

Concept Note

Regional Kick-off Workshop

Better Statistics on Digital Services Trade for Gender-Responsive Trade Policies in Asia and the Pacific

8-10 June 2026, Bangkok, Thailand

Meeting Room A, United Nations Conference Centre, ESCAP s, Rajadamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Hybrid event

UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), is organizing a three-day regional kick-off workshop on strengthening the measurement of digital trade in services and the production of sex-disaggregated statistics for gender-responsive trade policymaking in Asia and the Pacific. The workshop will launch a DA18-funded project (2026–2029) to equip countries with the data and tools needed to measure digital services trade and design gender-inclusive trade policies. The project focuses on four target countries: Bhutan, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea, with Kyrgyzstan and Viet Nam identified as backup countries.

Background

Digital trade in services is growing rapidly across the Asia-Pacific region, driven by expanding internet access, digital platforms, and evolving consumer and business behaviors. Globally, digitally deliverable services account for around 56% of total services exports, but the share is only 16–20% in least developed countries, highlighting significant digital gaps (UNCTAD)¹. Additionally, many developing economies lack the statistical capacity to measure services trade accurately. Root causes include outdated survey instruments, limited technical capacity, weak inter-agency coordination, and insufficient integration of gender variables into statistical systems. Existing data often lack granularity, are produced with significant delays, and do not capture digital trade or gender dimensions. As a result, the impacts of digitalization on women and men remain largely invisible, obscuring disparities in access to digital markets, skills, and income, and limiting policymakers' ability to design effective, inclusive, and gender-responsive trade policies. In response to these challenges, this joint project aims to enhance national capacities of selected countries to address the absence of timely, granular, and sex-disaggregated statistics on digital trade in services for effective and inclusive trade policy.

Building on international standards, including IMF-OECD-UNCTAD-WTO Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade and UNCTAD's Trade-in-Services Information System (TiSSAT), the project will enhance and adapt the TiSSAT tool to capture digital trade and gender data, and pilot the upgraded tool in four target countries.

¹ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/254>

Workshop Goals and Objectives

- ✓ Strengthen participants' capacity and understanding of the importance of digital trade and gender statistics for evidence-based and inclusive policymaking in trade.
- ✓ Introduce international standards and practical tools, including the TiSSTAT system, for measuring digital trade in services
- ✓ Identify national priorities, data gaps, and capacity needs in the target countries
- ✓ Align stakeholders on project objectives, approach, and next steps
- ✓ Foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among national and regional stakeholders

Participants

Participants will include 3 representatives from each of the four project countries—Bhutan, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea being selected from national statistical offices, trade and digital economy ministries, and gender equality institutions. We also welcome representatives from Kyrgyzstan and Viet Nam to participate online.

The workshop is open to representatives of partner agencies, United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices in the project countries, and other regional and international stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes

- ✓ Participants share a common understanding of the project's objectives, approach, and next steps
- ✓ Capacity is strengthened on digital trade and gender statistics and their use in policymaking
- ✓ Countries identify priority sectors, key data gaps, and national needs
- ✓ Participants are introduced to international standards, good practices, and the TiSSTAT system
- ✓ Next steps, country-specific action plans, and a shared workplan timeline are agreed for the first phase of project implementation.

Event Details and Logistics

Dates: 8-10 June 2026 (3 days)

Format: Hybrid (in-person and online) Connecting online: A hybrid option will be provided. The link will be shared closer to the event date for those unable to attend in person.

Working language: English

Travel cost: Country participants funded by the organizers (ESCAP) will receive a round-trip ticket in economy class, daily subsistence allowance (DSA) to cover lodging and meals for the duration of the workshop for the amount of 281USD per day, and terminal expenses, in accordance with UN travel rules and regulations.

Visa and entry requirements: All visitors to Thailand must have a valid passport. Many nationalities benefit from visa-on-arrival or visa exemptions for short stays. Participants are advised to verify entry requirements with the nearest Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate and to ensure all necessary travel documents are in order well in advance. In case participants shall require a visa attestation, they should reach the ECSPA organising team - Nucharat Tuntiwigit at tuntiwigit@un.org.

Organizers

The workshop will be organized by ESCAP, with technical and substantive support from UNCTAD, specifically its Statistics, Data and Digital Service (SDDS) and E-commerce and Digital Economy Measurement Unit (ECDE-Measurement, Division on Technology and Logistics), in collaboration with the Trade, Gender and Development Programme (Division on International Trade and Commodities) and the TRAINFORTRADE Programme.

For further information and logistics, please contact: Nucharat Tuntiwigit at tuntiwigit@un.org.

Indicative program

Day 1 (8 June). Opening, project overview, key concepts of digital trade in services, the gender dimension, introduction to UNCTAD's TiSSTAT system, and country presentations on policy priorities.

Day 2 (9 June). Joint session with APTFF x PTW 2026, country statistical capacities and gaps, hands-on TiSSTAT Playground, and ESCAP's tools for digital trade policymaking.

Day 3 (10 June). Guided TiSSTAT exercise, country breakout diagnostics, roundtable on the project workplan and country action plans for 2026 to 2029, and closing.