

MENA Trade Reforms and Employment Impacts

Significant political and economic changes have occurred in the past three years in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, a region that stands out for very low female participation rates compared to the rest of the world. Globally, the proportion of women engaged in paid employment has steadily risen in the last two decades, corresponding to the period of multilateral and regional trade liberalization. The linkage between trade and gender has gained increasing recognition in the policy debate and in the literature. Several studies have assessed the gendered impacts of trade reform using single-country CGE models which range in complexity from the simple inclusion of gender differentiation in employment to the integration of non-market activities in the model. In this paper, the case of trade reforms in the MENA region is used as an illustrative case in examining the significance of capturing the gender-differentiated impacts of trade reforms using a global CGE model.

A new gendered global database, developed from the GTAP 8 database, is employed with the MIRAGE CGE model which has also been modified to incorporate skilled and unskilled labor categories differentiated by gender. The gendered database is constructed using gendered employment data and industry average wages, across industry and occupations from the Yearbook of Labor Statistics. Wages by job, by gender, are obtained from the ILO October Inquiry data. From the employment (quantity) and wages (prices) data, employment value shares for men and women for five occupational levels and 10-15 industries for several countries are used to generate data across all sectors and countries in the GTAP database.

Several scenarios of trade reforms in the MENA region and with its key trade partners are examined to assess the differentiated sectoral and economy-wide impacts on the countries in the regions with and without gender-disaggregation in the model.

I. Introduction

II. Trade and Gender Literature

III. Data Methodology

IV. Model and Simulations

V. Results

VI. Conclusion