



**THE IEL COLLECTIVE  
INAUGURAL CONFERENCE  
6 – 7 NOVEMBER 2019  
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK, COVENTRY, UK**

**MAINSTREAMING GENDER RIGHTS THROUGH FREE TRADE  
AGREEMENTS: THE PROMISES OF CANADA'S PROGRESSIVE AND FEMINIST  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE POLICY**

**Chijioke Chijioke-Oforji  
School of Law, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK**

Abstract

The idea that free trade agreements should enhance normative values rather than simply maximise economic efficiency is gaining traction across the world. Nowhere is this clearer than in the trade policy of Canada whose government has increasingly championed a progressive and feminist approach to International trade. At the heart of Canada's progressive trade policy is the idea of including standalone chapters on gender rights in free trade agreements (FTAs). So far, such provisions have been incorporated into the modernised Canada-Chile FTA and the Canada- Israel FTA.

This paper argues that Canada's feminist trade policy disrupts the prevailing orthodoxy of International trade and economic governance which is largely fixated on the use of trade and investment protection agreements in the pursuit of narrow economic advantages. It also argues that Canada's trade policy has the potential to democratise international trade by encouraging the full and equal participation of women and minorities in the global economy. It is further argued that a commitment to gender-friendly trade such as that championed by the Canadian government might encourage the transfer of distributive benefits to marginalised constituencies while simultaneously deepening trade and economic ties between Canada and its partners.