

Supporting development and building trade capacity

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Background on supporting development and building trade capacity

The WTO aims to help developing countries build their trade capacity and allows them a longer time to implement trade agreements. Hundreds of training courses are organized each year for officials from developing countries.

7



Trade and development

- **The Committee continued its work on the link between trade and development.**
- **Topics discussed by the Committee included issues relating to duty-free and quota-free market access for least-developed countries and the monitoring mechanism for special and differential measures.**
- **A new WTO publication shows how trade can help accelerate progress in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Background on trade and development

The Committee on Trade and Development is the focal point for the coordination of all work on trade and development issues in the WTO. The Committee deals with a variety of issues, including all developmental issues, technical cooperation and training, and notifications under the Enabling Clause, which allows developed countries to give more favourable treatment to developing countries.

The Committee on Trade and Development continued work on the link between trade and development, as instructed by trade ministers. They considered possible future work for the Committee on electronic commerce and continued discussion of duty-free and quota-free market access for least-developed countries (LDCs). They also discussed the monitoring mechanism for special and differential treatment (S&D) for developing countries in WTO agreements and decisions.

Chad, on behalf of the LDC Group, reminded WTO members of the group's proposal on draft terms of reference for a WTO Secretariat study on DFQF market access for LDCs, submitted in 2016.

The WTO Secretariat prepared a report for the Committee on the implementation of S&D provisions in WTO agreements and decisions. Such provisions range from increasing trade opportunities for developing countries and LDCs to granting longer transition periods for the implementation of WTO agreements and providing technical assistance.

The Committee held two dedicated sessions on the monitoring mechanism, which acts as a focal point to review the implementation of S&D. Ministers declared in at the 2013 Ministerial Conference in Bali that monitoring should be based on written inputs or submissions. However, no written submissions had yet been received. Delegations differ on whether to proceed with a review of the mechanism or wait until there is concrete experience of its use.

At a meeting of the Committee in November, WTO members expressed regret at the lack of submissions regarding the monitoring mechanism. The Chair, Ambassador Diego Aulestia of Ecuador, urged members to come to a common understanding on the way forward for the mechanism.

In a session dedicated to regional trade agreements (see page 99), the Committee considered the Partial Scope Agreement between Panama and the Dominican Republic, and the Arab Mediterranean Free Trade Agreement (Agadir Agreement) between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. The Committee also adopted a template for notifying changes to an existing regional trade agreement.

A session dedicated to preferential trade arrangements allowed members to consider the US trade preferences for Nepal.

The Committee received a report on the 52nd session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) of the International Trade Centre. The JAG is the policy-making body of the trade promotion agency for developing countries jointly sponsored by the WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).



Trade and the SDGs

In May, the WTO launched a publication on the role of trade in advancing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new publication – “Mainstreaming Trade to Attain the Sustainable Development Goals” – looks at how international trade can help countries gain access to new markets and new investments, boost growth, raise living standards and promote sustainable development.

It outlines a number of steps to help accelerate progress in achieving the SDGs, including embedding trade policies in governments' national development plans. It also suggests action to further lower the costs of world trade, notably by implementing the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (see page 86), which establishes procedures for streamlining the flow of goods among WTO members.

“Combined with the right financing and capacity-building assistance, trade is a vital catalyst for development. This is demonstrated by the experience of recent decades,” DG Azevêdo said on launching the report at the WTO Public Forum (see page 150) in October.

Market access

The Committee received notifications under the Enabling Clause concerning an agreement between MERCOSUR (the Southern Common Market) and Egypt, and an agreement between Ecuador and El Salvador. Discussion continued on the notification under the Enabling Clause made in 2017 by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay, members of the Latin American Integration Association.

Technical cooperation and training

The annual performance report on technical assistance and training for 2017 was presented to the Committee. The WTO Secretariat undertook 261 technical assistance activities in 2017 and participated in several other related activities. Overall, 18,200 participants were trained, down from 18,600 the year before. Close to two-thirds of the participants in WTO technical assistance activities were trained online (see page 141).

A new WTO publication on trade and the SDGs was launched at the Public Forum.



Least-developed countries

- Least-developed countries (LDCs) highlighted the need for better market access, including through implementing ministerial decisions on duty-free, quota-free market access and preferential rules of origin.
- LDC exports grew 13 per cent, reversing a three-year negative trend. But the LDC share of world exports remains low.
- Twelve countries are expected to graduate from the LDC category in the near future.

Background on least-developed countries (LDCs)

The Sub-Committee on LDCs, established in July 1995 as a subsidiary body to the Committee on Trade and Development, focuses its work on an agreed WTO work programme for LDCs. This programme looks at a number of systemic issues of importance to LDCs in the multilateral trading system, such as market access, technical assistance and accession to the WTO.

Market access for LDCs

LDCs highlighted their need for improved market access, which continued to be a central element of discussions in the Sub-Committee on LDCs. They also called for progress in implementing a ministerial decision on preferential rules of origin for LDCs (see page 79).

The WTO Secretariat presented its yearly report on trends in LDC trade and market access and briefed the Sub-Committee on developments in preferential rules of origin in the Committee on Rules of Origin.

After three years of negative growth, LDCs' exports of goods and services increased by 13 per cent in 2017, thanks largely to increases in the prices of fuels and minerals. LDCs' share of world exports increased slightly from 0.88 per cent in 2016 to 0.90 per cent in 2017. But their trade deficit remained substantial at US\$ 93 billion in 2017, three times higher than in 2010. Tourism was one bright spot, with the LDC share of world travel exports increasing from 1.1 per cent in 2010 to 1.4 per cent in 2017.

The LDCs expressed concern about their low share (0.5 per cent) of world manufacturing exports and regretted that they are far from doubling their share of world exports of goods and services by 2020, as seen by the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs and the Sustainable Development Goals.

LDCs urged preference-granting members to improve duty-free, quota-free (DFQF) market access conditions for products from LDCs and to speed implementation of the Nairobi ministerial decision to make it easier for LDC

exports to qualify for preferential access. The European Union asked LDCs that still had to fulfil the prerequisites for this access to apply the Registered Exporter system of certification for origin of goods relating to the EU's Generalized System of Preferences scheme.

DG Azevêdo told a meeting of the LDC Group in June: "I think you will need to develop specific proposals especially on implementation of DFQF market access and engage directly with the relevant stakeholders."

"The strong progress we saw after Hong Kong and after Bali has slowed," the DG said, referring to the 2005 and 2013 ministerial conferences. DG Azevêdo also referred to the LDC services waiver (see page 88). He said LDCs should consider submitting specific recommendations on measures that would support their services sector.

Technical assistance and capacity building

The WTO continued to attach priority to LDCs in the delivery of technical assistance (see page 141). The Sub-Committee monitors the progress of technical assistance provided to LDCs as well as other capacity building initiatives.

In 2017, LDCs were associated with approximately 60 per cent of all activities. LDCs, especially from Africa, were among the biggest users of e-learning courses, accounting for close to one-third of participants. The delivery of technical assistance in the Asia-Pacific region has been significantly improved through close collaboration with UNESCAP, the United Nations Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.





LDC exports of goods and services increased by 13 per cent, largely due to higher prices in fuels and minerals.

The Executive Secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), which assists LDCs in integrating trade into their national development strategies, updated WTO members on the EIF programme (see page 137). LDCs highlighted the positive impact of EIF projects and called on development partners to continue supporting the EIF.

The Secretariat of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) noted that LDCs benefited from close to 60 per cent of STDF project funds (see page 139). LDCs called on donors to increase their contributions to the STDF. The Advisory Centre on WTO Law briefed WTO members on the free legal advice, training and WTO dispute settlement support provided to LDCs.

Accession of LDCs to the WTO

The WTO Secretariat briefed WTO members on the state of play in working parties on LDC accessions and experience-sharing among acceding LDCs (see page 28). Eight LDCs are in the process of acceding to the WTO (Bhutan, Comoros, Ethiopia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Timor-Leste). LDCs emphasized the importance of special and differential treatment in the LDC accession process in line with the LDC accession guidelines.

LDC graduation

The Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs for 2011-20 aims to help LDCs graduate from the LDC category. The Secretariat of the UN Committee for Development Policy reported that 12 LDCs are expected to graduate in the near future. The LDCs requested assistance from the WTO to help graduating LDCs improve their understanding of the trade-related implications of graduation.

South-South dialogue on LDCs and development

Under China's LDCs and Accessions Programme, the third South-South Dialogue on LDCs and Development was held in Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland, in December. It provided an opportunity to discuss recent proposals on WTO reform. The LDCs highlighted that discussions at the WTO must remain inclusive and stressed the need to further strengthen the development dimension of the multilateral trading system.

Small economies

- **WTO members discussed the challenges and opportunities for small, vulnerable economies in reducing trade costs, particularly through trade facilitation.**
- **Possible solutions included reducing transport costs and increasing digital connectivity.**
- **The WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement is seen to be already bringing benefits.**

Background on small economies

The Committee on Trade and Development – in dedicated sessions – oversees work on small economies and monitors the progress of proposals from small, vulnerable economies in the various WTO bodies and negotiating groups. Several small economies are small island states.

The Committee on Trade and Development held two dedicated sessions in 2018 on small, vulnerable economies (SVEs). Work was based on a 2017 WTO Secretariat report on the challenges and opportunities small economies face in their efforts to reduce trade costs, particularly in the area of trade facilitation.

At their first session in June, participants concentrated on the challenges – transportation and logistics, border costs, such as red tape and documentation, the cost of information, and tariff and non-tariff barriers. Several SVEs shared their experiences, underlining problems such as weak IT capability, lack of coordination among public agencies, poor infrastructure and lack of access to trade financing.

The meeting in November focused on possible solutions. Representatives from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (see page 137) talked about policy

options that could reduce transport costs, such as: improving links between national, regional and intercontinental shipping services; regional coordination in planning port investments to accommodate vessels travelling on the same route; and the modernization of seaports.

Digital connectivity and e-trade were also mentioned as ways to reduce costs for SVEs. Representatives from several SVEs explained how their countries were tackling the challenges identified by implementing the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA – see page 86) and adopting digital solutions. Mongolia and Mauritius underlined how the TFA will help to reduce trade costs. Mauritius said that major reforms to customs procedures have already greatly reduced processing time for the clearance of imported goods.

The SVE Group will prepare an outcome document of the discussions held in 2018.



Aid for Trade

- The Committee on Trade and Development adopted the 2018-19 Aid for Trade Work Programme on “Supporting economic diversification and empowerment”.
- Global disbursements of Aid for Trade amounted to US\$ 38.8 billion in 2016 (the latest year on record) compared with US\$ 40.3 billion in 2015.
- In 2018, the WTO and OECD launched a monitoring and evaluation exercise to review Aid for Trade priorities.
- The next Aid for Trade Global Review is set to take place in Geneva on 3-5 July 2019.

Background on Aid for Trade

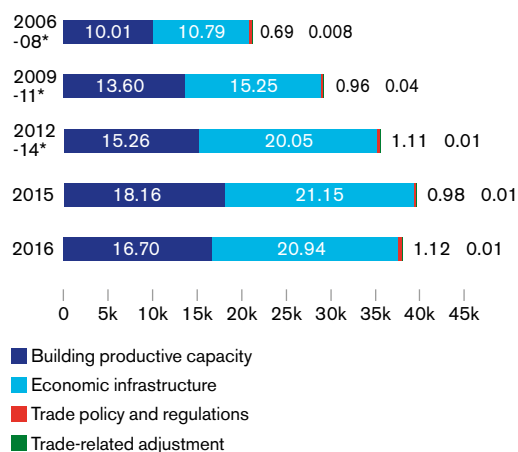
Aid for Trade helps developing countries, and particularly least developed countries, trade. The WTO-led Aid for Trade initiative encourages developing country governments and donors to recognize the role that trade can play in development. In particular, the initiative seeks to mobilize resources to address the trade-related constraints identified by developing and least-developed countries.

Aid for Trade financing

From 2006 to 2016, the total amount of Aid for Trade, a subset of official development aid (ODA), disbursed to developing countries reached US\$ 342.3 billion. An additional US\$ 297.4 billion was provided as part of other official flows, development finance that is provided at non-concessional rates.

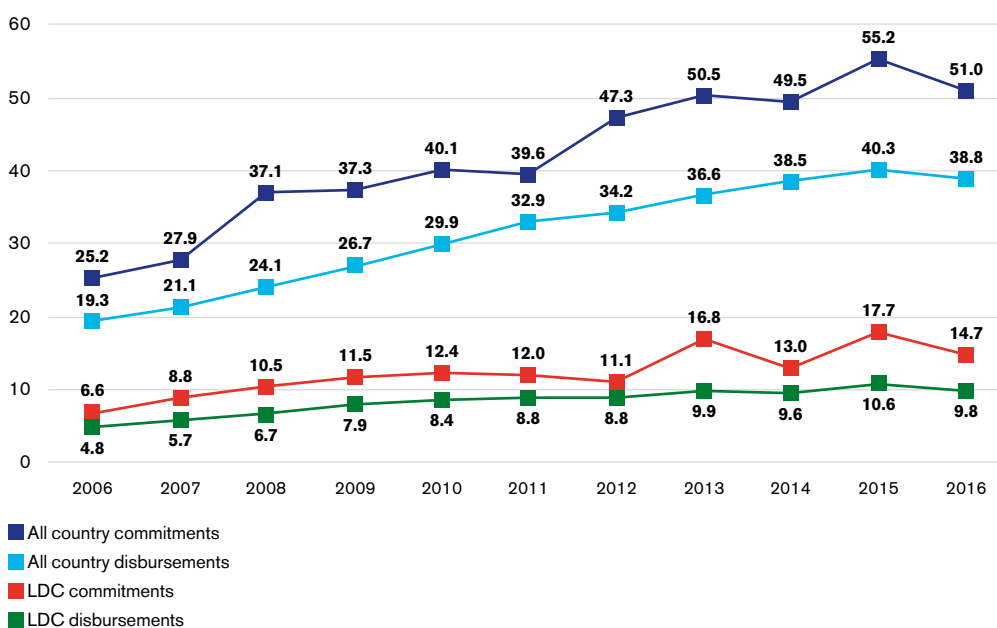
The latest Aid for Trade data available from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that global disbursements amounted to US\$ 38.8 billion in 2016 compared with US\$ 40.3 billion in 2015 (see Figures 1 and 2). Commitments totalled US\$ 51.0 billion in 2016, down from US\$ 55.2 billion in 2015.

Figure 1: Aid for Trade disbursements by category (in US\$ billion, 2016 prices)



Source: OECD-CRS, Creditor Reporting System

Figure 2: Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements by category (in US\$ billion, 2016 prices)



Disbursements increased for Africa, America and Europe (see Figure 3). Disbursements to least-developed countries (LDCs) slipped to US\$ 9.8 billion in 2016 from a high of US\$ 10.6 billion in 2015 but were well above those of 2006 (US\$ 4.8 billion). Increasingly, support for LDCs is taking the form of loans rather than grants, which raises debt sustainability concerns.

Aid for Trade Work Programme

The Committee on Trade and Development adopted the 2018-2019 Aid for Trade Work Programme entitled “Supporting Economic Diversification and Empowerment for Inclusive, Sustainable Development through Aid for Trade”.

The programme seeks to further develop analysis on how trade can contribute to economic diversification and empowerment, with a focus on eliminating extreme poverty, particularly through the effective participation of women and youth. It also focuses on how Aid for Trade can contribute by addressing trade capacity and trade-related infrastructure constraints, including for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The programme will also further examine themes that emerged in the 2017 Global Review.

Activities outlined in the programme will culminate in the next Global Review, scheduled for 3-5 July 2019. Global Reviews are attended by ministers of trade and development, international financial institutions, private sector firms and associations, development research organizations and participants from the trade and development community.

“Over the last 12 years, our Aid for Trade initiative has been a powerful instrument for building trade capacity and trade-related infrastructure in developing and least-developed countries,” said DG Azevêdo. “Our focus in 2019 will be how trade can do even more to contribute to economic diversification and empowerment.”

Committee on Trade and Development

The Committee on Trade and Development held three sessions on Aid for Trade. A number of international organizations updated the Committee on Aid for Trade activities, implementation and resource mobilization. Participating organizations included the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) (see page 137), the International Trade Centre, the Islamic International Trade Finance Corporation, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (see page 139) and the World Bank.

Thematic events

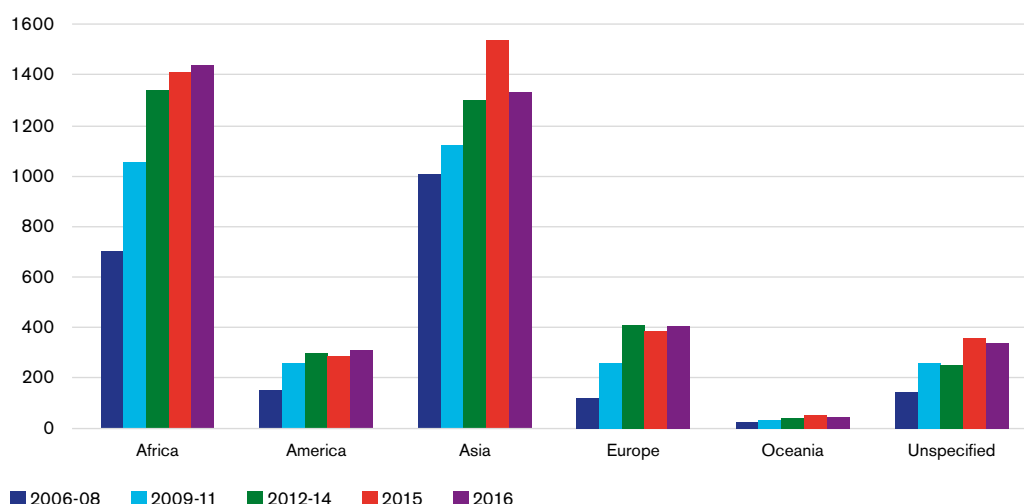
In November 2018, the WTO held two Aid for Trade workshops. A first workshop highlighted trends in economic diversification and industrialization. It also discussed policy perspectives and national experiences. A second workshop examined economic diversification, with a focus on youth and women. It presented various empowerment programmes, initiatives and policies implemented at international and regional levels.

Monitoring and evaluation

The latest OECD-WTO Aid for Trade monitoring and evaluation exercise was launched in November. It aims to review Aid for Trade priorities and assess how Aid for Trade is supporting economic diversification and contributing to the empowerment of MSMEs, youth and women.

The data collected will be analysed and presented in the next edition of “Aid for Trade at a Glance”, a co-publication with OECD. The report will be launched at the 2019 Global Review of Aid for Trade.

Figure 3: Aid for Trade disbursements by region (in US\$ million, 2016 prices)



Source: OECD-CRS, Creditor Reporting System



Enhanced Integrated Framework

- The Board of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) approved the strategic plan for 2019-22 – “Inclusive trade for better lives”.
- US\$ 47 million in new funding was submitted to the EIF Board, with US\$ 25 million from the EIF Trust Fund and US\$ 21.9 million from other sources. Sixty-four per cent of project funding went to building trade capacity in least-developed countries (LDCs).
- The EIF hosted the first Global Forum for Inclusive Trade for LDCs at the WTO. Some 300 participants attended from more than 50 countries. Four LDCs issued a call to global leaders to substantially increase support for trade development in the LDCs and for the EIF.
- The EIF intensified its work in the most fragile LDCs.

Background on the Enhanced Integrated Framework

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is the only multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to addressing the capacity needs of least-developed countries in their use of trade as an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. It is supported by a multi-donor trust fund. The EIF partnership of 51 countries, 24 donors and eight partner agencies work closely with governments, development organizations, civil society and academia. The WTO houses the Executive Secretariat of the EIF.

New EIF strategic plan

The EIF's strategic plan for 2019-2022, approved in 2018, focuses on building “inclusive trade for better lives”. The plan has two key goals. The first is to generate improved trade environments conducive to inclusive and sustainable growth for LDCs. This includes improved policy and regulatory frameworks for trade and investment, strengthened institutional coordination for trade development and investment, and enhanced capacities for policy formulation and implementation.

The second goal of the plan focuses on increased exports and access to international markets for LDCs, including through greater participation in strategic value chains, improved technology use in production and services for select value chains, and support to EIF-assisted countries to leverage additional investments for capacity-building.

In 2018, US\$ 47 million in new funding for 42 new projects was submitted to the EIF Board, US\$ 25 million of it through the multi-donor EIF Trust Fund and US\$ 21.9 million from other sources. This continues a recent trend; every EIF dollar invested in LDC capacity-building since 2016 has resulted in US\$ 0.9 million of additional resources from LDC governments and development partners.

The Trust Fund had US\$ 116.8 million in donor pledges, slightly up on US\$ 115 million at end-2017. By the end of 2018, US\$ 44 million had been allocated to ongoing projects and operations, giving a disbursement rate of around 50 per cent (US\$ 22.33 million).

Overall, 64 per cent of the funding for projects was allocated to building trade capacity in LDCs. New projects included investing in Benin's shea butter value chain, supporting honey production in Ethiopia, developing export competitiveness in Lao People's Democratic Republic and assisting metrology development in Senegal.

Ongoing projects are delivering results. EIF supported trade promotion in Malawi has resulted in US\$ 47 million of new agribusiness exports, for example. In 2018, over 1,600 smallholder farmers received key skills for improving production and more than 300 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and 125 producer associations received training and support.

Ensuring institutional ability to implement effective trade and development strategies remains a crucial part of EIF work. EIF national structures coordinate Aid for Trade (see page 135) activities and provide a consultative mechanism between the government and relevant stakeholders. In 2018, 35 per cent of project resources was targeted at this area, resulting in more than 400 individuals and 125 associations increasing their awareness of trade-related issues. These structures are embedded in government structures in at least 16 LDCs.

Global Forum

In June 2018, the EIF hosted the first Global Forum on Inclusive Trade for LDCs at the WTO. The forum resulted in a call from four LDCs – The Gambia, the Central African Republic, Malawi and Uganda – for global leaders to substantially increase support for trade development in the LDCs and for the EIF.

More than 300 participants from over 50 countries attended, including the Vice-President of The Gambia, Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang, HRH Princess Abze Djigma from Burkina Faso and the trade ministers of the Central African Republic, The Gambia, Malawi and Uganda as well as Geneva-based heads of agencies.

Agricultural trade was a major theme and “connecting” was a key word – connecting the ministries involved, connecting farmers to markets and connecting markets to buyers. “Inclusive growth is important, and we cannot continue with business as usual – if we want to stop migration, if we want to keep decent jobs, we really need inclusivity, and this means we have to share market access and remove hurdles,” Princess Abze Djigma told the forum.

Working in fragile LDCs

The EIF has intensified its work in the most fragile LDCs. This has included joint work with the WTO to drive the WTO accession process of South Sudan and to support institutional strengthening.

The EIF co-organized a high-level panel at the WTO Public Forum (see page 150) on “Trade for

Peace in 2030: Integration of fragile states into the global economy as a pathway towards peace and resilience”. The panel helped to raise awareness about the challenges facing fragile countries. Countries long isolated by years of conflict are yet to fully realize their trade potential and reap the benefits, participants highlighted. Thirteen out of 22 governments currently acceding to the WTO are considered “fragile” countries.

Deepening engagement in cross-cutting areas

The EIF has jointly invested with the International Trade Centre in projects to support women traders in The Gambia and Zambia. The EIF has also partnered with the South Asian Women Economic Development Forum in working with women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal on leveraging technology and e-commerce.

New e-trade readiness assessments for LDCs were undertaken in conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. These assessments review the current e-commerce and digital trade situation in selected countries and allow LDCs to identify opportunities and barriers.

The Vice-President of The Gambia, Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang, opened the Global Forum on Inclusive Trade for LDCs.



Standards and Trade Development Facility

- In 2018, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) committed US\$ 3.9 million to help developing countries meet international standards for food safety, plant and animal health and access global markets.
- A new STDF book was launched with 25 “results stories” on projects helping small-scale farmers, processors and traders gain market access.
- The STDF released an external evaluation of STDF projects in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Since 2004, over US\$ 32 million has been provided through STDF funding to support projects in least-developed and other low-income countries.

Background on the Standards and Trade Development Facility

The STDF is a global partnership that helps developing countries build their sanitary and phytosanitary capacity and their ability to gain and maintain market access. The STDF contributes to Sustainable Development Goals, such as enhanced economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and environmental protection. Established by the WTO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, the STDF is financed by voluntary contributions. The WTO houses the Secretariat and manages the STDF trust fund.

Improving trading capacity in developing countries

Six project grants and six project preparation grants (PPGs) were approved by the STDF in 2018, totalling US\$ 3.9 million. These projects and PPGs aim to improve the capacity of the public and private sectors in developing countries to meet international standards for food safety, plant and animal health and to access international markets.

New projects aim to upgrade the sesame value chain in Sudan, help Uganda and Togo comply with phytosanitary requirements for their fruits and vegetables, reduce aflatoxin contamination in Burkina Faso maize, expand exports of safe and high-quality spices from India and enhance the capacity of the Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable industry to comply with food safety requirements.

New PPGs include the development of proposals to control sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) risks in cashew, shea and smoked fish in Mali, to establish a bee sanctuary in Niue in the South Pacific, to support the national food-control system in Kiribati in the Central Pacific and to test and assess voluntary third-party assurance programmes for food safety in Africa and Central America. Another PPG will develop a regional project in eight Asian countries to mitigate pesticide residue limit violations through the use of biopesticides.

Since its founding, the STDF has provided US\$ 48.9 million for projects aimed at building the SPS capacity of producers, traders and governments in developing countries. Of these funds, over US\$ 32 million has been provided through STDF funding to support projects in least-developed and other low-income countries.

STDF project work mostly benefits countries in Africa, followed by Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Location of STDF projects and project preparation grants (number), 2004-18

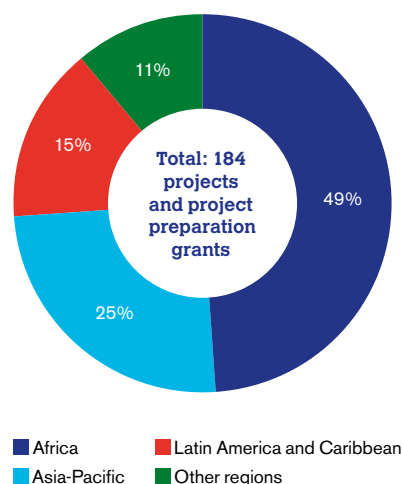
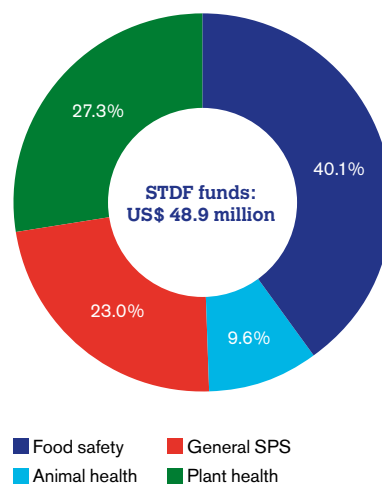


Figure 5: Coverage of STDF projects and project preparation grants (number), 2004-2018 (US\$ million)



Good regulatory practice

The STDF continued its work on good regulatory practice (GRP) to analyse how it can improve the quality and effectiveness of SPS measures in developing countries. The main objective of this work is to bring GRP to the attention of policy makers and SPS regulatory authorities in developing countries as well as the private sector. A consultant is currently working on a study on GRP in the SPS area, based on research, interviews and analysis.

Prioritizing SPS investments for market access (P-IMA)

Work continues on the STDF's P-IMA framework, which aims to improve SPS planning and decision-making processes. Two P-IMA focused PPGs were carried out in Tajikistan and Madagascar. In addition, the STDF started a project to help selected Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) member states in using the P-IMA framework to mainstream SPS investments in agriculture, trade and environment planning and financing frameworks. This project will be implemented in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (see page 137).

SPS awareness-raising

In 2018, the STDF published a results book, "Driving Safe Trade Solutions Worldwide", containing examples of the impact of 25 STDF projects on local communities in developing countries and showcasing their contribution to achieving various Sustainable Development Goals.

An independent evaluation of 22 STDF projects was published, highlighting useful lessons for further strengthening the STDF's future activities and improving the quality of SPS projects.

In 2018, the STDF Secretariat shared experiences and lessons from the STDF's work at over 60 conferences and SPS capacity-building workshops worldwide. Presentations were given on electronic SPS certification, border agency cooperation, implementation of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (see page 86) in relation to SPS compliance, prioritizing SPS investments for market access and the impact of STDF work on poverty reduction, women's economic empowerment and food security.

The STDF improves access to export markets by helping farmers and processors comply with international standards.



Technical cooperation and training

- The WTO undertook more than 330 technical assistance activities in 2018, including e-learning, global and regional training courses, academic programmes and national and regional workshops.
- Least-developed countries (LDCs) participated in over 52 per cent of all technical assistance activities.
- Recommendations from an external evaluators' report were reflected in the new workplan for 2018-19.

Background on technical cooperation and training

The Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation coordinates the WTO's technical assistance programmes. Its activities include e-learning, global and regional training courses, academic programmes and workshops at national and regional level. The technical assistance programmes help WTO members better understand their rights and obligations in the multilateral trading system. This strengthens countries' capacity to benefit from participation in the system.

The WTO Secretariat undertook over 330 technical assistance activities in 2018 to help government officials gain a better understanding of WTO rules and the multilateral trading system. More than 21,000 participants benefited, a 17 per cent increase from 2017.

The WTO's training activities are mostly based on a biennial technical assistance and training plan approved by the Committee on Trade and Development. As with its predecessor, the 2018-19 plan follows a "results-based management" approach, measuring results to ensure that training is delivered in the most effective way. The plan for 2018-19 follows many of the recommendations made by an external evaluation of WTO technical assistance undertaken in 2016. This evaluation endorsed the WTO approach, concluding that it was relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable and had an impact in beneficiary countries.

Courses are undertaken as part of a progressive learning strategy so that participants benefit from a step-by-step approach to improving their

awareness of trade issues. Guidelines and benchmarks help to maintain a high standard of content for all training, consistent teaching methods and regular evaluation of all technical assistance activities delivered by the WTO.

Overall, the WTO Secretariat undertook 336 training activities in 2018 (254 face-to-face and 82 online), a 22 per cent increase over 2017, and participated in 25 conferences and other events organized by partner institutions. The number of technical assistance activities in which LDCs participated was slightly lower than in previous years but still over 52 per cent. More than 60 per cent of all participants accessed their training through e-learning resources on the WTO's online platform.

The WTO continued to involve international and local partners in technical assistance activities to integrate a local perspective in the design of the training programmes. Fourteen per cent of activities were for the benefit of African countries, 13 per cent for Asia and the Pacific,

Table 1: Technical assistance activities by region in 2018*

Region	Regional		National		Global**		Total	
Africa	19	26%	29	23%	–	0%	48	14%
Asia Pacific	15	20%	29	23%	–	0%	44	13%
Caribbean	5	7%	8	6%	–	0%	13	4%
Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia	13	18%	23	18%	–	0%	36	11%
Global	7	9%	–	0%	134	100%	141	42%
Latin America	7	9%	28	22%	–	0%	35	10%
Middle East	8	11%	11	9%	–	0%	19	6%
Total	74	100%	128	100%	134	100%	336	100%

* Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

** Activities under the "global" category are not targeted at a specific region but include activities such as Geneva-based courses, distance learning, internship programmes and an advisory role on legal issues.

Technical cooperation and training



336

technical assistance activities in 2018



Over

60%

of all participants accessed their training through e-learning resources.



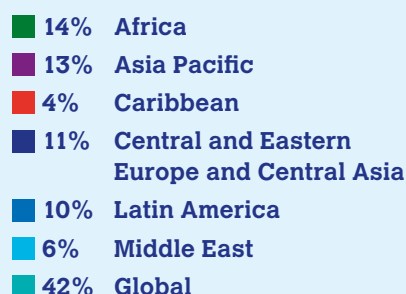
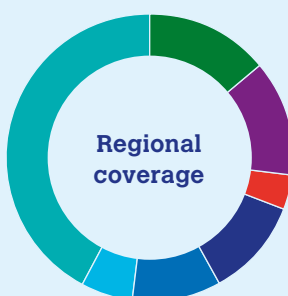
22%

increase over 2017



21,600

participants



11 per cent for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 10 per cent for Latin America, 6 per cent for Middle East countries and 4 per cent for the Caribbean (see Table 1). The remaining 42 per cent were “global” activities, mostly held in Geneva (including online courses), aimed at participants from all WTO members and observers. In line with the demand-driven approach, approximately 38 per cent of all activities were delivered at the national level in countries where a specific need was identified.

Participation levels

Approximately 21,600 participants undertook technical assistance activities in 2018, a 17 per cent increase from the previous year.

Women represented 47 per cent of participants for all WTO technical assistance activities in 2018, an increase of two percentage points compared with 2017. Roughly 60 per cent of participants undertook technical assistance in English, 17 per cent in Spanish and 16 per cent in French. Another 7 per cent of participants benefited from multilingual training.

Technical assistance continued for countries seeking to join the WTO (see Figure 1 on page 30), with some 570 government officials invited to participate in approximately 100 technical assistance events.

Internship programmes

In 2018, the majority of officials completing WTO internship programmes were from LDCs and other low-income countries in Africa and the Asia and Pacific regions. Sixteen candidates completed the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme, five candidates completed the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme and three completed the Accession Internship Programme.

WTO internship programmes offer government officials hands-on experience in WTO activities. The Netherlands Trainee Programme, the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme, the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme and the Accession Internship Programme give priority to applicants from Africa and LDCs, to small, vulnerable economies and to countries in the process of joining the WTO.



Fifteen young professionals took part in the 2018 Young Professionals Programme.



Young Professionals Programme

Following a merit-based selection process, 15 young professionals were recruited for the Young Professionals Programme in 2018. The programme was launched in 2016 to increase the representation of professionals from nationalities currently under-represented at the WTO Secretariat. Funded by the Global Trust Fund, the programme aims to improve the chances of the young professionals being recruited by the WTO and/or other regional and international organizations. All the young professionals came from members currently with no professional staff in the WTO Secretariat.

The young professionals were hosted by several divisions in the Secretariat and were supervised by WTO staff. Their tasks ranged from contributing to Secretariat working documents, attending meetings and preparing minutes to co-delivering technical assistance presentations and assisting in the organization of the WTO's Public Forum.

Financing technical assistance

The bulk of the technical assistance programme is financed by the Global Trust Fund, which receives voluntary contributions from WTO members.

Excluding some annual fluctuations, there has been a steady decrease in voluntary contributions for a decade, with fewer donors and lower contributions. In 2018, one major contributor resumed support for the programme, leading to a 23 per cent increase in the grants received by the fund during the year, with the total reaching CHF 7.4 million.

For the first time in four years, technical assistance expenses rose by 8 per cent in 2018. Expenses continued to exceed contributions and the year-end balance in the fund was further reduced.

Other funding sources include the WTO regular budget for Geneva-based courses and national technical assistance activities – approximately CHF 4.5 million for 2018 – and contributions from other trust funds (such as the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme and the China Programme), which totalled CHF 1.6 million in 2018.