



Celebrating the International Women's Day, 8th March, with Gender Lens on Standardisation, Trade and Gender Policy Initiatives for Women's Empowerment and Reflecting on UN and AU gender policies.

With well over a century of history and change, the first International Women's Day (IWD) was held in March 1911. The Socialist Party of America designated this day in honour of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York, where women protested against working conditions.

Since then, the International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8, has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas. The Day gives focus to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women and with greater to focus to Celebrate women's achievement, raise awareness about discrimination and Take action to drive gender parity.

20th June 2019-
ISO President Elect Mr. Edward Njoroge handing certificate of Participation in the ARSO Standardisation Essay Competition to Ms. SABS/South Africa, through Ms. Ann Wanjiku, Kenya.



In celebrating International Women's Day 2024, under the theme of 'Investing in women: Accelerate progress', ARSO relates the theme to its 2024 theme "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century- building a quality culture - "One market-one standard" and which is based on the African Union 2024 "Year of Education", calling on governments to "accelerate progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)", Quality Education, and themed: "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa".

ARSO recognises that, Daily, millions of women in Africa are engaged in one form of trade or another, either within their countries or across national borders. They buy and sell everything, from agricultural produce to manufactured products. It is mostly women who conduct cross-border trade, delivering goods and services. They also run the majority of agricultural small landholdings. Indeed, women traders' contribution to national economies has become essential in boosting trade in Africa. However, the constraints women face undermines Africa's efforts to realize its full trade potential.

On the same note The World Bank 2018, in its study Women and Trade in Africa: Realizing the Potential, highlights that there is enormous potential for African countries to increase their trade both with the global market and with each



other with women playing key role and will have to be at the heart of Africa's success in exploiting this trade potential, already being facilitated under the AfCFTA guided Trade Initiative started in Oct. 2022 and piloted in 8 countries (Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania and Tunisia and represent five regions of Africa). They carry goods across borders (70% informal Trade), produce products, especially food, that can be exported, and own and manage trade-oriented firms and SMEs, this despite

the many challenges related to Cultural Barriers, lack of access to collaterals; harassment and extortion at the border points; difficulties in getting access to Trade, Market and products regulatory requirements.

As we join in the appreciation of the role Women play in the economic development of Africa, there is a greater need to re-focus once more, on the need for promoting the Africa's SMEs competitiveness and productivity, through the development of the trade support ecosystem, including better regulatory environment and adopting Quality culture, and standardisation. This is because, in Africa and all over the world, SMEs, where women are the majority, have emerged as the engine and drivers of economic growth and global connectivity, and where as in Africa, the SME sector accounts for over 90% of all enterprises of which 70 to 80% are micro and very small enterprises, owned by women, and therefore, their Productivity and Competitiveness remain key.

Women's empowerment for greater role in the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement, which has already been signed by 54 AU members and ratified by 46 members, 35 of who are ARSO Members, remains pivotal with the full realisation that the successful implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement, will integrate a market of 1.3 billion people and potentially 2.2 billion people by 2050, majority being Women, marking a pivotal shift for Africa in terms of

accelerating trade, investment and industrialization, and itching closer to achieving the continental Agenda 2063 “the Africa we want,” and contributing significantly to increased production and competitiveness of Africa’s industrial products through harnessing the economies of scale of a large continental market; increased rate of diversification and transformation of Africa’s economy and better integration of the continent into the global economy, for which already the United Nations and the African Union as well as AU Agenda 2023 and SDGs 2030 provide the platform and the requisite strategies that are required to enhance Women empowerment and their competitiveness in the global economy, and for which standardizations is an integral part.

The UN, under its SDGs 2030, Goal 5, on Gender, aims at ensuring Gender Equality, and to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership. The UN seeks to facilitate the adoption and strengthening of sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels, and in all sectors, including trade. The UN, seeks to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), on its part has, among other initiatives, introduced the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) in 2004 with the aim of supporting member States to measure the gap in the relative status of African men and women and to assess the progress made in implementing government policies that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It published yearly.

In the UN, the commitment to gender equality can be traced to the 1948 United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which states that rights and freedoms will not be limited by a person’s gender and establishes that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Since then, the milestones include the 1975 Mexico City 1st Women’s Conference, the 1979 adoption of CEDAW, the 1980 Copenhagen 2nd Women’s Conference, the 1985 Nairobi 3rd Women’s Conference and the 1995 Beijing 4th Women’s Conference which adopted instruments such as the Convention the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, Beijing Platform of Action, the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Humans, and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At institutional level, the UN has put in place an elaborate institutional mechanism to support the advancement of women and gender equality.

- (i) In 1946, the United Nations created the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) to champion women’s empowerment and gender equality in order to ensure that women, being half of the world’s population enjoy equal rights as well as living in dignity as equal citizens everywhere.
- (ii) In 1974, the United Nations, through the DAW, declared an International Year of Women which was globally celebrated by women. The Year ended with the World Conference on Women that was held in Mexico City, Mexico in 1975.
- (iii) UN Resolution 1325 (2000) is a landmark step that politically legitimises women’s role in peace, security in conflict and post conflict management. The Resolution contains actions for gender mainstreaming in humanitarian operations and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Resolution 1325 has already become a powerful tool which has been domesticated by the AU.
- (iv) The creation of UNIFEM allowed institutional recognition to the need for a focused approach to women’s empowerment at global and local levels. The contribution of Africa to global action has been immense and is reflected in the history.

WELCOME TO THE ARSO MONTHLY WEBINAR

The Gender Agenda in Standardisation
"The Gender dimension of standards and mainstreaming gender in the development and implementation of standards. Why it Matters!!!"

27th Oct 2021
1430 HRS EAT

Hosted & Moderated by
Dr Hermegine Nsangima,
 Secretary General - ARSO

SPEAKERS

- Dr. Eve Godzikwa, ISO Gender Champion for Africa and the Arab States region and the Director General, Standards Association of Zimbabwe**
 "The Gender Agenda in Standardisation Strategies: The Gender Dimensions in the Standardisation Programmes and why it matters to ensure Gender Equality and Gender-responsive outcomes".
- Ray Walsh, Lead of UNECE Gender Responsive Standard Initiative's Expert Group on Network Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**
 Mainstreaming Gender in Standardisation, the Development and Implementation of Standards - Key entry points for integrating gender into Standardisation Policies, Strategic Plans, Programmes by the Standardisation Stakeholders, including the Governments and National Bureau of Standards - The case of the UNECE Global Gender Responsive Standards Initiative
- Mr Nathan Taylor, Secretary of the ISO/IEC Joint Advisory Group on Gender Responsive Standards**
 The Gender dimension as an integral part of standards development - Inclusion of Gender indicators and criteria from the preliminary and drafting stages to ensure Gender Responsive Standards to support gender equality through standardisation - The ISO Perspective and Gender Action Plan
- Nadia Hasham, Trade and Gender Lead, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**
 The role of Gender in sustainable development and Global Governance of Trade: Establishing Strategies, Structures and Capacities for Promoting Gender Equality and the Importance of Integrating a Gender Lens in Standardisation and Trade Policies

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 Interpretation Provided - English and French

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ARSO South African Bureau of Standards

SABS South African Bureau of Standards

Welcome to the 35th ARSO Joint Webinar

Women in Standardisation & Trade

Wednesday 26th July 2022 from 1430 HRS EAT

Host: **Dr. Shabir Hussain** (Mr. Eng.), South Africa Bureau of Standards, CEO

Co - Host: **Dr. Shabir Hussain** (Mr. Eng.), South Africa Bureau of Standards, CEO

Moderator: **Tracy Hartzenberg**, National Standards Division Manager, SABS

PANELISTS

- Sandiswa MUGWANAIZA**, ARSO Project Coordinator
 Developing gender responsive standards and making the standardisation process a gender agenda for Africa a commitment to spurring inclusive sustainable development - International and Regional Policy Initiatives and role of ARSO
- Lance THOMPSON**, UNECE Economic Affairs Officer, WFP's Secretary
 Mainstreaming Gender in Standardisation: The Gender dimension as an integral part of standardisation development and implementation and as a means to support gender-equal standards - The benefits and implications of UNECE initiative and practices on Gender Responsive Standards
- Tracy HARTZENBERG**, South Africa
 The Gender Agenda in Standardisation Strategies and programs: The Gender indicators and criteria from the preliminary and drafting stages to ensure Gender Responsive Standards to support gender equality through standardisation - The ISO Perspective and Gender Action Plan
- Tracy HARTZENBERG**, South Africa
 Standardisation as a Technical Barrier to Trade in Africa - the importance of women-friendly SMEs at the African level, including the informal cross-border trade (ICBT) - the role of women entrepreneurs
- Pheliso NKOUMO**, Development Economist and a gender and social justice activist, South Africa
 Identifying the trade and economic opportunities of the eCFTA Agreement for the benefit of the African women - Policy issues and the South African experience
- Rose KONO**, Gender Consultant and Trade Economist and Policy, the African Trade Policy Centre, UNCTAD
 Gender and Trade - Facilitating integration of women-owned business in value chain and trade opportunities under the eCFTA - why the integration of a gender lens and gender mainstreaming in the African, regional and continental trade policies matters - UNCTAD initiative

Language Interpretation Provided English, Zulu

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For Africa, Under its **ASPIRATION 3**, Africa Agenda 2063, the African leadership is aspiring for an Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law, and a continent where democratic values, culture, practices, universal principles of human rights, **gender equality**, justice and the rule of law are entrenched; and under **ASPIRATION 6**: An Africa where Development is People-Driven, **Unleashing the Potential of its Women and**

Youth; Has full gender equality in all spheres of life and Africa of 2063 with full gender parity. Already many Organisations have policies to ensure Gender Equality in their programmes.

In related aspirations, the African Union developed the AU Gender Policy and its Action Plan that provides a framework that accelerates the realization of gender equality, fairness between men and women, non-discrimination and fundamental rights in Africa. This commitment is reinforced by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2006, among others. In the SDGEA, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to: the principle of gender equality as enshrined in Article 4 (L) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights.

The AU Gender Policy takes into account the activities of the African Centre for Gender (ACG) which has been established to provide technical support to member States to address gender inequality and women's empowerment through developing tools and providing evidence for policy formulation and effective implementation. It also facilitates the tracking and monitoring of the implementation of the agreed commitments and declarations. Further, the AU Gender Policy provides a mandate for the operationalization of Assembly commitments to Women empowerment and Gender Equality, including the implementation the African Women's Decade (2010-2020), and calls for members to among other things:

- Initiate and accelerate gender mainstreaming in institutions, legal frameworks, policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and plans, human resources (HR) and performance management systems, resource allocation, and decision-making processes at all levels;
- Develop a Gender Management System (GMS) and address gender-based barriers (TBTs included) to the free movement of persons and goods across borders throughout the Continent;

The AU Assembly adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in July 2003 in Maputo Mozambique. The Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights came into effect to protect the rights of girls and women, promoting gender equality and removing gender-based discrimination. The 2003 Protocol remains one of the most progressive women's rights treaties globally and has been pivotal in the journey to equality in Africa. The rights enshrined within it include the right to health, education, economic and social welfare, protection before the law, inheritance and elimination of harmful practices. Of the 54 African nations, 44 have signed and ratified the treaty. Under the Sustainable development **Article xix**., highlights the need for appropriate measures to:

- *Introduce the gender perspective in the national development planning procedures;*
- *Ensure participation of women at all levels in the conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programmes;*
- *Take into account indicators of human development specifically relating to women in the elaboration of development policies and programmes; and*
- *Ensure that the negative effects of globalisation and any adverse effects of the implementation of trade and economic policies and programmes are reduced to the minimum for women.*

The AfCFTA framework Agreement includes an objective of gender equality (**Article 3(e) and Article 27.2(d)**), where under Article 3(e), one of the general objectives aims to “promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation”, while in Article 27.2(d) of the Protocol on Trade in Services focusing on improving the export capacity of formal and informal Entrepreneurs, with particular attention to micro-small- and medium-sized operators and “women and youth service suppliers”.. The Agreement

- recognises the importance of gender equality and improving export capacity of informal suppliers, MSMEs, women/youth.
- is Projected to increase exports of female-dominated sectors in manufacturing and agriculture and value addition along value chains and to increase intra-African exports in labour-intensive industries, low-skilled wages, dominated by Women SMEs
- focuses on strengthening regional value chains, customs cooperation, trade facilitation
- Provides Mechanisms to address non-tariff barriers under TBT Annex 6 and SPS Annex 7, and gender Mainstreaming in the process remains key building block to the realisation of full benefits from Trade opportunities under the AfCFTA Agreement and the transformative promise of the AfCFTA, by the African women.

However, it must be noted that the costs and benefits will not be distributed equally, and therefore, supporting policies (Quality Policy) are required to facilitate adjustment and to ensure that trade liberalization is not accompanied by greater inequality, including gender inequality, as Trade, for which Standardisation remains key pillar, has the potential to contribute to either the widening or closing of gender gaps in the economy, depending on how the process is managed. Beyond the inherent economic disadvantage, women remain vulnerable to high levies, bribes, harassment, confiscation of goods and violence, especially in Africa's informal cross-border trade where they make up 70 per cent of merchants. Therefore, measures are needed to ensure opportunities arising from the AfCFTA benefit women and men equally across the region. **The AfCFTA Secretariat Women in Trade Conference Series is commendable.**



Countries need to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to the national implementation of AfCFTA, especially in areas that directly affect women. Specific measures could range from customs cooperation to trade facilitation, legal protection from discrimination, sanitary services and administrative support, which will offer women a better, fairer and safer trading environment. **Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA (2021))** highlights that under the AfCFTA Agreement, specific continental frameworks are needed to address gender-based barriers which will guarantee that trade opportunities reach and benefit every African. She adds the need for introducing a continent-wide ‘**Simplified Trade Regime**’ that is sensitive to needs of small-scale female traders to bring such traders (mostly women) into the formal trading system, enabling them to grow and thrive. Similar interventions that address obstacles women face could, be, for instance, improving the productivity and competitiveness of women-owned businesses and enable female farmers and enterprises to access regional markets. In all these, standardisation remains the key pillar, and exploiting the AfCFTA Agreement standardisation opportunities, under the TBT Annex 6 and SPS Annex 7, with a Gender lens, remains strategic.



Influencing Gender mainstreaming and Capacity building in Standardisation - ARSO Webinar Panelists, 2020-2023

The Standardisation initiatives for Gender Responsive standards and Women Empowerment.

Given the role Standards play in all spheres of life including the socio-political and economic Governance and Policy issues, Manufacturing, Trade, and entirely all aspects of life, there is increased call to ensure that the Gender Agenda is considered in standardisation with respect to governance and leadership, programmes, activities, strategies, policies, projects, Capacity building, and the content and development of the standard processes. Although standards have implications for both women and men, they are rarely examined for their gender dimensions. This has had severe consequences in the past. One striking example is the conventional 3-point seatbelt used in cars: designed in the 1950's. This needs to consider biological differences in standardisation. For example, Asking the right questions is a key entry point: Does the standard proposal differentiate between women and men? If not, is it based on research on both sexes, or is it a male (or female) reference model? If it does, how adequate are the implications investigated in relation to other social or biological factors?

This also calls for the development of standards conducive to gender equality. In this case, when planning annual work programmes, standardization bodies should favour the development of standards that have a high potential for gender equality and the empowerment of women. These include standards for products and services that help to relieve the strain of childcare and domestic work or contribute to decrease maternal mortality ratio and adolescent fertility rate, as well as standards in sectors with high female labour force participation rate. **This calls for ensuring participation of women in standardisation project activities, particularly in capacity building activities, for enhanced results and sometimes greater project efficacy.**

- *The need for Gender Sensitive standardisation services, is called for and in this regard the Outreach and communication activities should be inclusive and designed to leave no one behind. Mostly also, it well established that majority of women businesses fall under the SMEs, which in all regions, phase the technical challenge of complying with standards and also to get certification.*
- *In Leadership, in cognizance with their standard-setting mandate, standardization bodies should demonstrate leadership in gender equality to ensure Gender responsive standards and outcomes. In particular, including women in the board of governance and initiating and maintaining dialogue with gender advocacy groups pave the way of an economic environment where women and men engage at the same level.*
- *Furthermore, spotlighting female professionals as role models, to girls and boys alike, creates the conditions for social change towards greater fairness.*
- *Increasingly, there should be increased sensitisation on standards Seminars, training sessions and quality promotion activities with the inclusion of female entrepreneurs, employees and students.*
- *The inclusion of women as beneficiaries of knowledge sharing activities should be actively sought in order to stimulate new opportunities and ultimately a change of mindset towards gender equitable world.*

For initiatives, the United Nations, UNECE, through the UNECE WP.6 Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies initiated the **Global “Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development”** that focuses on the role of standards as a way of furthering equal participation by both genders in economic decision-making; as instruments for women’s health, safety, and wellbeing; and finally, as tools for sustainability reporting. This initiative, for which ARSO and many other Standardisation bodies, is a signatory, facilitates partnership among standards bodies (including ISO – Gender Action Plan), governments, UN (UNIDO, UNECA), the civil society, academia, and other key stakeholders for gender equality. The declaration

Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards



- Acknowledges the pervasiveness and influential / impactful role of standards in society; and that representation of women in standards development is almost always below parity and that the outcomes for men and women are not, explicitly addressed during the standards development process;
- Recognises that the content of standards and engaging in the standards development process are opportunities for women's empowerment; and that different national standards bodies (NSB) and different standards development organizations (SDO) operate in different ways and within different infrastructures. The Declaration expresses the need and commitment to work towards:
 - gender inclusive standards development organizations; o gender responsive standards;
 - gender balance at all levels of the organization (including in governing bodies);
 - enhanced expertise to create and deliver gender inclusivity;

The International Standards Organisation (ISO), launched in 2019, the ISO Gender Action Plan that outlines five priority areas (**Collect and analyse data on gender representation; Collect case studies and best practices on standards in support of gender equality; Assess the gender responsiveness of ISO standards; Raise awareness of standards in support of gender equality; and ISO policy on gender**) that focus on collecting data, creating a network to share best practice, and raising awareness of standards in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. The purpose of the Action Plan is to; **Deepen the understanding of gender representation in ISO work; Assess the gender implications of standards, and ensure that ISO work and activities include a gender perspective.**



ARSO through its various programmes, including promotion of gender balancing in its Technical Committees and their leaderships; open participation of both Male and female students in the ARSO Continental Gender Essay Competitions; Promotion of African SMEs and Made in Africa Products mainly owned by Women; Inclusion of Women in ARSO staff, Leadership and Goodwill Ambassadors (H.E. Dr. Bibi Ameenah Firdaus Gurib-Fakim GCSK, CSK, former President of the Republic of Mauritius); and the various ARSO Programmes, Policy documents and Constitution that don't discriminate against women. Already ARSO is a Signatory to the Global Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development. Being, also, signatories to the Global Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development, most of the **ARSO Members, like Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ), South African Bureau of Standards, Rwanda Standards Board (RSB)**, are already in the forefront of championing the Gender Mainstreaming in Standardisation in Africa, while at the same time nominating women experts to the standardisation making process in the ARSO Technical Harmonisation Committees.



The Gender equality standard launched

all partners and stakeholders who have made the dream come true today as we launch this first Rwanda Standard on promoting and ensuring Gender Equality accountability". The launch took place when Rwanda was celebrating the Gender Equality Seal Certification Awards, recognizing nine companies and public institutions (Bank of Rwanda, National Industrial Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Trade and Industry, CIMERWA Pls, INKOMOKO, SINA GERARD/ Enterprise Urwibutso, NCBA Bank, Mata Tea Company and Rwanda Energy Group (REG). Other institutions to be recognized include Legacy Clinics and Kitabi Tea companies) that have excelled in creating gender-equal working environments.

For Example, on 30th March 2023 – Rwanda, led by the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB), Private Sector Federation (PSF), and Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), with support from the United Nations Development Program and UN Women, launched the first-ever National Gender Standards, as an initiative to provide guidance and best practices for organizations to adopt and implement gender-sensitive policies and practices in their workplaces. **During the launching, Mr. Murenzi Raymond, the Director General of the Rwanda Standards Board, highlighted that "Building a better world requires the participation of everyone, equally. Promoting gender equality is a cornerstone to spurring inclusive sustainable development, and standards being benchmarks for safeguarding the quality and safety of people, products, and services, we are grateful to the contribution and participation of**

ARSO, therefore, joins the International Community to celebrate the Standardisation initiatives that are being put in place to ensure Women's empowerment and Gender equity and with great recognition of the AU and the UN Policy initiatives to guide the process. HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2024.