



Services: New Frontier for Sustainable Development



UNCTAD Findings on Services, Development and Trade

This publication is part of a series entitled “Services: New Frontier on Sustainable Development.” It results from the Global Services Forums in Doha in 2012 and Beijing in 2013.

This publication reviews the findings of various UNCTAD reports and studies from 2009 to 2013 on services, trade and development.

UNCTAD reports have generated a number of key messages across all service sectors that not only facilitate trade from and to developing countries, but elaborate the fundamental regulatory and policy commitment needed to ensure effective contributions to development objectives, in particular for LDCs and landlocked States. For the latter, which depend in many cases on trade flows in traditional goods in their regions, to enable growth in a range of services trade together with domestic-services reform is the inextricable current and emerging requirement that will propel their economies and job creation into more advanced stages of development. High infusions of relevant infrastructure and technology-intensive services are key in the recipe to reduce any impediments common to the state of being landlocked.

The lessons learnt extracted from UNCTAD literature to date may be summarized as follows:

- Several service sectors have been more resilient and have recovered faster from the financial and economic crises;
- The role of the State is essential to promote development, correct market failures and maximize social benefits of trade in services;
- There is a need to set priorities among different and sometimes competing policy and regulatory objectives;
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to finding the adequate policy and regulatory mix;
- Consideration of social and environmental aspects when designing and implementing service policies and regulations have a positive effect on political stability and competitiveness;
- Quality and effective regulatory and institutional frameworks matter more than ownership when assessing performance;
- The results of services privatization experiences in developing countries have been mixed; defining objectives and requirements can improve the outcome;
- Universal access, especially in basic and infrastructure services, remains a key policy objective;
- Preparedness for liberalization, multistakeholder coordination, and understanding negotiation options may allow for more optimal results for developing countries.