



Department for  
Business & Trade

# UK Implementation of Gender Equality in Free Trade Agreements

WTO Informal Working Group on Trade & Gender



# Agenda

## The Evidence

- Differing Impacts of Trade

## Opportunities

- The Role of Trade Policy

## External Speaker

- Elizabeth Vega Obe, Chief Executive Officer, Informed Solutions Group, UK

## Approach to Free Trade Agreements

- Applying a Gender Perspective

## Examples

- Implementation of Gender Provisions

## External Speaker

- Shoko Doherty, Chief Executive Officer, Celtic English Academy, UK

## Q&A



# Evidence of the Differing Impacts of Trade

## Women as Workers

- Fewer women work in sectors supported by trade. In the UK, 41% of trade supported jobs were occupied by women in 2020<sup>1</sup>.
- Women are paid almost 20% more in trade-supported jobs than other jobs<sup>2</sup>.
- Women make up around 86% of people who are economically inactive due to care work<sup>3</sup>.



## Women-owned Businesses and Entrepreneurs

- In 2023, 15% of SMEs were women-led while 44% were men-led<sup>4</sup>.
- Women-led businesses have fewer and shallower professional networks, which are important for enabling access to capital and sharing market information<sup>5</sup>.
- In the UK, only around 3% of all UK equity investment went to all-women founder teams in 2023<sup>6</sup>.



## Women as Consumers

- Women drive approximately 80% of all consumer spending in OECD countries<sup>7</sup>.
- Women with children represent three-quarters of all single-parent households in developed countries<sup>8</sup>.
- Women-led households have on average lower incomes and are more likely to consume imports<sup>9</sup>.



# Opportunities of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

## The Role of Trade Policy:

- Leverage trade policy to promote gender equality and empower women economically
- Ensure evidence-based decision-making for effective interventions
- Foster collaboration to share best practices, generate innovative solutions, and remove barriers for women in trade
- Implement targeted actions to unlock the economic benefits of gender equality in trade



### Trade barriers for women include:

- Challenges in securing financial resources
- Limited access to professional networks
- Restricted opportunities for skill development
- Bias and negative societal perceptions
- Disproportionate caregiving responsibilities



# Growing Women-led Businesses Through International Trade

## There's Never Been a Better Time



Digital services enable us to do business anywhere, at any time, with anyone



UK Dept for Business & Trade's Export Academy and Women's International Network



Modern, inclusive FTAs create new opportunities and more accessible trade channels



We have stronger and better support from allies who want to help us succeed



How international trade has grown and strengthened my business

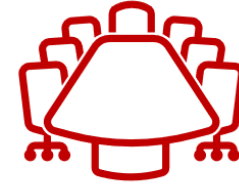
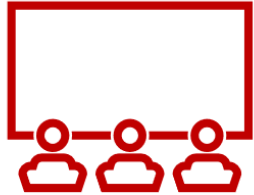


**Elizabeth Vega** OBE DUniv  
Group CEO  
Informed Solutions





# What is FTA Utilisation?



01

**Raise awareness** of the FTAs and the market opportunities these present.

02

Ensure businesses have the necessary **tools and knowledge** to use the FTAs.

03

Provide **practical support** to businesses, including through [great.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/great.gov.uk) guidance.

04

Seek **business feedback** (issues and opportunities) during the FTA implementation period.



## The UK on Advancing Gender Equality in FTAs

---

We have successfully included a number of gender provisions in our newly negotiated FTAs, including:

- **UK-Japan CEPA**, Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment Chapter [2020]
- **UK-Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein FTA**, Women's Economic Empowerment and Trade Section, Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter [2021]
- **UK-Australia FTA**, Trade and Gender Equality Chapter [2021]
- **UK-New Zealand FTA**, Trade and Gender Equality Chapter [2022]





# UK approach to Trade and Gender Equality in FTAs

## 1. Signalling

Reflects shared priorities and overarching objectives of both parties

## 2. Thematic Weaving

Embeds gender-specific provisions throughout the agreement to maximise impact

## 3. Cooperation

Encourages joint initiatives, knowledge exchange, and best practice sharing

## 4. Institutional Mechanisms

Establishes a framework for coordination, cooperation, and monitoring progress over time



# FTA Implementation

## UK-Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein FTA: Women's Economic Empowerment Section

- **Exchange of information** on programmes and initiatives
- Insights from working with Japan on implementation
- Overview of **UK approach to analysis** and building the **evidence** base

## UK-Australia FTA: Trade and Gender Equality Chapter

- **Exchange of information** on policies and programmes
- Overview of our **approaches to analysis** and building the **evidence** base
- Agreement on a structured **work plan** for future cooperation

## UK-New Zealand FTA: Trade and Gender Equality Chapter

- **Exchange of information** on developing frameworks for analysing sex or gender-disaggregated data and gender-focused analysis of trade policies
- Research on the impact of trade on **women as consumers**
- Agreement on a structured **work plan** for future cooperation
- **Networking dinner for Women Business Leaders in Tech and Innovation** – June 2024
  - NZ trade mission matched with likeminded UK women business leaders
  - Information sharing seminar on insights from Māori Trading Practices





Department for  
Business & Trade

# UK hosted Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar (10 July 2024)



<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-the-uk-japan-womens-economic-empowerment-seminar>

GOV.UK

[Home](#) > [Business and industry](#) > [Trade and investment](#)

News story

## Statement on the UK - Japan Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar

The UK and Japan hosted a hybrid seminar for Japanese women entrepreneurs, investors, and business owners seeking to increase trade and investment with the UK

From: [Department for Business and Trade](#)

Published 18 July 2024



### UK-Japan CEPA: Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment Chapter

- **Exchange of information** on programmes and initiatives
- **Engagement with stakeholders:**
  - “Women in Exports” roundtable
  - UK/Japan WEE Seminars



Department for  
Business & Trade

# Japan hosted Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar (6 February 2025)

外務省  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Go to the main | textComments and | opinionsSitemapLinks | [English](#) [Other Languages](#)

Google 提供 search Change text size small medium large

About the Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Press Conferences, Announcements, and Public Relations | **Foreign Policy** | Country/Region | Overseas travel and stay | Application and Procedures

[Home](#) > [Foreign Policy](#) > [Economic Diplomacy](#) > [Securing and Promoting National Economic Interests](#) > [Free Trade Agreements \(FTAs\) / Economic Partnership Agreements \(EPAs\)](#) > [UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(EPA\)](#) > Announcement of the Japan-UK EPA and Japanese Government Sponsored Seminar on Supporting Women Entrepreneurs 2025

## Free Trade Agreement (FTA)/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

### Announcement of the Japan-UK EPA and Japanese Government Sponsored Seminar on Supporting Women Entrepreneurs 2025

January 17, 2025

[English version](#)

✕ ポスト | シェアする | メール

#### overview

The Japanese and UK governments will cooperate to hold the Japan-UK Women's Business Support Seminar 2025 on Thursday, February 6th as part of the Japan-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-UK EPA).

This seminar is being held in response to the agreement between the Japanese and UK governments to build up concrete cooperation to make 2025 an opportunity to promote "trade and gender equality" based on the Japan-UK EPA, which came into force on January 1st, 2021.

The seminar is aimed at British female entrepreneurs and female business owners who are aiming to trade, invest, and do business in Japan. The seminar will introduce the attractiveness of Japan as a market, support tools for female entrepreneurs and female business owners provided by the Japanese government and other related organizations, and the experiences and lessons learned of British female entrepreneurs who have actually entered Japan. It will also introduce support and experiences from private companies involved in supporting businesses entering Japan.

For more details, please visit [the UK Department for Business and Trade website](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-the-japan-uk-womens-economic-empowerment-seminar>



[Home](#) > [Business and industry](#) > [Trade and investment](#)

News story

## Statement on the Japan - UK Women's Economic Empowerment Seminar

Japan hosted a virtual seminar for British women entrepreneurs, investors, and business owners seeking to increase trade and investment with Japan

From: [Department for Business and Trade](#)

Published 7 February 2025



On 6 February 2025, with the support of the Department for Business and Trade, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a virtual seminar for British women entrepreneurs, investors, and business owners seeking to increase trade and investment with Japan.

Department for  
Business & Trade

REGISTER NOW

## JAPAN-UK WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR

6 February 2025  
9:00-11:30  
Online







Celtic  
English  
Academy

# Breaking Barriers: Women in Trade and Business

WTO IWG TG - UK TGE FTA Presentation (Export Champions)



# — Shoko Doherty

- Originally from Japan, came to the UK as an international student
- Now leading a British Council-accredited English language centre in Cardiff as the CEO
- Chair of English UK - National Association of accredited English language centres, supporting language education & trade
- Export Champion - Department for Business & Trade, the UK government
- Export Exemplar - Business Wales, the Welsh government
- Woman, immigrant, ethnic minority navigating global business







# Celtic English Academy

*We are a friendly and welcoming English language centre in the heart of Cardiff.*

Established:



Location:



**Cardiff**

Excellent city centre location

Small class size:

**10**

Maximum



Number of students:



**16,000+**

studied



**22**

classrooms



**Qualified teachers**

with a native-speaker level of English

## Accreditations & Memberships

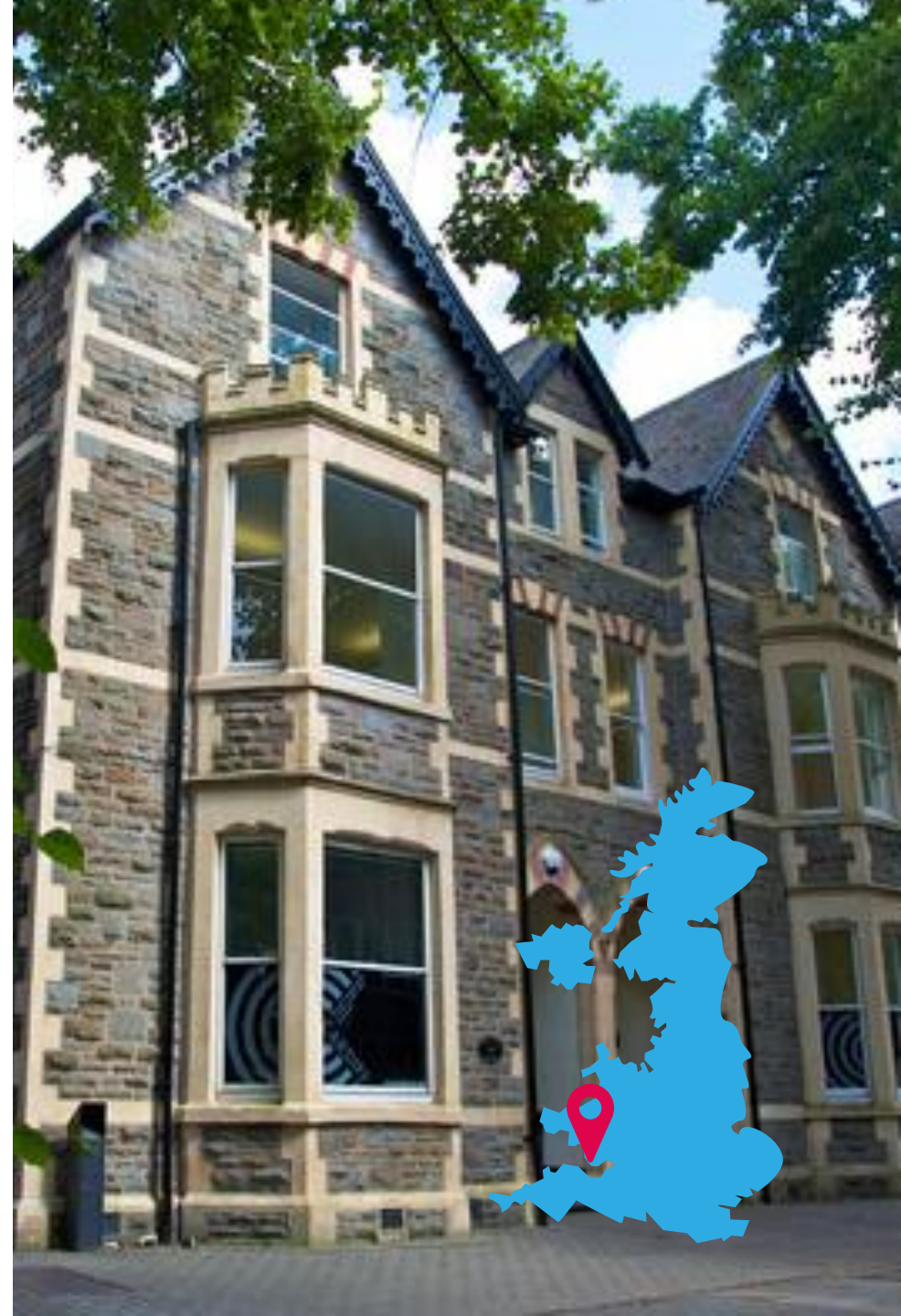
Accredited by the



for the teaching of English in the UK



International Association of Language Centres









# Trade and Gender Equality: Progress and Challenges

## Insights from the Japan Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Seminar

- Case studies showed how FTAs have helped women-led businesses access new markets
- Knowledge-sharing programmes
- Financial support for women entrepreneurs
- Policies that actively dismantle gender-based barriers



Department for  
Business & Trade

**REGISTER NOW**

**JAPAN-UK  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR**

6 February 2025  
9:00-11:30  
Online

**GREAT**  
BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

# Gender Equality is a Two-Way Street

Gender stereotypes impact men too



**Cultural biases make balancing  
career & family challenging**

# Trade & Women's Participation: Addressing Barriers



International business travel challenges for women

- Trade mission
- Inward mission



Elderly & childcare responsibilities



More cooperation needed to support women-led businesses

# Gender-Related Legal Barriers in Trade Negotiations



Retaining maiden names  
after marriage



Recognition of same-sex  
marriages



Inclusive policies benefit all in  
global trade

# A Call for Collaboration

- Greater access for women-led businesses in international markets
- Increased engagement in trade missions
- Recognition of the need for inclusive business environments
- Expanding childcare and eldercare support for entrepreneurs engaged in international trade
- Encouraging gender-equal business regulations in FTA negotiations
- Improving gender-specific data collection to measure real progress



**Policy reforms**



**Collaboration with trade partners needed**



**cultural shifts**



**Creating an inclusive, equal trade system benefits all**





Celtic  
English  
Academy

## Shoko Doherty

Celtic English Academy  
18 Park Grove, Cardiff CF10 3BN Wales  
Tel: +44 (0)2920 344805  
Email: [shoko@celticenglish.co.uk](mailto:shoko@celticenglish.co.uk)  
[www.celticenglish.co.uk](http://www.celticenglish.co.uk)



- How do you approach gender equality and women's economic empowerment in your FTAs?
- For example, do your FTAs include dedicated chapters on gender equality and/or gender-responsive provisions in other chapters?
- If applicable:
  - What actions have you taken to implement gender equality provisions in FTAs?
  - What challenges have you faced when implementing FTA gender equality provisions/cooperation?
- Do you have any initiatives to increase the uptake of women-owned businesses utilising FTAs?

# Q&A



Department for  
Business & Trade