

A background photograph showing three people in a professional setting. On the left, a woman wearing a pink hijab and a dark blue top is smiling. In the center, a woman with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt, is also smiling and looking towards the right. On the right, a man in a blue and white checkered shirt is seen from the side, smiling. They appear to be in a meeting or training session. A blue banner with the WTO logo is partially visible in the background.

2023

WTO Technical Assistance Annual Report

Back to satisfactory results



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

“ In 2023, WTO Technical Assistance (TA) returned to its full operational capacity. I am delighted that the increase in activity was mirrored by significant progress in terms of results. WTO TA achieved the best success rate of the last five years, with almost 80% of targets fully or partially met.

I would like to congratulate the Members and the Secretariat for their resilience and tenacity, which have nurtured a rapid and dynamic recovery. Our donors should also be congratulated for their generous contributions throughout these difficult times.

A core function of the WTO, technical assistance and capacity-building activities seek to enhance professional and institutional trade capacities in developing and least-developed WTO members and observer governments. WTO TA provides beneficiaries with enhanced know-how to take full advantage of the opportunities from the rules-based multilateral trading system and address potential challenges. Within the WTO Secretariat, the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) oversees these activities.



This brochure is a summary of the content of the WTO Technical Assistance Annual Report 2023 (WT/COMTD/W/290 - 24-3422), and it has been produced for informative purposes only.

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WTO TA 2023 - Key takeaways

- With the number of TA activities and participation almost back to pre-pandemic levels, the overall success rate bounced back to almost 80% in 2023, while the proportion of missed targets shrank.
- More engaging and action-oriented TA programmes with a lasting impact have gained momentum, particularly those related to notifications, supporting growing levels of compliance with transparency requirements.
- TA has continued to support Members' engagement in the negotiations on a second Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, while encouraging prompt ratification of the first Agreement.
- New initiatives were launched in 2023 to meet the capacity-building needs of Geneva-based WTO delegates.



Better results

Overall, the TA success rate in 2023 (79%), as measured under the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach approved by Members, was higher than the average of the three pandemic years 2020-2022 (66%) and in line with the last three pre-pandemic years 2017-2019 (80%).

Achieved targets (60%) increased significantly after their historic low in 2022 (39%), since a lower proportion of targets were partially met or not met (19% instead of 27% in 2022 in both instances).

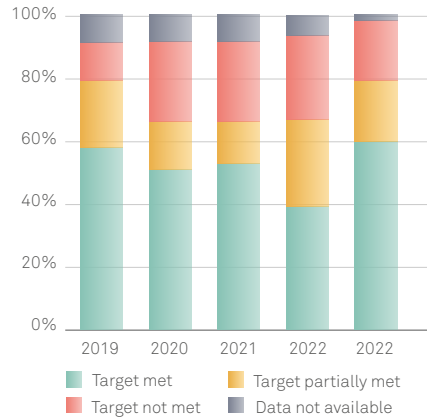
Higher participation

The upturn in results was accompanied by an overall increase in the volume of activities and participation. During the year, WTO TA trained 16,095 participants through 301 activities. This represents an increase of 32% and 24% respectively over the previous year. However, while the volume of TA activities has returned to pre-pandemic levels, participation has not yet fully recovered. An important indicator of the level of demand for TA by Members, i.e., the number of requests for national activities, surged by 60% after hitting record lows in the three-year period 2020-22.

Digital transformation

The majority of TA participants (59%) engaged in e-Learning self-paced courses, followed by face-to-face courses (35%). The delivery of virtual courses launched in 2020 to replicate the in-person training experience gradually lost its attractiveness, gathering around 6% of participants. In general, an increasing number of activities combined elements of these three delivery methods offering a blended learning approach.

WTO TA success rate (2019–2023)



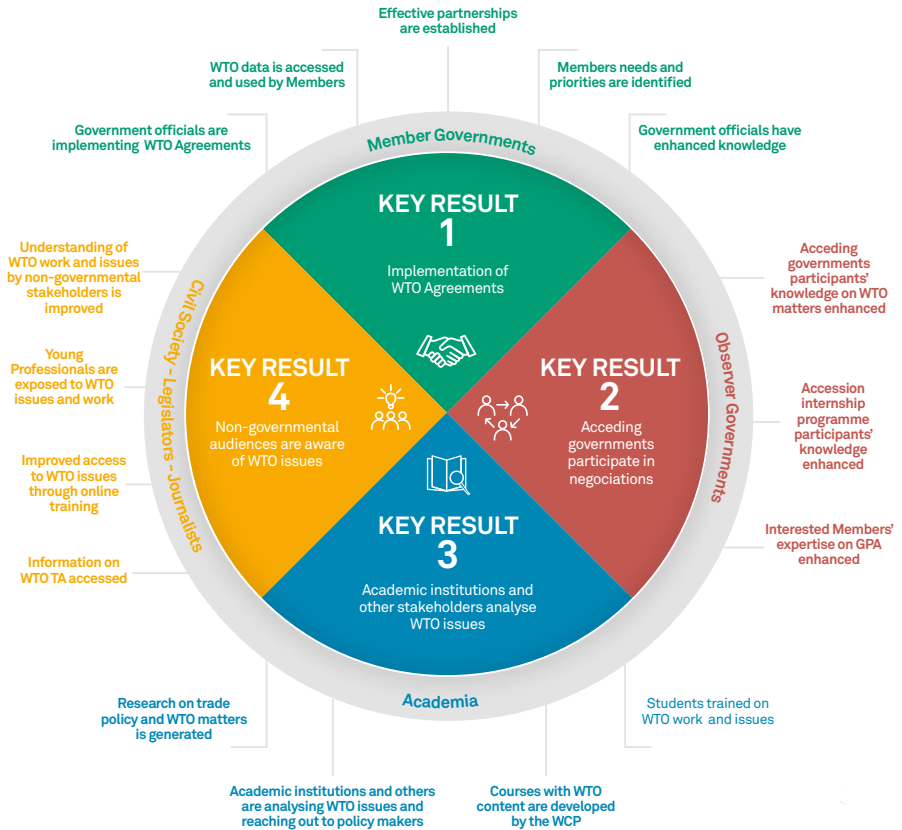
Evolving pedagogical approaches

After almost disappearing in virtual delivery, pedagogical methods such as simulations, participation in Committee meetings, coaching of participants and development of action plans were back in 2023. These methods proved particularly effective in encouraging the application in the workplace of what participants learned, increasing the return on participation for beneficiary institutions.

On-the-job training

The learning-by-doing offer comprising internships and the young professionals programme attracted 65 participants, the highest number ever recorded for such programmes. The interns and young professionals joined the Secretariat or the Permanent Missions in Geneva to enhance their knowledge while working on trade-related matters. Except for one, all of them met the performance expectations, with more than one third of them exceeding those targets.

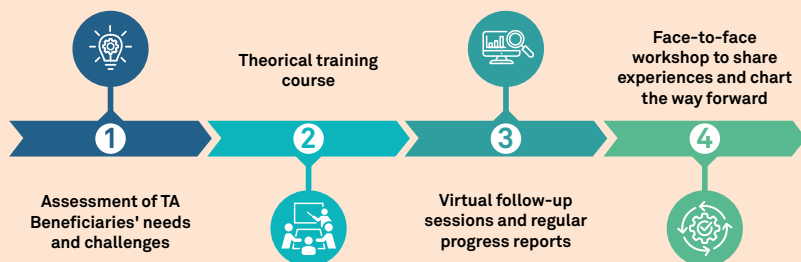
WTO TA Framework of impact



In the spotlight

A concerted approach across WTO areas to boost transparency

Tailored pedagogical approaches, including mentoring and coaching, development and implementation of action plans, focus on specific deliverables, and follow-up activities, have been introduced in several TA training schemes in recent years, especially for courses on transparency obligations. Besides a few variations, these programmes follow four main phases.



Pilot Transparency Champions Programmes on SPS & TBT

With the close support of experimented mentors assigned to participants, the implementation of tailored action plans developed during the training course was set in motion in the intermediate phase of the programmes. Progress reports allowed periodic monitoring, and an overall evaluation was carried out during the final phase.

The initial results from the programmes have shown a significant improvement in the number, quality and frequency of notifications from TA beneficiary Members. For some of them, the notifications submitted during and upon completion of the programme equalled or exceeded the total number of notifications submitted since 1995.



“ Part of my action plan was to ensure that Tanzania could meet its notification obligations. I succeeded in organising a national awareness seminar that brought together around thirty participants from several ministries, which was very useful in stimulating notifications. In the next steps, I will have to ensure that the ePing tool is effectively utilised.

Melkizedeck Killian Kodyy

Fisheries Officer, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Tanzania
Participant in the Transparency Champions Programme

Six Key Success Factors of the Transparency Champions Programmes

ACTIVATING

Guiding participants and providing them with the skills to transform their ideas into concrete work plans, strengthen internal coordination and reach out more effectively to key stakeholders and identified decision - makers to gain support for specific proposals and promote change in their countries to address the implementation of the transparency provisions of the agreements.

**MENTORING**

Mentors assist and stimulate the process of creating action plans, help participants avoid dead ends or unrealistic ambitions, challenge them to step out of their comfort zone if necessary, suggest alternatives or solutions they may not have considered, and boost their determination and confidence during the implementation phase.

**PLANNING**

With their mentors' support, participants analyse the implementation challenges arising from the results of the baseline survey, define the expected results, set their objectives, plan actions, establish timeframes and anticipate progress measures, while building on the knowledge and skills gained from the training.

**REPORTING**

To keep up the momentum between the main training course and the follow-up activities, interim reports keep the Secretariat, mentors and other participants informed of the progress made in implementing the action plans.

EMBEDDING

Attending committee meetings during the programmes allows participants to gain first-hand experience of WTO procedures and processes. Recordings of public meetings are uploaded to a dedicated ePing page and shared with participants as additional training material.

**NETWORKING**

Formal sessions dedicated to experience-sharing and networking. Participants are encouraged to exchange contact details and identify WTO experts – particularly among trainers - who could be useful in their areas of work in the future. Participants are also included in a discussion group on the ePing platform, creating a community of transparency champions to support each others.

**George Apiyo**

Senior Information Officer, Uganda
National Bureau of Standards
Mentor as part of the Transparency
Champions Programme

“As a mentor, I provided participants with best practices that they were able to adapt to their own context. During the lectures and other activities, I was able to lend practical advice, for example by showing how to practically prepare and submit notifications. I also mentored participants through the process of implementing their individual action plans, where it was very important to help them move towards feasible actions.

Workshop on Notification of Subsidies

Following a theory-based face-to-face workshop, participants, assisted by coaches, were required to analyse potentially notifiable subsidy regimes and submit draft notifications in order to secure their participation in the final face-to-face workshop. Participants benefited from hands-on support in preparing ready-to-submit notifications on concrete subsidy schemes.

For several WTO Members who participated in the programme, this led to improved coordination of the notification process, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and data management procedures. This initial change, with its expected long-term effects, is an important first step towards making these efforts sustainable.



Rupesh Raj Khanal

Senior Section Officer, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Nepal

“The first phase of the programme was very much fruitful to update the theoretical understanding of the Agreement and its notification obligations. The second phase was very interactive and supportive. This phase was, in fact, a unique opportunity for experience sharing, mutual learning and networking with experts.

Advanced Agriculture Notification Workshop

Thirty government officials attended the first phase of the programme to enhance their expertise on notification requirements in agriculture, with an in-depth look at domestic support, one of the most complex areas of the Agreement. Participants now have to work remotely on at least one of their outstanding notifications, and to collate the related information and data which they should present in the follow-up in-person workshop planned at the end of 2024.

Workshop on Notification of Quantitative Restrictions

The programme enabled developing Members to improve their understanding of the relevant WTO rules and to better comply with transparency obligations. Participants first went fishing for relevant information that could be useful for notifications. During the three-day training, dedicated sessions enabled them to make use of the information gathered to prepare draft notifications, under the guidance of specialised coaches. The

workshop was followed by virtual follow-up sessions devoted to finalising draft notifications and experience-sharing.



Akouvi Soke Klolly

Foreign Trade Officer, Ministry of Trade, Togo

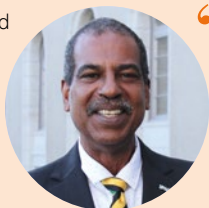
“I was able to strengthen my capacity on the notification of quantitative restrictions. I leave with the necessary background that will allow me, back in Togo, to coordinate with other institutions, ministries, so that we can notify effectively to the WTO our quantitative restrictions.

Supporting the implementation of the WTO Agreement on fisheries subsidies

Over a period of seven months, eight regional workshops were carried out worldwide, bringing together more than 265 senior officials responsible for trade and fisheries management from 85 WTO Members.

Experts from the WTO and other relevant partners raised participants' understanding of the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The workshops provided the details on the issues and dynamics in the second wave of negotiations.

Internal evaluations of two of the activities confirmed the high relevance of the workshops. They were effective in reaching their stated objectives and would help the participating Members move their national process forward. As at end of March 2024,



out of the 35 TA beneficiaries who have deposited instruments of acceptance of the Agreement, 29 had participated in one of the workshops.

“ We explored the details of the agreement and obtained WTO experts' interpretation, while having the opportunity to clear up misconceptions about how we operate within the system. Signing such an agreement commits an entire country and future generations to providing all the necessary notifications on a timely manner.

Dr Gavin Bellamy, Chief Executive Officer, National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica, Participant in the WTO workshop in the Caribbean

Responding to the needs of Geneva-based delegates

To carry out their mission successfully, Geneva-based delegates require a combination of in depth understanding of WTO issues and diplomatic know-how in the conduct of WTO matters. Traditional WTO TA programmes are designed to address the needs to understand the substance of the issues covered by the WTO bodies.

What has been new in 2023 is the development of instruments and programmes to assist the delegates with the other aspects of their jobs as representatives of their countries. This was discussed by Members in the context of their work on WTO reform to improve the functioning of the WTO bodies, following the mandate received at the 12th Ministerial Conference. Several

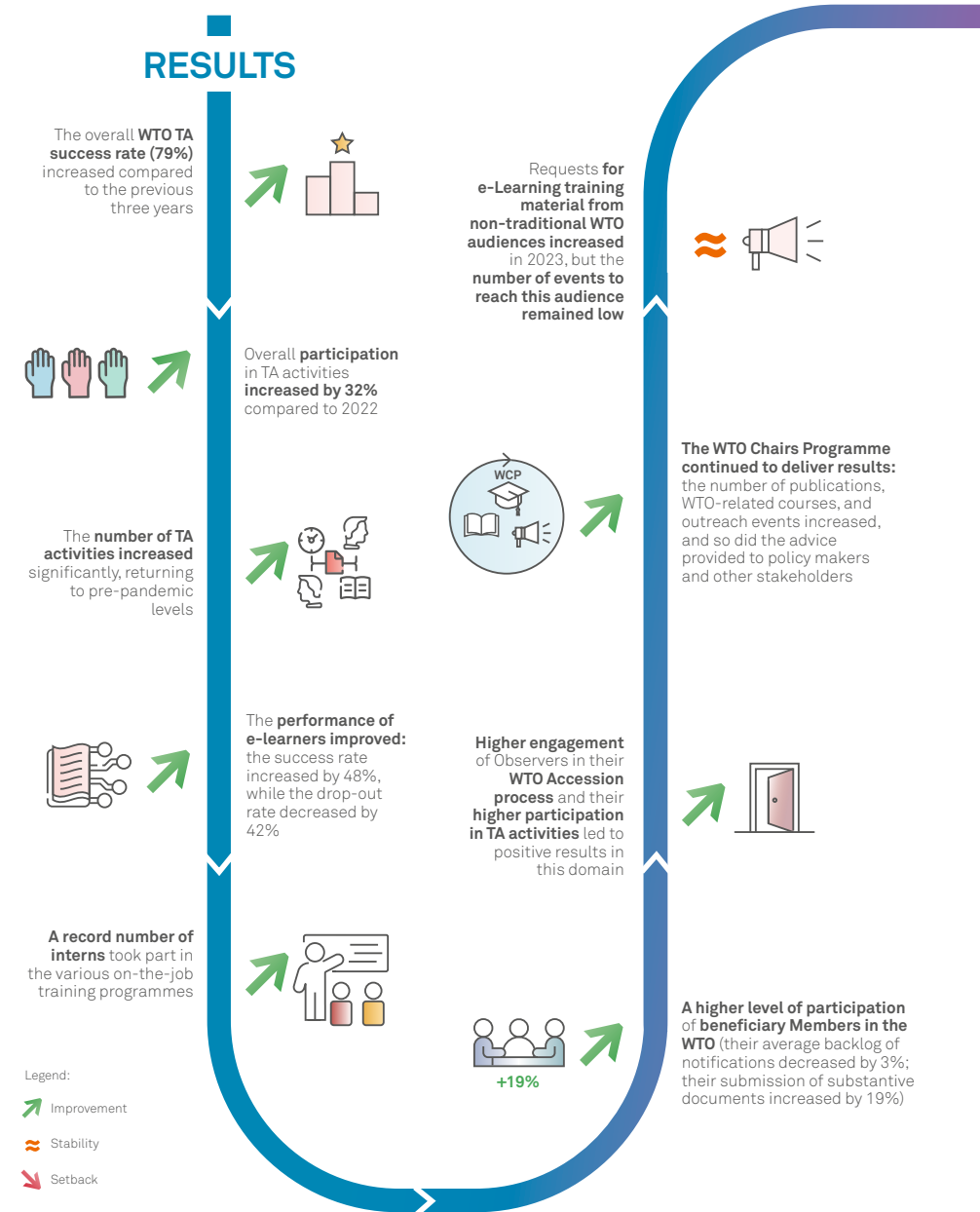


initiatives were launched to meet the TA needs of Geneva-based delegates, including induction sessions to the SPS Committee work and functioning, training sessions on the e-Agenda tool, on the functioning of the Committee on Agriculture, etc.

“ The SPS briefing sessions are delivered in a succinct and user-friendly manner, enhancing delegates' practical understanding of the procedures and tools that they need to be familiar with, to effectively participate in SPS Committee meetings.

Tayutic MENA RETANA, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the WTO, Chair of the SPS Committee

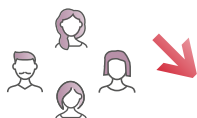
2023 results at a glance



INCLUSION

Participation from LDCs in TA activities **increased by 40%** compared to 2022

➔ **LDCs**



Language diversity continued to be **more balanced** than in the past



Women's participation in WTO TA **decreased** after its historical peak in 2022, while remaining high (48%)



Overall **geographical spread increased**



TA expenses **bounced back** almost to their pre-pandemic level, making a **better use** of available resources



The trend of donors to earmark their voluntary contributions continued in 2023



Voluntary contributions decreased further, reaching their **lowest level ever**

MANAGEMENT

CURRICULUM

TA activities **increasingly adopted a blended learning format** and used a greater **variety of pedagogical methods** tailored to the challenges and needs of the participants



The number of **national activities requested** bounced back by 60%



The **Regional Trade Policy Courses** returned to face-to-face delivery, incorporating lessons learned from the online editions of the previous three years



For the **second year in a row**, participation in advanced courses **decreased**



The transition to the **new e-Learning platform** was **fully completed**, enhancing the users learning experience

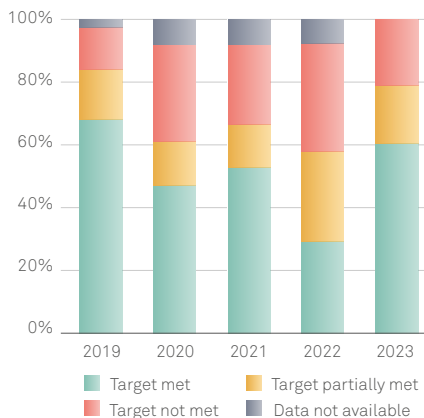


A **record number of face-to-face activities** were delivered in cooperation with **partners**, but their contribution was **lower** than in the past

KEY RESULT 1



Implementation of WTO Agreements



Continued support for Members and Observers

TA mainly targets government officials from developing and Least Developed Country Members and Observers. The objective is to enhance beneficiaries' capacity to better comply with their obligations under the WTO Agreements and to make full use of their rights.

Overall, the level of activity of TA beneficiary Members in the WTO was higher in 2023 compared to the previous year. The number of 'substantial' documents issued by these Members – a proxy indicator for their involvement in the work of the WTO bodies – increased by 19% when compared to the previous year. Efforts to enhance transparency in trade regulations and notifications led to a notable reduction in the backlog of outstanding notifications under different WTO Agreements. TA beneficiaries' average notification backlog decreased by 3%, with an extensive use of online platforms to complete these procedures. Several action-oriented trainings were provided during the year to support the TA beneficiaries' efforts in this domain.

Another proxy indicator is the ability of these Members to raise new Specific Trade Concerns (STCs) in relation to measures that may affect their trade. In 2023, TA beneficiary Members raised again the majority of new STCs on, for example, Market Access issues, Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures or Technical Barriers to Trade, albeit at a slower pace than in the previous year.



Thato Motlotlegi

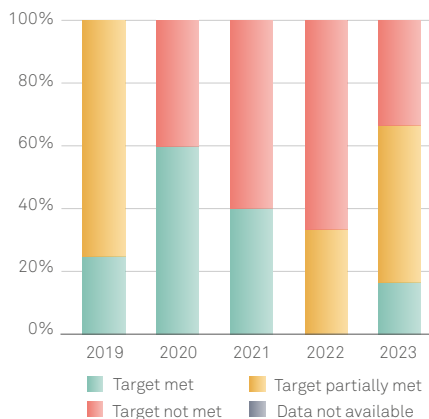
Regional Coordinator Internship Programme
Participant from Botswana

“ I gained so much insight into the function of the WTO, the multilateral trading system and the Trade Policy. Working at the Mission has exposed me to a multitude of experiences, allowing me to appreciate how missions handle regular WTO work and negotiations, while at the same time keeping the country in the know of what is happening.

**KEY
RESULT
2**



Acceding governments
are participating in
accession negotiations



Accompanying new accessions

Another TA objective is to support the accession of new Members to the WTO. 2023 was marked by a heightened level of accession-related technical assistance activity, especially for LDCs, as Comoros and Timor-Leste completed the final stages of their accession. Bhutan moved from inactive observer in 2022 to active in 2023 and Turkmenistan launched its discussions with Members.

Nine formal Working Group meetings were held (more than double the number of the previous year) for Azerbaijan, Comoros, Timor-Leste, and Uzbekistan; and eight accession-related documents were prepared or reviewed (one more than in 2022).

Regarding plurilateral Agreements, the Parties agreed in mid-2023 on the appointment of the Chair of the Committee on Government Procurement (CGP), thus breaking an almost two-year impasse. This boosted TA results in this domain, i.e., the number of meetings and interventions made by TA-eligible Members in the CGP. However, the circulation of accession related documents decreased compared to the previous year.



Getahun Walegn Dagnaw

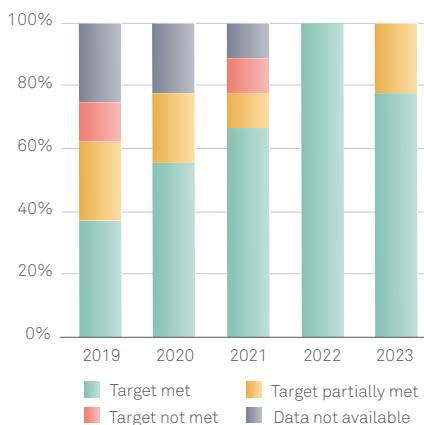
*Deputy Assistant Attorney General and Advisor to the State Minister of Ethiopia
Participant in the training on WTO rules in accessions negotiations*

“ The training has opened our eyes to appreciate the rules, procedures, and key issues that should be our focus in the ongoing negotiation process. A one-week training cannot equate our experience with that of WTO Members who have decades, if not half a century, of negotiation experience, therefore ongoing capacity building and technical assistance are essential.

KEY RESULT 3



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



WTO Chairs Programme

The WTO is partnering with local universities and researchers to expand 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, which started in 2022, continued in 2023 on a bright note with its 16 participating chairs. Almost all benchmark indicators showed higher levels of results than in the previous year. The number of publications increased by 36%, as did the number of new or updated WTO-related courses (almost doubled), the number of outreach events (+10%), and the advice provided to policymakers and stakeholders (+37%).



Ambassador José SÁNCHEZ-FUNG

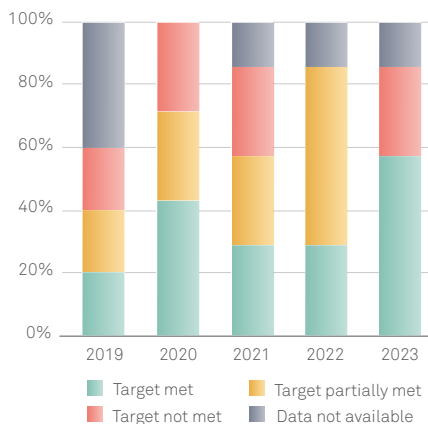
*Chair of the Committee on Trade and Development,
Dominican Republic*

“ I see the impact of the Programme’s capacity-building efforts extending beyond the individual beneficiary countries — contributing to a more inclusive and balanced global trade landscape.

**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. Four activities were organised for this audience as in 2022: three for journalists and one for legislators. These activities focused on the challenges facing the multilateral trading system, general understanding of WTO-related issues and preparations for the 13th Ministerial Conference. Meanwhile, demand for training materials by the academia or private actors surged in 2023 after years of gradual decline.

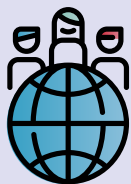
The WTO went on to strengthen its use of social media and other platforms and channels to spread awareness of trade issues among different audiences. Its number of social media followers and of views of TA webpages and news items increased in 2023.



Malayvieng Vongchandy
Vientiane Times, Lao PDR

“ The workshop for journalists not only updates my knowledge on the WTO, but also provides me with some skills to access the global trade database and establish professional working relationships with the WTO.

Fostering inclusion



WTO TA Benefited 39 LDC's

Efforts to make TA accessible to LDCs and inclusive in terms of gender, geography, and language continued in 2023.

LDCs remain a priority for the WTO TA. The fact that Africa was again the region with the largest number of participants in TA activities in 2023, followed by Asia-Pacific, reinforced this priority, as all the LDCs except one are in these two regions. They were invited to 70% of all WTO TA activities organised in 2023, including activities focused only on LDCs and their priorities. The share of participants from LDCs increased by nine percentage points compared to 2022, reaching 31% of all learners. However, the number of LDCs taking part in TA activities decreased slightly from 42 different Members and Observers in 2022 to 39 in 2023. LDCs accounted for 18% of the requests for national activities in

2023, while almost half (46%) of trainees and young professionals and 38% of e-learners were participants from LDCs.

Participation increased in all regions, with the exception of the Middle East, where geopolitical turmoil and security concerns played a major role, especially in the second half of the year. The proportion of languages used to conduct the TA activities has not changed much since 2021 and was more balanced than in pre-pandemic years. Half of all TA activities – both e-Learning and face-to-face – were conducted in English (52%), while the use of French and Spanish accounted for 21% and 23% of activities respectively. Finally, 15 activities (12 global and 3 regional) were conducted with interpretation in 2023.



“For too many talented women and men in the developing world, performing to the best of their potential to enable so many Members to participate meaningfully in global trade remains hampered by inadequate access to trade-related training.

Taufiqur Rahman

Director, Development Division, WTO



48%
of **Women**
participation

After a record-breaking 2022, in which more women (51%) than men participated in WTO trainings for the first time, the ratio fell to 48% in 2023, the second-best performance ever along with that achieved in 2019.

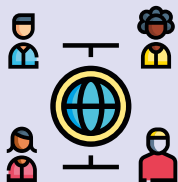
WTO TA also pays particular attention to ensuring that its programmes are accessible to persons with disabilities. In 2023, two government officials with disabilities completed the highest level of the WTO TA Progressive Learning Strategy.



“ I was somewhat apprehensive before joining the course because of the arrangements required for persons with disabilities, which are not always available everywhere. But I was pleased to find, when I arrived at the WTO, that everything was in place so that I could take part in the programme and progress as smoothly as the other participants.

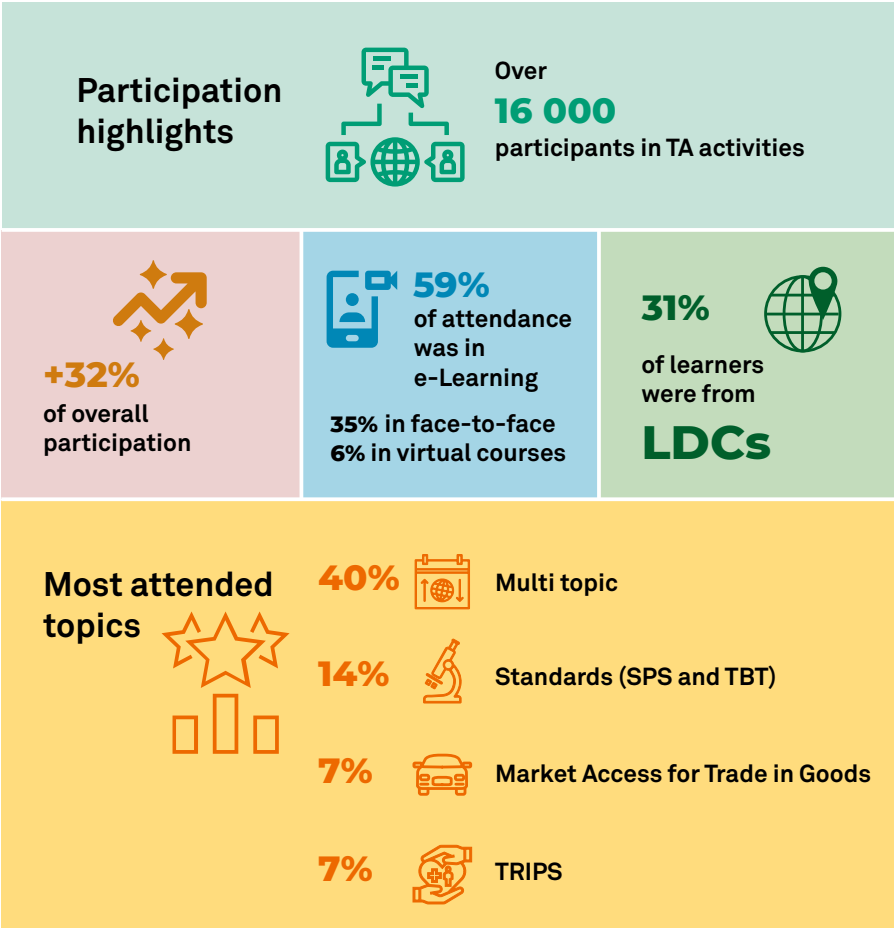
Jean François ADJI YAPI

*Head of Sub-Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Trade,
Industry and SME Promotion, Côte d'Ivoire*



70 Members
and Observers
hosted
WTO TA

Participation highlights

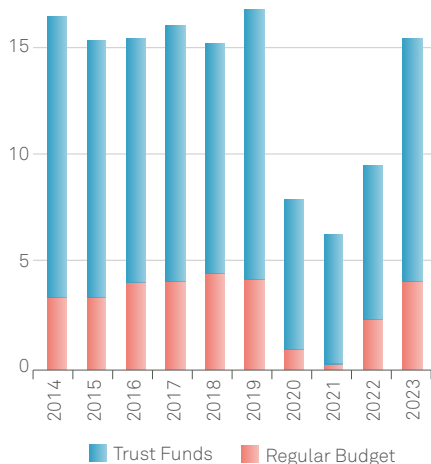


TA expenses on the rise

In 2023, TA expenses bounced almost back to their 2019 level, the last pre-pandemic year, as face-to-face TA activities were again fully available during the entire year. Total TA expenses amounted to CHF 15.1 million, marginally below the 2015-19 average, as the recent inflation in airline tickets and hotels was compensated by a still lower number of TA activities.

The overall TA expenses almost doubled in 2023 compared to the previous year. However, they remained within the available TA resources during the year, thanks to the reserves accumulated during the pandemic and the Secretariat was able to fully respond to the TA requests of beneficiaries. This has dented the unearmarked year-end balance which stood well below the target amount for the following year at the end of 2023.

Technical Assistance Expenses (2014-2023)



TA resources on the decline!

The WTO TA is traditionally financed through a combination of Regular Budget funding and voluntary contributions to trust funds, earmarked or not. Members kept the Regular Budget envelope for TA constant at CHF 4.4 million. A total of CHF 3 million of unearmarked voluntary contributions was received in 2023 from 6 donors, the lowest level for 25 years, equivalent to 13% of the annual contributions received during the peak years of 2006-9.

Meanwhile, earmarked voluntary contributions remained constant. For the second consecutive year, they exceeded unearmarked voluntary contributions, reversing the logic which had presided over the creation of the Global Trust Fund (GTF) more than 20 years ago. As a result, the donor-driven proportion of the WTO TA offer keeps increasing.



João Aguiar Machado

European Union Ambassador to the WTO

“Unearmarked contributions give the WTO Secretariat the possibility to be more flexible in designing technical assistance for those most in need. This is particularly important when budget resources are scarce.

WTO TA funding

Almost 60% of WTO TA resources in 2023 were voluntary contributions from the donor Members, while the remaining 40% came from the WTO regular budget.



**WTO Members
contributing to the
various WTO Trust
Funds in recent years.**



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Find out more

