

COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT TOOL-KIT FOR WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES

SheTrades Commonwealth Guidebook

COVID-19 Crisis Management Tool-Kit for Women-Owned Businesses 1

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A. Background

SheTrades Initiative

The International Trade Centre launched the SheTrades initiative to create an ecosystem of integrated solutions that empower women economically through greater participation in trade and investment.

The Goal: Connect 3 million women to market by 2021.

A Plan: To work with partners including governments, private sector, international organizations, and others to expand opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Through country-based activities, SheTrades enables women entrepreneurs to improve the quality of their products and services.

SheTrades Commonwealth project

The SheTrades Commonwealth project aims to increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by enabling the increased participation of women-owned

¹ The Information provided in this guidebook is accurate as at the time it was made public (22 May, 2020). However, the situation surrounding the COVID-19 crisis is evolving, and we anticipate change in figures and descriptions on current events.

*This is a working document and has not been formally edited by the International Trade Centre.

businesses in international trade. The project is funded by the UK Department for International Development and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) under the framework of the SheTrades Initiative.

Commonwealth-wide support: The SheTrades Outlook, a key output of the project, is an innovative interactive mapping tool that focuses on how countries support women's participation in international trade. Policymakers, private sector partners, and other stakeholders will benefit from access to analysis of legislation and outcomes, best practices, and key documents.

Country-level interventions: The SheTrades Commonwealth project supports:

- i) Women-owned businesses - to make them more competitive and connect them to markets, by building their competitiveness and their capacity to participate in trade, through intensive training, mentoring and coaching. In addition to supporting their participation in trade fairs and other business generation activities
- ii) Business Support Organizations (BSOs) - to improve their service offerings for women entrepreneurs. It will also provide direct support to women-owned businesses,
- iii) The private sector partners - to adopt business practices that create economic opportunities for women-owned businesses.

The project is implemented in Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, in the following sectors: agriculture, textiles and apparel, IT&BPO and tourism.

[SheTrades Commonwealth COVID-19 Crisis Management Tool-Kit](#) for Women-Owned Businesses

In the last few of weeks, the world has experienced a monumental shift in the way it operates due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As at 22 May 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) had recorded over 5 million confirmed cases worldwide. All countries and sectors under the SheTrades Commonwealth project have been impacted.

To respond to the crisis, the project went through an initial understanding phase. Efforts during this phase focused on gathering information from project's beneficiaries and partners on the initial impact it had on their person and operations. We also surveyed the immediate needs of businesses within our network.

To respond to identified needs, the SheTrades Commonwealth project made available tools, resources, and avenues for information sharing to support women-owned businesses through this difficult time. Our priority as a project is to continue to support our network of women, businesses and partners to ensure economic recovery in all the countries where we work.

For this reason, the SheTrades Commonwealth project has developed a COVID-19 Crisis Management Tool-Kit for women-owned businesses. The thinking behind this is to create a one-stop-shop for businesses on the tools and resources needed to **manage change and plan in uncertainty**.

The key objectives of the tool-kit are to:

- Guide businesses on how to realistically assess the impact of the crisis on their business
- Guide businesses on how to clearly define a path forward
- Guide businesses on drawing up an adaptive action plan that is responsive to change

B. Guidance note for Women-Owned Businesses on Crisis Management and Recovery Planning

Men and Women, boys and girls experience and respond to crisis in different ways. Historically, society gives women various household roles that include raising children, first educator roles, ensuring family is well fed and nourished and creating a positive atmosphere in the home. In time of crisis, most women find themselves less able to control resources and distribute labour fairly. They also run small businesses which are hard hit during crisis. In addition to immediate household responsibilities, women find themselves having to care for elderly members in society.

COVID-19 presents women in business with all the above challenges and much more. The fact that sanitation measures and social distancing are key to flatten the curve means families are locked in their homes in order to ride out the pandemic.

It is on this background that this toolkit is simplified into a workbook format for ease of use. Businesses will need to set aside only 30 minutes a day to think through and design a business resilience path on how to survive. In order to derive maximum benefit from this toolkit, we recommend that WOBs make an effort to do the following:

1. *Download the Resilience and Recovery Action Plan Canvas (RRAP Canvas);*
2. *Spend 30 minutes a day thinking through various challenges and the opportunities presented by the pandemic;*
3. *Write down thoughts in a notebook;*
4. *Find a business buddy or a working partner (from the she trades community) to act as a sounding board and provide feedback. (Not a yes man, but someone to provide a holistic view on your thoughts and ideas);*
5. *Free yourself to do what comes naturally and spontaneously in your business e.g. – change of business model, embracing digitization;*
6. *Refer to the SheTrades Commonwealth COVID-19 Tool-Kit for additional resources and templates;*
7. *Where young adults above 18 are present, ask their opinions and gather their ideas on the way forward for the business;*
8. *Feel free to contact the SheTrades team in your country for further support;*
9. *Test your ideas as soon as possible and quickly learn what is working and what is not;*
10. *Don't beat yourself down, keep moving forward.*

C. Overview of the SheTrades Commonwealth Crisis Management Tool-kit and RRAP Canvas

1. COVID-19 Crisis Management Tool-Kit

The COVID-19 Crisis triggered a series of global economic and social events, which have caused uncertainty and rapid change in the business environment. Recognising the important role of women to the global economy, and the contribution of women-owned businesses (WOBs) to sustainable income growth and safe livelihoods. The SheTrades Commonwealth

Project built this tool-kit to support WOBs resilience and recovery. Its aim is to ameliorate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women-owned and managed businesses.

The [COVID-19 Crisis Management Tool-Kit](#) is a one-stop reference point for WOBs looking for resources and tools to guide and inform their decision making process during and after the COVID-19 Crisis. It includes the following resources:

- The Resilience and Recovery Action Plan Canvas
- A collection of relevant business planning and decision-making guides and templates
- References to online resources, webinars, trainings and ITC market intelligence tools.

2. Recovery and Resilience Action Plan Canvas (RRAP Canvas)

a) *What is a Recovery and Resilience Action Plan Canvas?*

A RRAP Canvas is a business assessment and planning tool, designed to support WOBs in quick and efficient decision making during a crisis.

Its function is to ensure that WOBs have a full picture of the current and anticipated impact of the crisis to their business. Thus, putting WOBs ahead of events as it unfolds. Thereby ensuring preparedness, readiness, as well as increasing businesses resilience and the odds for recovery.

The STC project recognises that WOBs often play dual roles in society. The role of homemaker and business leader. All over the world, and in countries where the SheTrades Commonwealth project operates, we see that one of the immediate fall-outs of the COVID-19 crisis has been the expansion of these two roles. WOBs responsibility now includes, in many cases, community care giver, home teacher to their children, and business leader-with a larger responsibility for the safety and livelihoods of their employee's. The projects WOBs COVID-19 Impact Survey conducted in March 2020 showed that 55% of respondents either temporarily had to reduce employment hours of their staff or lay-off staff completely.

What this expanded role translates to is added pressure on WOBs time. WOBs who at this critical time need to be at the helms of the crisis have less time to research, less time to plan, and less time to strategies. Thus reducing the odds of a lot of WOBs to put together business response and recovery plans. The Tool-Kit and accompanying RRAP Canvas is designed to support WOBs in research, planning and strategizing through this crisis. It is a one-stop shop of resources and tools to facilitate agile decision making.

A complete RRAP canvas would serve as a single comprehensive road map for WOBs through the crisis. Capturing information on where the business is, the direction they wish to travel, roadblocks to be mindful of, and the action steps needed to get there.

[Business name] [Date of last review] [Date for next review]				
(1) Strategic Objective:				
(2) Responsible team:				
(3) Business Impact Analysis:	(4) Scenario analysis			
	Scenario 1 (key indicators)	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:	Risks:
	Opportunities:	Opportunities:	Opportunities:	Opportunities:
	Best response: (urgent actions)	Best response (urgent actions)	Best response (urgent actions)	Best response (urgent actions)
(5) Strategic Action (next steps)			(6) Constraints (specifically as it relates to operationalising action steps)	
(7) Required Resources (human, hard/soft infrastructure, knowledge/skill)				

Figure 1: Resilience and Recovery Action Plan Canv

b) *An 8 Step Approach to Completing the Resilience and Recovery Action Plan Canvas*



The Resilience and Recovery Action Plan (RRAP) Canvas is designed to guide businesses through planning in uncertainty. It includes elements of crisis management, business continuity planning and scenario analysis.

The RRAP Canvas aims to provide a comprehensive strategy for resilience and recovery to WOBs. Though MSMEs generally are inherently predisposed to be flexible and adaptative in unstable conditions, a majority of MSMEs do not have the resources to conduct an in-depth analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to their businesses, and are usually do not have the formal structure to develop robust plans. The RRAP canvas equips WOBs on strategic planning for recovery, and places businesses at an advantage, equipping WOBs to anticipate change and plan according, which creates spaced for flexibility and adaptation.

Step 1: Strategic Objective/Approach

What is your business strategic objective and approach for resilience and recovery? This is the overall objective a business seeks to accomplish. This will be a description of a company's general direction through its response and recovery planning. It will guide internal and external operations and communication throughout the crisis.

Example 1: Strategic Objective

(1) Strategic objective: Our two priorities are to; i) Ensure the health and safety of our employees and direct suppliers; ii) Continue business operations and the delivery of our services by maintaining and respecting the confidence of quality that our clients have in our products and services.

Step 2: Response Team

Who is responsible for the businesses recovery plan and what role do they play in the business? Which team will help achieve the objective described in “Step 1”? Who will be responsible for the different elements? Who is responsible for the planning and implementation of the resilience and recovery action plan? The response team/ person depending on the size of the company, will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the RRAP. This will include flagging issues as and when the arise. The team should have the support and authority from management to act.

Example 2: Response Team

(2) Response team: Ms. Y, CEO; Ms. X, Head of operations (team leader); Mr. V, head finance.

Step 3: Business Impact Analysis

What is your core business competence? What impact has the crisis had on operations, employee's, customers and finance? This captures the current state of a business. This step should guide a business in understanding the impact the crisis has had on its core competencies and its ability to continue to deliver said business's product/service. Ask yourself 3 key questions:

- i. What is your core business competence?
- ii. What is the current state of our business's, i.e. operations, people, customers and finances?
- iii. How has the crisis impacted point i) and ii) above?

Example 3: Business Impact Analysis

(3) Business Impact Analysis

Core Business Competences: customer services; quality of products; nimble delivery service

Operations: Inventory_ stock available for production over 90days at 50%

Capacity; foreign suppliers shut down but local suppliers still processing (particularly household processors of shea);

People/Employee's: No staff exposed to virus; all at risks staff are on quarantine; regular updates to employees via WhatsApp

Customers: Communication with customers significantly reduced, 90% of customers have been walk-in, we have no existing system to continue engagement or reach out to new customers. We are communicating with the 10% long standing customers and we have a database of them

Finances/Legalities: With the reduction in sales due to store closure, cash-in has dropped, and we are still repaying existing bank loan.

Step 4: Scenario Analysis

Map out scenarios from positive, mildly negative, severe, and catastrophic. What are the risks, opportunities and possible responses to each scenario? Enter 4 different scenario's that could play out during and after the crisis. List the associated risks based on your projection in each scenario. Specifically identify what might happen internally or externally because of COVID-19. Next, outline/ describe the best response you can take under each scenario, while considering the information/results from your business impact analysis and your strategic objective.

Example 4: Scenario Analysis

(4) Scenario analysis			
Scenario 1 (key indicators)	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4
<p>Lockdown is lifted in 14 days, but only essential services/businesses are allowed to operate. Government offices remain closed. Business continues to operate at 50% capacity</p>	<p>Lockdown continues for 60 days. Inter-state and state borders shut down indefinitely.</p>	<p>Lockdown lifted after 30 days, but a severe spike in confirmed cases in Nigeria and limited testing cause other countries to place trade restrictions on people and goods coming out of Nigeria. Disconnected from international suppliers, restriction on goods and people places heavy financial burden on business</p>	<p>Lockdown remains in place for 60 days, during this time the reduction in economic activity cause a hike in the cost of inputs</p>
<p><i>Risks:</i> Demand for our goods drop further Pressure on cash-flow</p>	<p><i>Risk:</i> Disconnected from suppliers and significant stock depletion.</p>	<p><i>Risks:</i> Disconnected from international suppliers, restriction on goods and people places heavy compliance pressure on production, loss of international buyers</p>	<p><i>Risks:</i> Increase in prices adds extra pressure to business finances and ability to pay back existing debt, pay employee and purchase production inputs</p>
<p><i>Opportunities:</i> essential services are still running, idle capacity in our delivery operations due to fall in customer orders.</p>	<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p>	<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p>	<p><i>Opportunities:</i></p>
<p><i>Best response (urgent actions):</i> Leverage on core business competence and outsource delivery services and customer services to external essential businesses.</p>	<p><i>Best response (urgent actions)</i></p>	<p><i>Best response (urgent actions)</i></p>	<p><i>Best response (urgent actions)</i></p>

Step 5: Strategic Action

What are your next steps? Based on your analysis from step 3 & 4, identify specific solutions. What is the most reasonable next step for your business? Include a timeline for each action step. Ensure that your strategic action steps align with your strategic objective?

Example 5: Strategic Action

(5) Strategic action. To ensure survival and redirect current business operations to focus on core competences by:

Mapping out essential services within business area
Develop marketing and pricing plan aligned with approach

Step 6: Constraints

What are the constraints to identified strategic action steps? What are some hurdles to implementing solutions identified under Step 5?

Example 6: Constraints

(6) Constraints

Business currently operates using analogue or face to face engagement with customers. Outsourcing our service will put additional pressure on our system, and affect the quality of our service. Absence of online presence restricts our marketing reach. No one on our team is skilled/ knowledgeable on digital marketing

Step 7: Required Resources

What resources do you need to implement your action steps? What resources do you need to implement the business continuity solutions/ strategic action steps (Step 5), and to overcome the constraints (Step 6)?

Who are some of the institutions, existing partners that may provide these resources e.g. - which bank? Human resource consultancy services, part-time staff, e-commerce platforms, suppliers/ market places to increase sales outlets etc.

Example 7: Required Resources

(7) Required Resources (human, hard/soft infrastructure, knowledge/skill)

- Logistic management software
- Business website where businesses can order and pay for pick-ups and delivery

Step 8: RRAP Test

Does my canvas show a clear direction to previously identified business strategic objective? Does your response for step 5 support your overall objective in step 2? Is your team clear on its role? Do you have a clear communication message?

3. Additional Recommended Resources

Here is a list of additional resources to help businesses go deeper in their planning, all of which can be found on the [SheTrades Commonwealth COVID-19 Tool-Kit Page](#).

a) *Webinars*

- Crisis Management for SMEs by Maersk and Twill
- Leading in Times of Crisis

b) *Business Planning Templates*

- Business Assessment Forms
- Business continuity self-assessment
- Strategic Objective templates
- Core competence template
- SWOT Analysis Template
- Scenario Analysis Template
- PEST Analysis Template
- 90 Day Financial Action Plan Template

c) *Online resources*

- ITC Covid-19 Dashboard: macmap.org/covid19
- SheTrades.com
- ITC's Market Analysis Tools: marketanalysis.intracen.org
- ITC's SME Trade Academy: learning.intracen.org/

