



TRADE FACILITATION

MAKING TRADE EASIER AND FASTER



GLOBAL CONTEXT

In an international environment where falling tariffs and quotas represent less of a barrier to trade, trade facilitation has emerged as an important trade policy tool. **The main objective of trade facilitation is to reduce the complexities and costs associated with cumbersome border procedures and controls, while maintaining efficient compliance controls.** World Bank estimates suggest that administrative hurdles arising from cumbersome border procedures can cause up to 75 per cent of delays of shipments. The Agreement on Trade Facilitation of the World Trade Organization, which entered into force on 22 February 2017, is a major international achievement. It aims to reduce trade transaction costs and bureaucratic barriers, speeding up clearance procedures for the cross-border trade of goods, thereby making trade easier, faster and less costly. The alignment of national and regional rules with the multilateral trade facilitation framework is instrumental to achieving increased trade integration. **To facilitate the implementation of the technical and institutional obligations resulting from the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, UNCTAD assists developing countries, including the least developed countries (LDCs), with a range of activities, as follows: elaboration of needs assessments and assistance with the ratification, categorization and notification of national trade facilitation implementation plans; development of project plans; advisory services to national trade facilitation committees; monitoring and evaluation of trade facilitation initiatives; general capacity-building and technical assistance on trade facilitation reforms; as well as assistance with the implementation of trade facilitation measures.**



HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME WORK?

Ultimately, the Trade Facilitation Programme of UNCTAD aims at enhancing trade facilitation processes and the competitiveness of developing countries, including LDCs, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Its goal is to **ensure an increased implementation of trade facilitation reforms by developing countries, improving their capacity to comply with international and regional rules and standards relating to trade facilitation, including World Trade Organization commitments.**

One of the programme focuses is to improve decision-making capacity and implementing skills of national trade facilitation committees to fulfil their mandate. UNCTAD provides an intensive professional programme for the secretariat and members of such committees, namely the Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees. The main objective is to help the committees to implement, in a coordinated manner, trade facilitation reforms, including the provisions of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, and to be able to monitor implementation. With a view to ratification and implementation of the Agreement, UNCTAD support covers assessments of technical assistance needs and preparation of categorization of provisions of the Agreement; tailored training in trade, transit and transport facilitation; advisory services on ratification of the Agreement; and assistance in the creation and sustainable operation of national trade facilitation committees.

The Trade Facilitation Programme also assists developing countries in the implementation of trade facilitation measures, for instance: establishing a legal framework for trade-related single windows, undertaking simplification of trade-related procedures, training national transit coordinators or supporting regional trade facilitation initiatives. The success of the programme resides in its strong cooperation not only with external partners such as the World Customs Organization and the International Trade Centre, but also with other experts within UNCTAD, working on the crossroads of trade facilitation with customs automation, e-commerce or non-tariff measures.



RESULTS AND IMPACTS AT A GLANCE

Learn about the results of UNCTAD Empowerment Programme in just two minutes with this short video: youtube.com/watch?v=Jh4-ukGQrxc. Since 2016, UNCTAD has empowered 27 countries around the world, mainly in Africa and the Caribbean region.

UNCTAD has held over 60 programme events and trained over 2,000 trade facilitation stakeholders (40 per cent women). But UNCTAD support to national trade facilitation committees is not just about training. UNCTAD also supports countries in the production of numerous outputs, such as terms of reference and work plans for the committees, multiannual trade facilitation road maps, categorization and notification to the Trade Facilitation Committee of the World Trade Organization, support for legislative documents, project proposals for trade facilitation reforms and knowledge-transfer strategies.



IMPACT STORIES

94% of beneficiaries fully agree or tend to agree that the programme has improved their knowledge in trade facilitation



92% of beneficiaries intend to apply the acquired knowledge in their daily jobs

86% of beneficiaries affirm that they now feel in a better position to assume their role as members of national trade facilitation committees than before the workshop

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT US

The knowledge shared by the resource experts has encouraged greatly the inter-agency collaboration in Nigeria to enhance trade and reduce time as well as cost of imports and exports.

I have come a long way, and it has been a lifetime experience that I will definitely apply in the future.

I have learned so much in this programme. Now, I think of trade facilitation in a different way. I understand better all the things that the Sudan can do and how important it is to mainstream trade facilitation in its development policy.

UNCTAD EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME IN AFRICA

for National Trade Facilitation Committees



- Empowerment Programme completed
- Empowerment Programme ongoing
- Empowerment Programme starting in 2020
- Past and present support to national trade facilitation committees outside the framework of the Empowerment Programme

Updated in December 2019



PROGRAMME FACTS AND FIGURES

Scope: all regions

Start date: 2012

Countries assisted: more than 80

Ongoing programmes:

Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees in 15 developing countries, including 5 LDCs

Support to national trade facilitation committees in 15 small island developing States

Support to regional trade facilitation efforts

Support for the establishment of a single window legal framework in Jamaica

Website: unctad.org/tf



Sustainable Development Goals addressed:

Directly: 10,16

Indirectly: 17



DONORS/FUNDING SOURCE (2014–2019)

Australia, China, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom, European Union, United States Agency for International Development, Trade Mark East Africa, United Nations Development Programme