

2022

WTO Technical Assistance Results at a glance

The post-pandemic return
of face-to-face activities



Xiangchen Zhang
*Deputy Director-General,
World Trade Organization*

“ The Secretariat continued to adapt and remain relevant in a fast-changing world, moving towards blended TA activities, which mix online, face-to-face, and virtual components to maximise impact and efficiency.

I am particularly pleased to see the increased participation of women in technical assistance — in 2022 more women than men participated in WTO TA activities for the first time.

WTO will continue to make TA accessible to beneficiaries to ensure they can contribute to their economy’s participation in the WTO’s work and trade negotiations.

Technical Assistance (TA) is a core function of the WTO, aiming to enhance human and institutional trade capacities in beneficiary countries.

All TA activities, courses and trainings are designed to enhance the capacity of WTO Members and Observers to take full advantage of the rules-based multilateral trading system, and to deal with the challenges and opportunities emerging from it.



This brief is a summary of the content of the WTO Technical Assistance Annual Report 2022 (WT/COMTD/W/272 - 23-3102), and it has been produced for informative purposes only.

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WTO TA 2022 - Key takeaways

- **MC12** was the main **WTO priority of the first semester** of the year, which reduced the availability of many TA beneficiary officials to participate in trade-related TA activities and limited the Secretariat's capacity to provide TA during the first part of 2022.
- WTO TA saw a **decline** in its **overall results** in 2022.
- The level of **participation** in, and the **quantity and the diversity** of TA activities **increased** in 2022.
- A progressive return of TA face-to-face activities in the spring of 2022 led to the introduction of **more blended TA activities** also involving virtual or online components.



Higher participation, lower results

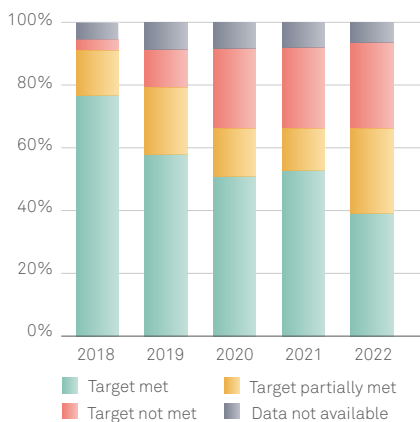
Overall, the TA success rate (65%), as measured under the Result-Based Management (RBM) approach approved by Members, was stable when compared to 2021 (66%). However, at a disaggregated level, achieved targets dropped dramatically to a historic low of 37% compared to 53% in the previous year, while the proportion of targets missed only by a small margin doubled to reach 27%. Finally, the targets not met (29%) were slightly higher than in the previous year.

This drop in results was somewhat mitigated by an overall increase in activities and participation. Although the transition from virtual to face-to-face was slow, and Members were busy with preparatory work for the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) held mid-June, after several postponements, the number of participants increased by 7% compared to the previous year. Moreover, requests for national activities – which are the best tool to tailor training to the needs of a beneficiary at a given moment – rebounded after hitting its all-time low in 2021.

The resumption of in-person activities contributed to a greater variety in the pedagogical methods used, especially those that had almost disappeared in virtual delivery (e.g., simulations, participation in Committee meetings, coaching participants to develop action plans, etc.). In this regard, the Secretariat introduced a new train-the-trainer programme to develop the pedagogical skills of staff members designing and delivering TA, whether virtually or in-person.

The WTO's network of partnerships played an important role in 2022 and 62% of the activities were implemented with the involvement of a partner. These partnerships are a valuable asset for the WTO, as they contribute to the relevance and efficiency of the activities provided to Members and to ensuring the financial sustainability of the WTO TA.

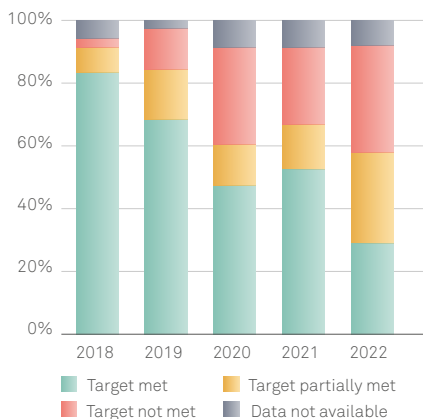
WTO TA success rate (2018-2022)



KEY RESULT 1



Implementation of WTO Agreements



**Khetsiwe Khumbuzile
Makhanya,**

FIMIP intern from Eswatini

“ This internship experience has been very enriching and has allowed me to deepen my knowledge on the various issues that concern global trade and have an impact on the economies of Members, particularly developing countries like Eswatini.

Continued support for Members and Observers

TA mainly targets developing and Least Developed Country Member and Observer government officials. In the TA Plan, WTO Members agreed to measure the TA effectiveness and impact through the evolution of beneficiaries' activity within the WTO as much as through their participation in training activities.

Overall, the level of activity of beneficiary Members in the WTO was lower in 2022 compared to the previous year. Their average notification backlog increased by 9% despite a larger use of online platforms to complete these procedures. Also, the number of 'substantial' documents issued by these Members – a proxy indicator of their involvement in the work of the WTO bodies – decreased by 24% when compared to the previous year.

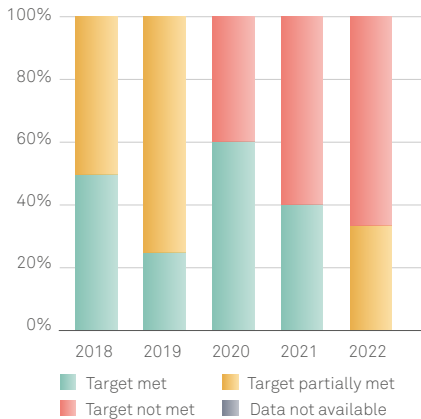
Another proxy is the ability of these Members to raise new Specific Trade Concerns (STCs). Whilst beneficiaries Members still raised the majority of the new STCs on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) or Sanitary & Phytosanitary measures (SPS), their share was also marginally lower than in the previous year (77%).

On the bright side, after two years heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in TA activities increased to reach more than 12,000 persons. The success rate in face-to-face activities and internships remained high, whilst a change of e-Learning platform prevented many participants from completing their online courses on time.

KEY RESULT 2



**Acceding governments
are participating in
accession negotiations**



Accompanying new accessions

A nother TA objective is to support the accession of new Members to the WTO. There was a lower engagement of several Observers in their accession processes in 2022, with an increase of almost 40% in those considered as inactive. Four formal Working Party meetings were held for the Comoros, Timor-Leste, and Uzbekistan, while an informal one was held for Iraq. Seven accession documents were prepared or revised (one more than in 2021). This was still much lower than the 2017-19 average initially anticipated in the TA Plan.

Regarding plurilateral agreements, Parties could not agree on the designation of the Chair of the Committee on Government Procurement since mid-2021, which also negatively affected TA results in this domain. Nonetheless circulation of accession-related documents has increased (+37%) while at a lower level than the 2018-20 average.



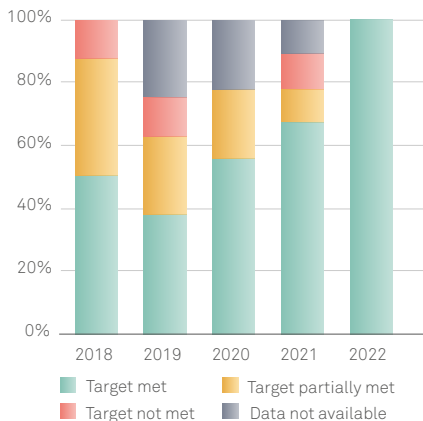
Amanda Sayuri Miashiro,
AIP Intern from Brazil

“Working specifically in accessions provided me with a comprehensive overview of WTO rules and enhanced my understanding of the political realities involved in bilateral negotiations between acceding governments and WTO Members. My daily tasks were challenging, dynamic and innovative, and working under the supervision of the Division was very enriching: I received solid guidance while having the autonomy to focus on my areas of interest and to propose new ideas for research, events, and more.

KEY RESULT 3



Academic institutions and other stakeholders are analysing WTO issues and reaching out to policy makers



Usha Chandnee Dwarka-Canabady,
*Ambassador of Mauritius, Chair of the
Committee for Trade and Development*

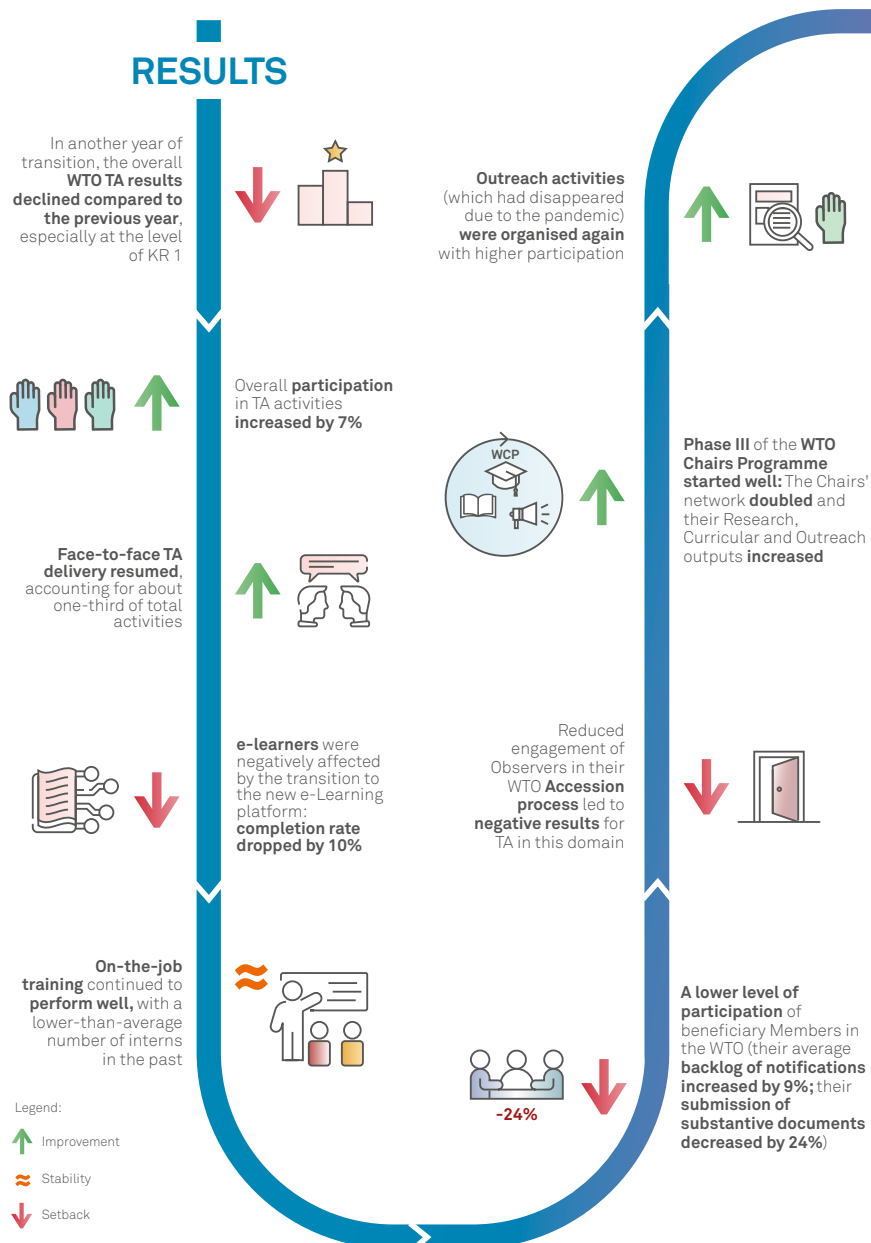
A new cycle of the WTO Chairs programme

Partnering with local universities and researchers is an effective way of expanding knowledge about trade and WTO-related issues in developing Members and Observers. The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) has been supporting academics and their teams since 2010 to foster research, adaptation of university curricula and dissemination of results among policy makers.

Phase III of the WCP started in 2022 and will last four years. The established network almost doubled from 19 to 35 Chairs, leading to a wider and deeper geographical coverage. The first results produced by phase III Chairs are encouraging and above expectations. Overall research output doubled compared to 2021, while outreach activities also increased. Furthermore, one former participant in the PhD support programme earned the Asian Development Bank best thesis of the year award.

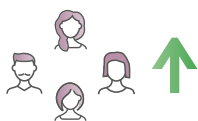
“An independent external evaluation of the Chairs Programme recommended better representation – both geographically and regarding LDCs – and more integration with other WTO capacity building and research activities. I am pleased that these improvements have been fully addressed in the WCP’s third phase. The programme now counts a total of 6 LDC Chairs, greatly boosted its presence in previously underrepresented areas across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

WTO TA in 2022 at a glance



INCLUSION

Participation from LDCs fell by 5%



Language diversity was more balanced than in the past



For the first time, more women than men participated in WTO TA



Overall geographical spread increased

CURRICULUM

Greater variety of pedagogical methods used, especially those that had almost disappeared in virtual delivery



Requests for national activities bounced back



New train-the-trainer programme to develop the pedagogical skills of staff members designing and delivering TA



Voluntary contributions reached a new all-time low

TA expenses increased by 50% thanks to the resumption of face-to-face activities



The trend of donors to earmark their voluntary contributions continued in 2022, making TA increasingly donor-driven



MANAGEMENT



The WTO revamped its e-Learning platform to enhance the users learning experience

Participation in advanced activities decreased

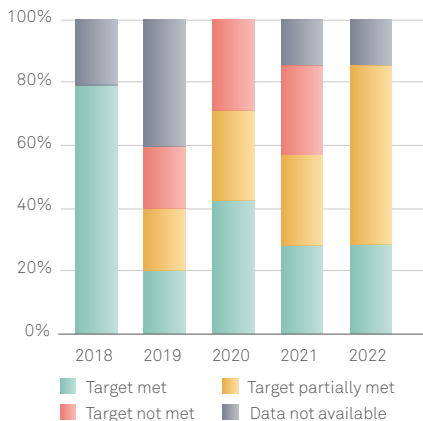


Six out of ten TA activities were implemented with a partner

KEY RESULT 4



Non-governmental stakeholders and legislators are aware of and knowledgeable about WTO work and issues



Growing outreach to non-traditional actors

WTO TA also targets other stakeholders (such as legislators, the media or civil society) through outreach activities and courses. Activities for legislators were resumed in 2022 focusing on the implementation of the outcome of MC12. There were also several activities with journalists and the private sector. Meanwhile, demand for training materials by the academia or private actors continued to decline.

The WTO went on to strengthen its use of social media and other platforms to spread information on trade issues across diverse audiences. Its number of social media followers and of views of TA webpages and news items increased in 2022.



Ahlam Nazih,

Journalist at L'Economiste, Morocco

“For me as a journalist, this training was an unexpected opportunity to discover the WTO closely, meet representatives of several countries, and get closer to their concerns and perception of things. It was also a great opportunity to take advantage of experts coming from different fields and better understand international trade’s current challenges.

Fostering Inclusion

Inclusivity is a priority in the WTO TA to ensure that government officials of all regions, especially the ones from least developed countries, enhance their negotiating skills and expertise on various aspects of the WTO work.

Nationals from LDCs accounted for 22% of the overall participation, coming from 42 different WTO Members and Observers, mainly from Africa. That share increased for interns and young professionals, as almost half (45%) were LDC nationals. The share of LDC nationals among e-learners slightly decreased in 2022 to 26% (30% in 2021). Regarding the completion of the courses,

only 49% of LDC participants completed the courses that they enrolled in, which is in line with the performance of non-LDCs e-learners.

Increasing women's role and participation in global trade is part of WTO TA's mission. For the first time, more women (51%) than men participated in WTO TA activities. This is a good move towards raising awareness of how trade can impact women's economic empowerment. Symbolically, this constitutes a spectacular achievement especially after the COVID-19 years during which women were disproportionately affected by sanitary restrictions and work-from-home.



Women’s participation in TA

In 2022, national and regional TA activities were organized in over 40 Members and Observers from different regions. These activities covered various aspects (from services to agriculture and from standards to e-commerce), and constantly adapted their contents to the regional or national context, thus providing valuable support to local audiences.

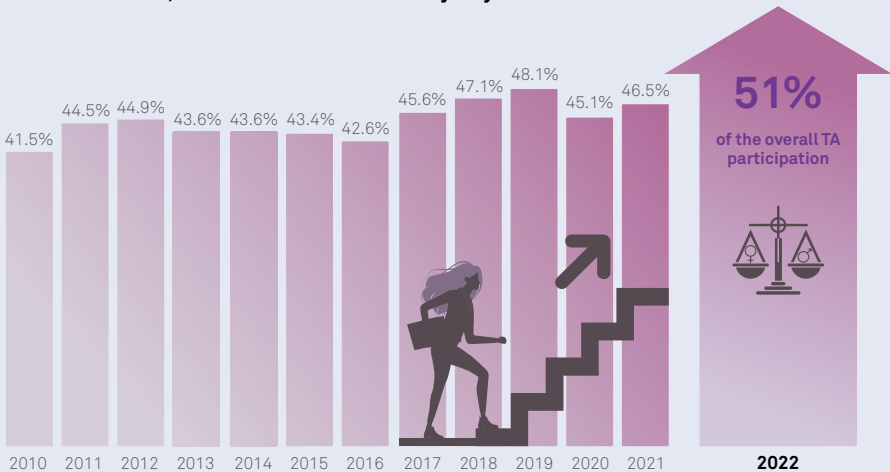
English remains the language of choice of most participants (66%), either in virtual, online or face-to-face TA activities. Over 15% of learners used French, 12% followed the activities in Spanish, and 7% engaged in multilingual training with simultaneous interpretation.



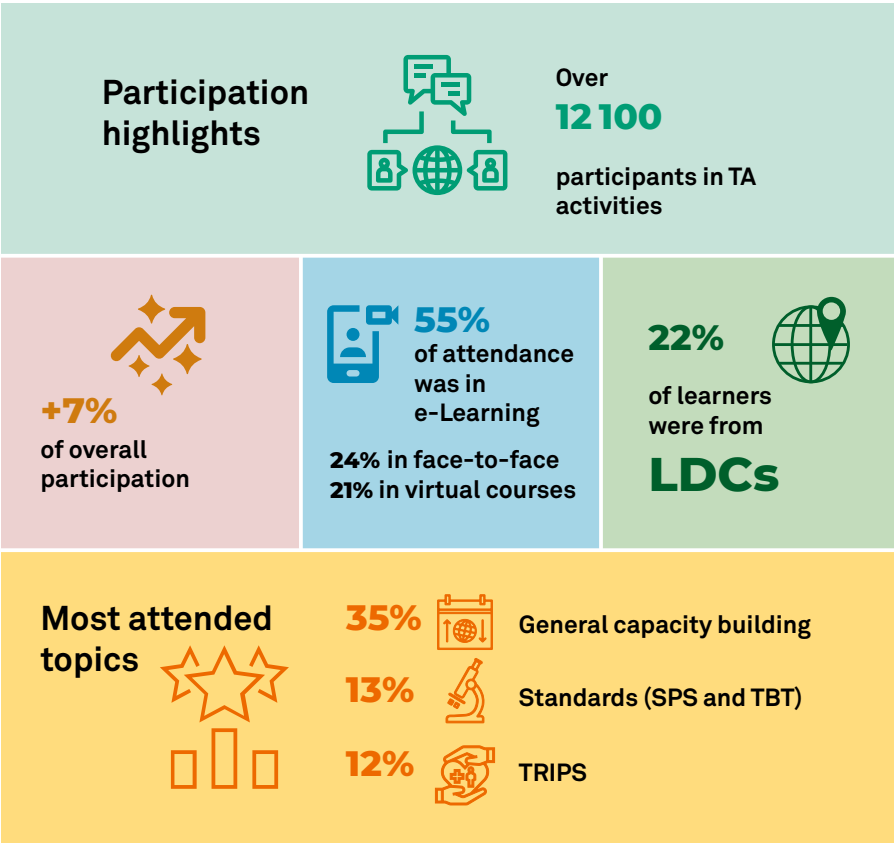
Nicole Mensa,
Special Assistant and Advisor on Gender to the WTO Director General

“ Inclusive technical assistance helps women and brings countries or territories often left behind into the global market. Inclusive economic growth leads to the creation of new markets, increased consumption, and new investment opportunities.

For the first time, female learners were a majority in TA



Participation highlights



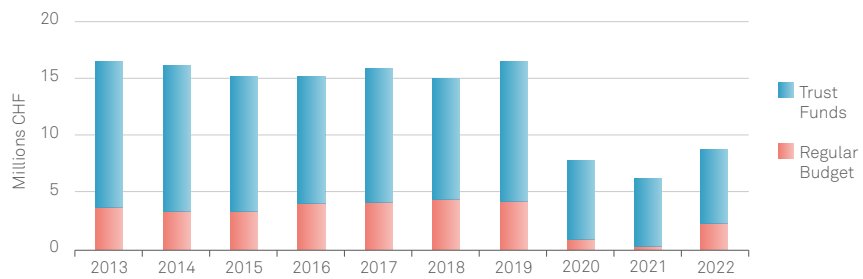
Spending bounced back as the pandemic ended

The Secretariat was able to resume the implementation of face-to-face TA activities in the second half of 2022, as the COVID-19 restrictions that had prevented them were progressively eliminated worldwide. It organised 60 in-person TA activities during the last six months of the year when only 3 such activities had taken place during the entire year 2021. After a long period of price stability, the year also saw a return of inflation in air ticket and hotel prices.

TA-related expenses consequently increased by 50% compared to the previous year, and the Secretariat was again able to use the share of the Regular Budget dedicated to TA for its intended purpose.

2022 recorded the lowest level of voluntary contributions to the WTO technical assistance in over 20 years, as several donors held back, pending the resumption of higher TA expenditure.

WTO TA expenses (2013-2022)



Unearmarked contributions kept declining

Unearmarked voluntary contributions decreased by 20% during the year, with only 7 donors making unearmarked contributions in 2022. This was a new historic low. Thus, the proportion of unearmarked

voluntary TA funds reached its lowest point in 2022, representing only one third of total TA resources for the first time since the beginning of the century.



María Pagán,
US Ambassador to the WTO

“ One important and foundational area of focus for the United States is technical assistance to support transparency and the good regulatory practices that undergird Members’ commitments to one another.

WTO TA funding

Technical Assistance is funded through the regular budget of WTO (38%) and voluntary contributions from the following Members (62%).



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