



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TradeMark Africa Champions Transformative Action Against Gender-Based Violence in Trade during 16 Days of Activism

Nairobi, Kenya, 5 December 2023: A recent study by TradeMark Africa (TMA) reveals a startling statistic: 40% of women traders at East African border crossings have experienced harassment in the past year, - including sexual and verbal abuse - highlighting the pressing issue of gender-based violence (GBV) in trade. The study also underscores the correlation between unpaid care work, GBV and its implications for women's participation in cross-border trade underpinning the critical need for sustainable solutions through partnerships. This alarming reality underscores the urgent need for action and was a focal point during a high-level stakeholder dialogue convened by TMA, following the 'UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls' campaign. The campaign advocates increased financial backing for preventive strategies and transforming societal norms to end violence against women and girls.

The dialogue brought together policy makers, private sector entities, civil society representatives, development partners, and women in business. The stakeholders articulated commitments and called upon governments to move swiftly in adopting GBV-specific legislation, trans-regional collaboration, establishment of secure centres, data management at borders, and the integration of private sector and community empowerment in efforts to combat GBV.

"While trade holds the promise of prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainability in Africa, the shadows of gender-based violence persists, impeding the empowerment of women in trade," said Principal Secretary, State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action Ms Anne Wangombe. *"This dialogue stands not just as an advocacy platform but as a clarion call for substantial investment and radical policy reform to fortify a conducive trading environment for women across the African continent."*

Making her remarks, Ms Anataria Uwamariya, TMA's Director Business Competitiveness said, *"Empowering women in trade necessitates more than rhetoric; it demands concrete, collaborative endeavours to dismantle the shadows of gender-based violence hindering progress. Our commitment to gender equality and inclusive development remains unwavering, evident in our strategic blueprint and initiatives aimed at creating a violence-free trading environment."*

TMA's 2023 to 2030 strategy, "Building Sustainable and Inclusive Trade for Africa," underscores the pressing need for comprehensive solutions addressing the nexus between women's trade engagements and their vulnerability to intimate partner violence. TMA's collaborative efforts concentrate on crucial domains, aiming to empower women traders and foster an environment that safeguards their rights.

The "Making Trade Work for Women" program, funded by Global Affairs Canada and a part of TMA's initiatives, has demonstrated significant impact, benefitting over 170,000 women across Eastern, Southern, and the Horn of Africa. The success of this program is a testament to the positive outcomes achievable through concerted efforts. "Through community and collaborative initiatives, we've witnessed tangible impacts, reporting and resolving cases, providing safe spaces, and empowering communities," concluded Ms. Uwamariya.

The call to action from this dialogue is clear: Empowering women in trade is not optional but a strategic necessity for sustainable trade in Africa. The commitment to this cause transcends borders, promising transformative action against GBV, thereby fostering a safer and more prosperous continent for all.



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For more press inquiries, please contact:

Sylviah Luseno

Snr. Communications Manager, TradeMark Africa

Email: sylviah.luseno@trademarkafrica.com

Cellphone: +254 720749389

About TradeMark Africa (TMA)

TradeMark Africa (TMA), formerly TradeMark Africa, is a leading African Aid-for-Trade organisation that was established in 2010, with the aim to grow intra-African trade and increase Africa's share in global trade, while helping make trade more pro-poor and more environmentally sustainable.

TMA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by: Belgium, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Ireland, the MasterCard Foundation, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. TMA works closely with regional and continental inter-governmental organisations, national Governments, the private sector, and civil society.

Since its inception, TMA has delivered substantial gains for trade and regional economic integration in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, including a reduction of 16.5% in cargo transit times on the Northern Corridor from Mombasa to Bujumbura, and a reduction of an average of 70% in the time taken to cross selected one stop border posts. TMA officially launched its continental-wide shift and rebrand in West Africa in January 2023, with Ghana being the first country of operations in the region.

In 2022, TMA set up a catalytic finance company – Trade Catalyst Africa – that will pilot commercially viable projects for creating trade infrastructure (both physical and digital) as well as increasing access to Trade Finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Both TCA's and TMA's headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. Offices in: EAC Secretariat - Arusha, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Uganda, with operations in Mozambique, South Sudan and Zambia. For more information, please visit www.trademarkafrica.com