Zaporizhzhia



Date: December 20, 2017

Number of participants: 31

Export Challenges

The challenges related to exporting to Canada participants mentioned were:

- a poor understanding of the logistics related to, and the process of, exporting;
- lack of information about the Canadian market and the specific opportunities that exist for potential Ukrainian exporters;
- challenges finding skilled employees to work with contacts in foreign markets (e.g., business staff lack foreign language skills, cannot adequately assess foreign markets, and have little knowledge of financial management relating to export activities);
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine;
- no skills related to finding potential buyers, distributors, and clients.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what type of assistance SMEs required and which approaches would be preferable, the most common request was advice about the legal steps businesses need to take in order to start exporting. Also, participants mentioned that they would like to see more online resources on market access and marketing.



Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in Zaporizhzhia said they would like to hear success stories from women in other regions who started exporting to Canada. Mentoring and knowledge transfer with other women business owners was also suggested. This was due to the fact that very few participants in the region had prior exporting experience.

Lutsk

Date: February 12, 2018

Number of participants: 35

Export Challenges

Workshop participants in Lutsk mentioned the following key challenges restricting them from starting to export to Canada:

- lack of access to reliable and consolidated information regarding the Canadian market, standards, certification, and rules of origin;
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine;
- little knowledge about how to identify potential clients or buyers abroad, and about participation in trade fairs, shows, and missions;
- low level of language skills (English and/or French);
- employees that lack sufficient cross-cultural experience to support business owners in the negotiation and partnership development process;
- high cost of logistical services related to exporting to Canada.



Gender-Related Challenges

Some workshop participants in Lutsk said that the double burden they face as women and business owners affects their capacity to grow their businesses and to expand into foreign markets. A lack of child care at export training sessions that women with young children would otherwise be interested in attending was also mentioned.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants asked for the following export assistance services:

- networking opportunities, including opportunities to share and hear examples of successful (or unsuccessful) export experiences;
- online help desks with information about market demand for SME products, taxation, certification, rules of origin, and examples of how to meet the importing country's documentation requirements;
- support to establish industry associations that can help members get information about international trade opportunities;
- consulting services to help SMEs identify partners abroad;
- consulting services to adapt promotional materials for different countries;
- support promoting Ukrainian goods and products abroad, including support for SMEs to participate in trade shows;

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in Lutsk would like to receive the following gender-related assistance:

- a women entrepreneur mentorship program with the involvement of international business mentors and examples of successful women exporters;
- support creating women's self-help groups to help overcome gender-specific challenges, especially the double burden;
- child care for businesswomen with young children during training on exporting and business development;
- better promotion of Ukraine's paternity leave program.

Kherson

Date: March 15, 2018

Number of participants: 35

Export Challenges

Workshop participants in Kherson also reported a number of specific challenges related to exporting:

- insufficient foreign language skills (e.g., English and/or French) that limit their capacity to take part in business negotiations;
- lack of cross-cultural communication skills, which inhibits the confidence needed to build partnerships with potential buyers and/or distributors;
- insufficient practical export knowledge: in particular, participants reported that they did not know how to develop export strategies and that they had little or no knowledge about foreign markets;
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine that result in delivery delays, thereby increasing the final price of goods and services;
- Ukrainian standards and certifications that are still not fully harmonized with EU, the U.S., and Canada, so businesses face additional costs to get the appropriate certifications;
- limited access to high-quality consulting services that can advise companies on how to access foreign markets (e.g., legal services, how to develop export strategies, financial planning).

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what type of export assistance SMEs would like to see in future and how they suggest it be delivered, these were the most common answers:

- Tips on getting export-ready, examples of business development and exporting experiences, and reliable information about buyers;
- training on long-term business planning to ensure sustainability;
- training on cross-cultural communication and public speaking for business;
- a one-stop-shop with information regarding exporting (including to Canada) with a checklist;
- a better enabling environment, including further deregulation of and less bureaucratization in the business environment.



Gender-Related Challenges

Participants at the Kherson workshop also reported a number of gender-related challenges to trade:

- traditional gender stereotypes: Women business owners believe that gender plays a role in the operation and internationalization of their companies, including a perceived lack of respect from men business owners, bravado, chauvinism, cases of women not being taken seriously, businessmen who refuse to do business with a woman;
- double burden/time constraints: women business owners reported that they still bear the primary responsibility for reproductive and unpaid work, including domestic work, child care, and caring for the sick and elderly. Therefore, women are at a greater disadvantage than men in terms of being able to respond to new economic opportunities;
- women business owners reported that starting a business was not a positive choice for them, but rather a decision based on the lack of alternative employment opportunities. Small business owners tend to avoid taking what they perceive as risks, such as internationalizing their companies.

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants asked for the following gender-related assistance:

- training on market access (in key foreign countries) for women entrepreneurs;
- networking opportunities with other women business owners in the Kherson region as well as in other regions to share experiences.

Kramatorsk

Date: March 21, 2018

Number of participants: 21



The participants in the workshop in Kramatorsk were business owners who were internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict with Russia in Eastern Ukraine. They had very little experience in exporting; those that did had mainly exported to Russia before the conflict or to other former Soviet bloc countries. These facts heavily influenced the dynamics of the conversations during the event as well as its results.

Export Challenges

Participants reported lacking information about how to get export-ready, including export road maps, detailed export guides and/or checklists. They mostly cited issues with regard to business development, rather than with regard to exporting, such as lack of access to capital and of marketing expertise.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

When asked what type of assistance SMEs would like to see in future, participants said that to make the transformation from a relatively small SME to an exporting SME, several enabling factors are required: access to capital (to put toward new investments), training on business management and export requirements, and greater information about market access in key foreign markets.

Kropyvnytskyi

Date: March 2, 2018

Number of participants: 21

Export Challenges

Women business owners who participated in the Kropyvnytskyi workshop reported a number of challenges to exporting. They included:

- little or no experience in international trade;
- little or no knowledge of foreign markets;
- insufficient skills required to develop an export strategy.



Gender-Related Challenges

The Kropyvnytskyi workshop primarily focused on discussing gender-specific challenges and challenges as they relate to international trade. Their ideas fall into two groups:

- gender stereotypes (e.g., the perception of women as unreliable or weak business partners) and their effect on the self-esteem of women business owners;
- double burden: a significant amount of time is spent on unpaid domestic work that limits women's capacity to focus on growing their businesses.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

The export assistance services participants reported that they would like to see include:

- networking opportunities with other women business owners;
- training on export strategy development, certification requirements, and export logistics;
- women's leadership training, including a mentorship program;
- easy-to-access information regarding foreign markets and about getting export-ready (e.g., export guides);
- legal advice regarding international trade opportunities;
- advice and support for exporters from Ukraine's State Fiscal Service;
- support participating in trade shows and missions;
- language and cross-cultural communication courses.

Khmelnyskiy

Date: March 27, 2018

Number of participants: 25

It should be noted that workshop participants in this region have very little export experience, and those who did had mainly exported to other former Soviet bloc countries. This influenced the dynamics of the conversations during the event as well as its results.

Export Challenges



- finding potential clients or buyers abroad;
- little knowledge of how to participate in trade fairs and missions.

Participants reported the following key challenges to exporting to Canada:

- access to affordable capital in order to grow their businesses;
- access to reliable and consolidated information regarding the Canadian market, standards, certification, and rules of origin;
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine;

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Khmelnyskiy participants expressed interest in the following export assistance services:

- support with certification of their goods and products;
- market research training, including information on the appropriate tools;
- support attending trade missions and shows;
- assistance promoting Ukrainian goods and services;
- support finding business partners, buyers, and distributors;
- online resources about getting export-ready;
- training on developing an export strategy;
- training on efficient logistics related to export.

Ivano-Frankivsk

Date: April 4, 2018

Number of participants: 18

Export Challenges

Related to export development, the following challenges were mentioned:

- lack of access to financing, insufficient production capacity, and lack of market access know-how;
- lack of knowledge about certification schemes and requirements;
- lack of consolidated information about the legal aspects of international trade;
- lack of skilled employees with cross-cultural experience and knowledge of market research;
- lack of exporting experience or examples of successful export experiences;
- an aversion to entering the Canadian market due to the [perceived] logistical difficulties involved in the long-distance transportation of products.



Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in Ivano-Frankivsk mentioned that they would like to see the following export assistance services in future:

- training about certification schemes and requirements;

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- expert advice regarding logistics around exporting and legal issues, in online formats (e.g., expert webinars or e-consultations and better Q&A sections on export promotion websites);
- creation of regional and/or industry-focused associations of female business owners in international trade (in order to share information about overseas partners and service providers, market opportunities, etc.).

Gender-Related Challenges

The participants at the Ivano-Frankivsk workshop reported that women owned companies often face the same challenges and challenges to exporting as do men-owned companies. However, they noted that there are few women business owners who can act as role models for successfully engaging foreign markets.

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in this region had little to say about gender-specific assistance in terms of helping their business export. However, they did mention that training for women on foreign market access would be beneficial.

Vinnytsya

Date: April 10, 2018

Number of participants: 25



Export Challenges

Participants in Vinnytsya reported that they are most concerned about the difficulties associated with establishing an export-ready business. These include:

- lack of access to affordable business capital in order to grow their businesses;
- little reliable and consolidated information regarding the Canadian market, technical standards, certification, and rules of origin;
- lack of advice regarding how to become export-ready (step-by-step export guides);
- difficulty finding potential foreign clients or buyers;
- lack of support with participation in trade fairs, shows, and missions;

- weak language skills (English and/or French) and lack of cross-cultural communication skills.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in Vinnytsya mentioned the following export assistance services they would like to see in future:

- expert advice on export-related logistics and legal issues, in online formats (e.g., expert webinars, e-consultations, and better Q&A sections on relevant websites);
- support with participation in trade missions and shows;
- more assistance with promoting goods and services;
- support finding business partners, buyers, and distributors;
- online resources on getting export-ready, including export guides for SMEs and examples of required documentation.

Gender-Related Challenges

During the conversations in Vinnytsya it became apparent that women-owned SMEs experience the above challenges to a greater extent than men. They see these challenges compounded by the double burden and by low self-esteem due to gender stereotypes and a culture of nepotism among men business owners.

Odesa



Date: April 23, 2018

Number of participants: 30

Export Challenges

Participants in Odesa reported a number of export challenges to women-owned/led firms, including:

- the high costs of developing new markets;
- difficulty finding reliable international partners;
- complicated, unclear, or bureaucratized and often-corrupt regulatory processes in Ukraine;
- lack of information about technical standards and the certification of goods and products;
- the high costs of export-related logistics (e.g., transportation and insurance of goods) due to the significant distance between Ukraine and Canada.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Women participants in Odesa reported interest in the following export assistance services:

- training on rules related to standards and certification procedures;
- online help desks with information about market demand, taxation, certification, rules of origin, and examples of export-related documentation.

Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants



Although women entrepreneurs in Odesa did not discuss gender-related challenges to exporting in detail, two suggestions were made with regard to how women could be empowered in business:

- launch initiatives addressing the low participation of women in the tech industry and in STEM fields (e.g., scholarships targeting women and improved access to technology for women);
- create more networking opportunities for women business owners across different regions.

Dnipro

Date: May 29, 2018

Number of participants: 27

Export Challenges

Workshop participants in Dnipro reported several export-specific challenges, including access to information about foreign markets and on export requirements. The participants noted that it is challenging to find comprehensive information regarding technical standards and required certifications for their goods and products. They also remarked that the significant geographic distance between Ukraine and Canada might be a challenge vis-à-vis starting to export.

Export Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants expressed interest in the following export assistance services:

- access to consolidated information regarding exporting, including export-related logistics, market research (analytics), and legal and regulatory issues;

- advice on developing an export strategy;
- training on technical standards and certification;
- training in cross-cultural communication, negotiation, and partnership development.

Gender-Related Challenges

In the discussion about gender-based challenges to trade, participants mentioned that they feel somewhat limited by the burden of having primary responsibility for children and the household. In some cases, they also feel they have less influence than men over decision-making. These realities—rooted in traditional gender stereotypes in Ukraine—not only influence the ability of women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, but also their ability to expand into new markets.



Gender-Related Assistance Desired by Participants

Participants in this region asked for more networking and experience-sharing opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended for the various stakeholders engaged in helping to support women entrepreneurs in Ukraine. While the intended audience for the recommendation is cited in parentheses, any institution promoting trade development, such as a state or local government, could act on these recommendations as well.

Offer Technical and Leadership Training for Women Entrepreneurs (Donor Agencies)

1. Offer technical training to women entrepreneurs on certification options, standards, and requirements of the donor or importing country.
2. Provide technical training on strategic planning and price setting.
3. Deliver leadership training for women entrepreneurs that includes a mentorship program with international and peer mentors.
4. Offer cross-cultural communication training for women business owners and their employees responsible for international trade.
5. Offer training for women entrepreneurs on how to develop an export strategy.

Help Women Entrepreneurs Become Export-Ready (Export Promotion Office)

6. Provide consolidated and comprehensive information on exporting to Canada and other trading partner countries, including:
 - transportation and insurance options for exporting businesses;
 - the legal framework and regulatory or tax issues related to exporting;
 - lists of industry associations and regulatory bodies;
 - targeted market intelligence (consumer trends, etc.) and analytics, to help businesses weigh the opportunities and risks related to export;
 - resources to help businesses consider different export scenarios and strategies;
 - financial management of market diversification;
 - examples of legal agreements (contracts with an overseas business partner);
 - examples of export strategies (including market analyses and financial plans).

Create a Positive Image of Women Exporters (Export Promotion Office)

7. Collect and disseminate successful examples of women exporters who can serve as role models for other women entrepreneurs, using online spaces (such as webinars) or via conferences or meetings targeting women exporters.

Support Networking for and Among Women Entrepreneurs (Business Associations)

8. In order to facilitate better experience-sharing among women entrepreneurs, create women's networks within business associations, or create a women exporters' network. This type of initiative would be particularly helpful in Ukraine's regions.
9. Help establish contact between women business owners in Ukraine and in Canada (and in other trading partner countries).

Undertake Public Education to Reduce Women's Double Burden (Ministry of Social Policy)

10. Launch awareness-raising campaigns in order to promote a more equal distribution of household responsibilities between men and women.

Support Trade Promotion Activities for Women (Ministry of Economic Development and Trade)

11. Offer financial assistance to women entrepreneurs wishing to showcase their products at overseas trade fairs (or other events that help promote trade) and advertise such assistance through the mass media, chambers of commerce, and business associations.

Trade Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs:

Findings From World Business Café Workshops: Connecting Women for Export Promotion
