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10 YEARS LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa



Women and inclusive trade in a changing global economy

4 NOVEMBER 2026 | LONDON

#WOMENINTRADE

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Wednesday, 4 November 2026 | London

About this event

Against a backdrop of geopolitical realignments, supply chain restructuring, green industrial strategies, and rapid digital transformation, the global trading architecture is undergoing structural change. While trade has the potential to significantly expand economic opportunities for women, these disruptions carry profound and distinct gendered consequences, from shifting tariff regimes and value-chain reconfigurations to climate-related measures and digital market access. Addressing them is essential to ensuring that trade delivers more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

This conference, convened by ODI Global and the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), brings together leading trade specialists, economists, policymakers, and researchers to explore the latest research and policy avenues at the intersection of trade and equality. It also marks the inaugural event of a multi-part policy series organised by ODI Global and international partners, aiming to inform actionable policy priorities ahead of the UK's G20 Presidency in 2027.

Key themes to be discussed

Across four dedicated sessions, discussions will examine:

- Tariffs, trade diversification and regional trade agreements (RTAs)
- Global value chain (GVC) reconfiguration and gendered labour outcomes
- Overcoming persistent constraints to women's entrepreneurship and trade facilitation
- Climate transition, industrial policy and sustainable trade systems

Agenda

09:30 – 10:00 **Registration and welcome refreshments**

10:00 – 10:15 **Opening remarks**

Prachi Agarwal, Research Fellow, ODI Global
Sara Pantuliano, Chief Executive, ODI Global
Deborah James, Interim Director, Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE

10:15 – 11:00 **Fireside chat: Geoeconomic rupture, inclusive growth and the future of trade**

Moderator: **Sara Pantuliano**, Chief Executive, ODI Global

Agnes Gitau, Executive Director, Eastern Africa Association; Managing Partner, GBS Africa; Visiting Fellow, The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE
David Luke, Professor in Practice and Strategic Director, The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE
Caren Grown, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution
Dirk Willem te Velde, Director, International Economic Development Group, ODI Global
Carolyn Birkbeck, Executive Director and Founder, Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS)

11:00 – 12:00 **Panel I: Gender, tariffs, and regional trade agreements**

Trade agreements, tariffs, and diversification strategies may appear gender-neutral but affect women differently as workers, entrepreneurs, traders, and consumers.

This session will examine:

- *Gender provisions' design and enforceability, and whether they offset inequalities reproduced by trade agreements*
- *How gender and human rights impact assessments and stakeholder consultation ensure accountability throughout trade agreements*
- *Gendered effects of tariffs and economic shocks, and whether crisis responses reinforce or reduce inequalities*

Moderator: **Prachi Agarwal**, Research Fellow, ODI Global

Maria Panezi, Associate Professor, University of New Brunswick School of Law
Clair Gammage, Professor of Law, University of Bristol Law School
Caroline Dommen, Senior International Policy Expert
Simonetta Zarrilli, Senior Advisor, ARTNet

12:00 – 12:20 **Coffee break**

12:20 – 13:20 **Panel II: Climate transition, industrial policy, and sustainable trade systems**

Climate change, the green transition, and shifting trade reshape women's economic opportunities. Competition in green industries, climate shocks, digitalisation, and unpaid care shape participation and benefits.

This session will examine:

- *Green industrial and trade policies' political economy and implications for women traders, entrepreneurs, and workers in developing countries*
- *Digitalisation in agricultural trade: opportunities and risks for women's empowerment, food security, and environmental sustainability*
- *Policies to increase women's participation in agricultural trade and food value chains, particularly smallholders and informal traders*
- *How care infrastructure and gender-responsive public finance can support a fair green transition*

Moderator: **Jodie Keane**, Principal Research Fellow, ODI Global

Silke Trommer, Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of Manchester
Maryam Rezaei, Food Systems Lead & Research Fellow, ODI Global
Caren Grown, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Brookings Institution
Izabella Vergara Arenas, Lecturer, Universidad de los Andes

13:20 – 14:30 **Networking lunch**

14:30 – 15:30 **Panel III: The reconfiguration of global value chains and gendered labour outcomes**

Geopolitical tensions and trade policies reshape global value chains (GVCs), women's employment, wages, and working conditions. Benefits depend on inclusion terms, expanding sectors, and occupations—not participation alone.

This session will examine:

- *How geopolitical tensions and trade policies reshape production networks and affect women across countries and sectors*
- *How trade shocks and firms' international integration affect women's employment, wages, and occupational opportunities*
- *How trade liberalisation and new export opportunities change firms' demand for women's labour*
- *Women's inclusion in GVCs, and policies for better jobs and more equitable labour market outcomes*

Moderator: **David Luke**, Professor in Practice and Strategic Director, Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE

Josra Riecke, Trade Policy Advisor, GIZ

Pinar Gunes, Assistant Professor in Trade, University of Sussex; Research Affiliate, Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy
Pavel Chakraborty, Reader (Associate Professor) of Economics, University of Bath
Stephanie Barrientos, Emeritus Professor, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester

15:30 – 15:45 **Coffee break**

15:45 – 16:45 **Panel IV: Barriers to women's entrepreneurship and trade facilitation**

Women entrepreneurs lack finance, networks, digital technologies, and export capabilities. Amid geopolitical fragmentation and tariff uncertainty in their markets, digitalisation, services trade, and regional integration may improve access, resilience, and competitiveness.

This session will examine:

- *Women entrepreneurs' barriers in international markets, and initiatives to help them navigate trade support*
- *Global economic changes affecting women-owned businesses, and support for resilience and participation*
- *Digital trade and emerging technologies, including AI: opportunities and risks for women digital entrepreneurs*
- *How services trade and regional integration can ease women entrepreneurs' access to international markets*

Moderator: **Carmine Soprano**, Senior Visiting Fellow, Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE

Grace Thompson, UK Public Affairs Lead, Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade; Co-Founder, Women in Trade Hub UK
Judith Fessehaie, Head of the SheTrades Initiative, International Trade Centre
Mariangela Linoci, Economic Affairs Officer, E-commerce and Digital Economy Branch, UN Trade and Development
Mia Mikic, Research Associate, University of Waikato

16:45 – 17:00 **Closing plenary**

Carmine Soprano, Senior Visiting Fellow, The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, LSE
Prachi Agarwal, Research Fellow, ODI Global

17:00 – 18:30 **Networking Reception**

Biographies



Sara Pantuliano is Chief Executive at ODI Global, where she was previously Managing Director and Director of Humanitarian Programmes. She has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as an Independent Eminent Person for the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and earlier chaired his Seventh Advisory Group of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, having also served on the Sixth. She is Chair of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Future Council on Reimagining Aid and a member of the High-Level Group of its Humanitarian and Resilience Investing initiative. In addition, she is Editor-in-Chief of Disasters journal, a trustee of Muslim Aid and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, and Chair of British Fencing. Formerly, she was a member of the Independent Team of Advisers established in 2016 by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to recommend reforms to the UN development system. Earlier in her career she led a high-profile UN response in Sudan's Nuba Mountains, headed the Peacebuilding Unit in UNDP Sudan and acted as an observer at the IGAD Sudan peace process. She is the creator and host of ODI Global's flagship podcast, *Think Change*.



Deborah James is an anthropologist of economy, specialising in indebtedness and advice, with research in South Africa and the UK. Her 2025 book *Clawing Back: A New Anthropology of Redistribution in Precarious Times* explores how people patchwork together a livelihood from debt, wages and welfare, and the crucial role of advisers, law clinics and small-scale brokers in helping them gain, or keep hold of, what they feel is their rightful share. It builds on her collaborative work with Black Sash, Stellenbosch University Law Clinic and the National Financial Ombud scheme, an ESRC-funded project on changing patterns of welfare and assistance in Europe and the UK, and her 2015 book *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa*, winner of the 2016 Fage and Oliver Prize. Her earlier work examined land reform, ethnicity, migration and musical performance in South Africa, including *Gaining Ground? "Rights" and "Property" in South African land reform* (2007).



Prachi Agarwal is a Research Fellow at the International Economic Development Group, ODI Global. She has worked extensively on empirical analysis of trade policy, regional trade agreements and digital trade. Her research focuses on trade and development, with an emphasis on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement, regional value chains, the trade-industrial policy nexus and digital services. She also leads research at ODI Global on women in trade, aimed at improving gender equity in trade policies and creating women-forward global value chains. Her recent research examines the economic impact of the cultural and creative industry at country and city level in African and Latin American economies, and the impact of climate change and decarbonisation policies on trade. Previously, she worked as a consultant with the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank on the impact of global shocks on growth and trade. She is also a Visiting Fellow and Guest Lecturer at the LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa.



Carmine Soprano is a development economist, policy advisor and academic lecturer with nearly two decades of international experience in trade and transport facilitation, regional integration and private sector development, including their gender and youth dimensions. He has led research, policy dialogue, technical assistance and investment lending operations in more than 30 countries, including fragile and conflict-affected settings, working with the World Bank Group, the Inter-American Development Bank, UN agencies and the WTO. He is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, a senior lecturer at LUISS, LUMSA and Tor Vergata universities in Rome, a research and policy advisor to Italy's National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL), and a member of the WTO Gender Research Hub.



David Luke is a Professor in Practice and Strategic Director at the LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, where he oversees a programme on African trade policy. He is a former Director of the African Trade Policy Centre at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), where he led the technical work on the protocols that make up the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. His research interests include boosting intra-African trade, the AfCFTA, Africa's multilateral and bilateral trade relationships, and how trade policy intersects with industrialisation, structural transformation, inclusion, gender, public health and climate change. He is a member of the Board of TradeMark Africa and of the Council of the Africa Trade Foundation. His most recent books are *How Africa Trades* (2023) and *How Africa Eats: Trade, Food Security and Climate Risks* (2025), both published by LSE Press on an open access basis.



Caren Grown is a Senior Fellow in and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development (CSD) at the Brookings Institution. From 2014-2021, Grown served as Global Director for Gender at the World Bank Group and then as Senior Technical Advisor in the Macroeconomics, Trade, and Investment Global Practice, where she developed a workstream on taxation and gender equality. Prior to the World Bank, she was economist-in-residence and co-director of the Program on Gender Analysis in Economics at American University. During her career, Grown held senior positions at USAID, the Levy Economics Institute at Bard College, and the International Center for Research on Women. She developed and co-led several large research projects, including the UNU-WIDER program on aid effectiveness and gender equality, the three-country Gender Asset Gap Project (based at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, India), and the seven-country Taxation and Gender Equality Project (American University & University of KwaZulu Natal). She has published widely on fiscal policy, development, trade, climate change, gender data, and health.



Agnes Gitau is the Executive Director for the EU and UK at the Eastern Africa Association, the membership platform for international businesses investing in the region, and Managing Partner at GBS Africa, an independent political and economic risk advisory. She advises governments, investment funds and international businesses on capital and risk in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, where investment decisions are increasingly shaped by geopolitics, the energy transition and the weight of sovereign debt. She is also a Visiting Fellow at the LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa. Her wider interest is in how African states build economic sovereignty as global capital, energy and geopolitical competition reshape the continent.



Dirk Willem te Velde is Principal Research Fellow and Director of the International Economic Development Group at ODI Global, and Director of the Supporting Investment and Trade in Africa and Supporting Economic Transformation programmes. He has written and edited extensively on investment, trade, macroeconomics, aid for trade and economic transformation. He has advised governments and parliaments in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, including both Houses of the UK Parliament, and donor agencies including the FCDO, the European Commission, the UN and the World Bank. He was Team Leader for the European Report on Development on *Combining Finance and Policies to Implement a Transformative Post-2015 Agenda* and on *Confronting Scarcity: Managing the Water-Energy-Land Nexus for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth*. He is Director of the Secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group Trade out of Poverty, a member of the UK Department for International Trade's Strategic Trade Advisory Group, and an alternate on the UK National Contact Point Steering Board for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. He is also a Professor of Practice at the Centre for Global Finance at SOAS University of London.



Carolyn Deere Birkbeck is the Founder and Executive Director of the Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS), housed at the Geneva Graduate Institute. TESS supports the multilateral dialogue, international cooperation and policy action needed to align trade with environmental action, sustainable development and just transitions. In 2022, she played a leading role in creating the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, which brings together 60 trade ministers. She advises the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastics Pollution, for which TESS supports the Secretariat, and participates in the Advisory Group of the Business Coalition for an Ambitious Plastics Treaty. She is also Founder and Board Chair of Global Policy Reporting, the Geneva-based non-profit behind Health Policy Watch and Intellectual Property Watch. She previously worked at the University of Oxford's Global Economic Governance Programme, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Overseas Development Council, and has consulted for UNEP, UNCTAD, UNDP, the South Centre, the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, the Commonwealth Secretariat and IUCN. Her books include *The Implementation Game: The TRIPS Agreement and the Global Politics of Intellectual Property Reform in Developing Countries* (2009) and *The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO): A Reference Guide* (2016), and she edited *Making Global Trade Governance Work for Development* (2011).



Maria Panezi is an Associate Professor at the University of New Brunswick School of Law in Canada. She is Academic Director of the UNB Law Trade Law and Carbon Pricing Lab and a founding member of the UNB International Law Group. Her research focuses on the interaction between sustainability and international trade law, including climate change, gender, indigenous economic empowerment and SMSEs. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Council on International Law, is included in the EU's list of candidates suitable for appointment as arbitrator and as trade and sustainable development expert in free trade agreement panel proceedings, and is a member of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement panel and appellate panel roster for the province of New Brunswick.



Clair Gammage is a Professor of Law at the University of Bristol Law School and a recognised expert on international trade, sustainable development and human rights. She has an established track record of providing expert advice to governments, international organisations and civil society actors on trade policy reform and gender mainstreaming. Clair has given expert evidence to the UK and EU Parliaments on trade, gender and human rights, and she has been commissioned to deliver expert-level training to government officials. Her current academic work focuses on integrating feminist approaches into reform proposals for international trade law and policy, with a view to reframing debates on what constitutes “inclusive” trade.



Caroline Dommen is a senior international policy expert and strategic leader working on human rights, economic justice and sustainability. She advises international organisations on aligning economic policy with social and ecological goals, and supports nonprofits with governance, strategy and organisational development. She holds leadership roles in trade and human rights advocacy, feminist economics and economic systems-change initiatives.



Simonetta Zarrilli is Senior Advisor to the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) and a founding member of the WTO Gender Research Hub, with over 30 years of United Nations experience and deep expertise in international trade, development and gender equality. In 2010, she established UNCTAD’s Trade, Gender and Development Programme, which she led until her retirement in 2024. A leading voice on the intersection of trade and gender, she received the WTO’s inaugural Gender Equality Pioneering Award in 2023. Through her research, publications and policy engagement, she brings valuable insights into how trade can better serve people and promote sustainable, inclusive development.



Silke Trommer is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Manchester and Director of the Manchester Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. She is author of *A Feminist Political Economy of Trade* (with Adrienne Roberts, 2026) and *Transformations in Trade Politics* (2014), and editor of *Expert Knowledge in Global Trade* (with Erin Hannah and James Scott, 2016). She has published widely on the international political economy of trade governance, trade policy and law, including in Review of International Political Economy, New Political Economy and World Trade Review. She is a member of the UK Trade and Public Policy Network, the WTO Gender Research Hub, and the NGO Women in Development Europe+.



Maryam Rezaei is Food Systems Lead in the Climate and Sustainability team at ODI Global. She brings more than 15 years’ experience in sustainable food systems, including policy advice and capacity building in value chain development and rural livelihoods, urban food systems, and food loss and waste reduction. She has worked with governments, the private sector, NGOs and international development organisations, managing multi-disciplinary teams, supporting intergovernmental processes and implementing major technical projects and programmes focused on the resilience, inclusion and sustainability of food systems. Previously, she worked for the FAO in Rome as a food systems programme advisor, and as team leader on value chain and agribusiness development at the FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa in Cairo, Egypt.



Izabella Vergara Arenas is a lawyer and lecturer in International Economic Law, Property Rights and Land at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia. Her academic work focuses on international trade law and its intersections with gender, food security and food sovereignty, including research undertaken as a research fellow within the framework of the WTO Chairs Programme.



Jodie Keane is is a Principal Research Fellow with the International Economic Development Group at ODI Global. She leads the climate, trade and development workstream, focusing on new green trade measures and related policy spillovers, greening trade and supply chains, and resilient value chains. Her interests also include technology transfer, critical minerals and carbon markets. As trade and development economist and project manager, she has worked with most international organisations and multiple governments over the past 15 years, including support to World Trade Organization (WTO) members on the future of aid for trade to Least Developed Countries. She began her career working on non-market economy issues for the World Bank in Hanoi, joined ODI Global in 2007 as a research officer working on EU-ACP relations, and became Research Fellow in 2012, leading workstreams on trade and climate change and global value chains. From 2015 to 2020 she was an economic adviser in the Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat, where she supported the Commonwealth Trade Reviews 2015 and 2018. She has taught on the political economy of trade at LSE and edited volumes on global value chains and LDCs.



Josra Riecke is an Advisor for Trade and Investment for Sustainable Development at GIZ, where she provides policy advice to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) on international trade and sustainable development. Her work focuses on gender-responsive trade policy, trade in services and intellectual property rights. She has experience in international trade policy and development cooperation, with a particular focus on West Africa. She has also worked with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in West and Central Africa on mixed migration, and participated in the WTO Youth Talent Incubator Programme on Trade and Gender.



Pinar Gunes is an Assistant Professor in Trade at the University of Sussex Business School and a research affiliate at the Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy (CITP). Her research examines the welfare effects of trade shocks, the labour market impacts of trade (particularly gender disparities), digital trade and AI adoption. Her current projects explore the effect of digital trade on women's employment in the UK, the welfare effects of trade wars, and how AI adoption affects firm sales across the firm-size distribution. She is Project Manager of the Online Distance Learning Diploma in International Trade Policy, and contributes to policy briefings and publications at the CITP and the UK Trade Policy Observatory (UKTPO). Previously, she was a Trade Policy Analyst at the OECD and worked at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank.



Pavel Chakraborty is a Reader (Associate Professor) of Economics at the University of Bath. He is an applied microeconomist whose research sits at the intersection of international trade, firm dynamics, innovation, labour markets, finance and development economics. He studies how external shocks and policy changes shape firms' production and trade decisions, and through them, economic growth and the effectiveness of industrial and trade policies in developing and emerging economies. His work appears in leading journals including the Journal of International Economics, the Journal of Development Economics and the World Bank Economic Review. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oxford and held Assistant and Associate Professor positions at Lancaster University. He also co-organises SEED (Symposium on Evidence of Economic Development), a workshop for applied microeconomists working on emerging and developing economies.



Stephanie Barrientos is Emeritus Professor in the Global Development Institute at The University of Manchester. She was previously a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (2000-7). She has researched and published widely on gender, global production, employment, decent work, trade and labour standards, corporate social responsibility, fair trade and ethical trade, with research in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the UK. She coordinated the Capturing the Gains Research Programme (with Prof Gary Gereffi) from 2008 to 2013, was research lead on the FCDO/DFID flagship programme Work and Opportunities for Women (2018-21), and led the GCRF/ESRC programme Shifting South: Decent Work in Regional Value Chains (2019-21). Her Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2013-16) led to her book *Gender and Work in Global Value Chains: Capturing the Gains?* (2019). She has advised and trained international organisations including the ILO, UNCTAD, UNIDO and the World Bank, sits on the Advisory Group of the ILO/IFC Better Work Programme and the Board of Trustees of the Fairtrade Foundation, and holds a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship (2023-25) to write an open access book on fairer trade in global supply chains.



Grace Thompson is the UK Public Affairs Lead at the Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade, where she works with members and colleagues across the Chartered Institute to identify barriers to trade and put forward policy solutions. She provided the secretariat for the UK's first E-Commerce Trade Commission, convened by the Chartered Institute to encourage and support businesses to trade and export online. She began her career in Parliament as a policy researcher for MPs, before joining Edelman Global Advisory's London-based public affairs team, supporting clients in sectors including food and drink and technology. She is also co-founder of the Women in Trade Hub UK.



Judith Fessehaie is Head of the SheTrades Initiative at the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint UN/WTO agency. In this capacity, she oversees a portfolio of projects and programmes spanning export-readiness and market access interventions for women producers and entrepreneurs, partnerships with business support organisations and corporates, and gender mainstreaming into trade policymaking.



Mariangela Linoci is an Economic Affairs Officer in the E-commerce and Digital Economy Branch of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), where she works with the eTrade Initiatives Section to support women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries. Previously, she worked in the Trade, Gender and Development Programme, focusing on the intersection of trade and gender from a policy perspective. Since joining UNCTAD in 2011, she has been involved in a wide range of analytical, capacity building and programmatic activities, providing technical assistance across Asia, Africa and Latin America.



Mia Mikic is a trade economist with an interest in inclusive development and a proven track record in academia and international civil service. She is a member of the Friends of Multilateralism Group, the Board of Advisors for the Trade Policy Research Forum and the Advisory Board of the Center on Inclusive Trade and Development, Georgetown Law, USA. She is a Research Associate at the University of Waikato and Advisor at Large for ARTNeT. Previously, she served as Director of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division at UN ESCAP and held various academic positions in Croatia and New Zealand before joining the UN in 2005.

Convenors

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10 YEARS LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa

The Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa (FLIA) focuses on the study of, and engagement with, Africa. FLIA promotes the visibility of Africa in teaching, research, and policy engagement across LSE. It supports independent multi-disciplinary scholarship; open and issue-oriented debate; and evidence-based policymaking. Originally established as a centre, it became the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa in 2021 after a generous gift from Firoz Lalji. As an Institute, FLIA sets its own research agenda and can plan for the future with secure funding. Learn more at www.lse.ac.uk/africa