UNCTAD TRADE FACILITATION E-LEARNING PLATFORM

Created thanks to the financial support from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office via Her Majesty Revenue and Customs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
CREATING AN E-LEARNING PLATFORM TO DELIVER REMOTE CAPACITY BUILDING

In the summer of 2020, when it became evident that the travel restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic would not be lifted in the short term, UNCTAD’s Trade Facilitation Team studied alternatives for ensuring a qualitative remote delivery of its successful Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees.

BUILDING ON THE ONLINE VIDEOS CREATED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME 2018-2020, UNCTAD OPTED FOR SETTING UP AN E-LEARNING PLATFORM THAT WILL ENSURE A HOLISTIC VIRTUAL TRAINING JOURNEY TO MEMBERS OF NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEES.

As a result, between August 2020 and January 2021, the UNCTAD team worked on the design of the platform, the adaptation of the existing content to a virtual environment, and liaised with Programme partner countries to identify potential participants for the course.

The course content as well as the platform has been translated into French, Portuguese, and Spanish, thanks to a combination of resources from different UNCTAD projects, including the HMRC-WCO-UNCTAD capacity building programme. This allows UNCTAD to open its training to partner countries across all continents.

The initial course entailed nine self-paced modules, 43 quizzes, nine exams and a final assignment and was delivered in approximatively four to seven months – depending on the needs of each country. For each course, 11 webinars are organised allowing participants to dive deeper into the topic, raise any questions that they have about the specific lesson and adapt the key learning concepts to a country’s reality.

Since its launch, several further courses have been developed and translated with the financial support of HMRC and other donors such as the African Development Bank, the European Union and the German Ministry of International Cooperation (BMZ).
MULTIPLYING TRAINING RESULTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME

UNCTAD Trade Facilitation e-Learning platform was launched at the beginning of February 2021.

The platform has benefited, not only Programme partner countries (Bolivia, Botswana, Cambodia, Eswatini, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Sao Tome e Principe, Timor Leste, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) but also other beneficiary countries that are being supported through the framework of other UNCTAD projects, namely:

- Ecuador, Mongolia, Peru, with support from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, with support from Trademark East Africa
- Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Republic of Congo, with support from the African Development Bank

It is also expected that the platform will be benefitting many more countries in the future, not only in the framework of the Phase IV of the Programme, but also in the scope of other UNCTAD delivered projects. By March 2025, it is already programmed that at least 25 further countries will undergo UNCTAD training using the Platform.
By the end of March 2022, 1,031 trade facilitation stakeholders had completed at least one UNCTAD course, with 388 being from Partner countries and 643 from other beneficiary countries outside the Programme. Overall, over 18,000 hours of studying were registered in the platform.

During the delivery of the courses in the partner countries, UNCTAD organised more than 180 webinars which included the participation of non-Programme funded international experts who were mobilized at no cost to the Programme via UNCTAD’s network of trade facilitation experts and practitioners. International experts, 49 of which were from developing countries, devoted over 200 hours to the Programme.

THIS LEVERAGE POWER CONSTITUTES HIGH VALUE FOR MONEY FOR THE PROGRAMME.

At the end of the course, participants are invited to fill in an evaluation form. The following results have been collected by 31 March 2022:

- 96% of participants affirm that the course has helped them improve (very) significantly their knowledge on trade facilitation.
- After the course, 97% of participants feel more comfortable to apply trade facilitation principles and concepts in their daily job.
- After the course, 88.77% of participants feel in a better position to fulfil their roles as members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

Validation of how trade facilitation stakeholders apply these learnings is gathered in their final assignments. To complete the course, members of the National Trade Facilitation Committees need to draft and present a final assignment, with an original reflection on the trade facilitation situation in their country, while applying the concepts and principles they have learned throughout the course.

THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE COLLECTED BY UNCTAD AND TRANSFORMED INTO INPUTS THAT ARE FED INTO THE RESPECTIVE WORK PLANS OF EACH NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEE.

Remarkable assignments have been published in the blog of UNCTAD Trade Facilitation e-Learning platform1. By the end of the Programme, 23 articles were published in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

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1 https://tfelearning.unctad.org/blog
Género en el comercio exterior - Perspectiva de las mujeres comerciantes en São Tomé y Príncipe

La integración de políticas de Género en el Comercio, un trabajo para 365 días en STP

La redynamización del grupo de trabajo de técnicas de negociación para promover la performance de CMFE de Malagasy

Retos y oportunidades para Honduras en la Facilitación del Comercio

El salto de la Ventanilla Única de Comercio Exterior a la plataforma digital de comercio internacional (Single Submission Portal)
TESTIMONIALS

UNCTAD collects testimonials from participants of the e-Learning courses through an evaluation process. This is what they have to say:

Patricia Joubert
Dean-Commerce at University of Swaziland, Eswatini

“[The course] will enable me to account and answer relevant questions from our stakeholders and make the dream of streamlined, efficient and effective trade practices in line with the TFA that we are party to, globally, regionally, and nationally. Trade Processes are evolving at a dynamic pace and requires regular innovation and improvements or else as countries we will not reap maximum benefits of trade with our trading partners.”

Gugu Treasure DLAMINI-ZWANE
Customs Modernisation, Reform, and International Relations, Eswatini

“Generally, I was amazed at how UNCTAD came up with such a very useful and relevant yet practical course. As WCO MPA, I will definitely advise countries to sign up for the course. A course so relevant during these COVID trying times. The combination of Videos and Notes is very useful.”

Emmanuel Malukutila
Assistant Director - Enterprise Risk Management Bank of Zambia

“I intend to apply this information in my personal and professional work, being a member of the working group of the NTFC.”
Andrew Kingstone Sandula

Director of Road Traffic and Safety Services, Malawi

“I enjoyed the course most because it helped to understand the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement much better than before. I stick to the end of the course because it was relevant to my job. I would recommend this course to my workmates. I wished to see the challenges African countries are facing in the implementation of trade facilitation reforms and possible solutions. Encouraging African countries to implement trade facilitation reforms.”

Margareth N Lukileni

Customs & Excise Officer, Namibia

“It was indeed a good course with so much insight on daily trade facilitation. I have enjoyed more on trade barriers. I had to push myself to hold on until the end, not to disappoint the people who nominated me for the course (supervisors). I would recommend this course to all customs officials especially to beginners. However, juggling this course with work requires more determination and courage especially attending live webinars.”
Bweupe Lombanya

Metrology Engineer (Zambia Metrology Agency)

“This course was one of the best online courses I have ever experienced. The material was well aligned and easy to follow.”

Moeketsi Ranthake

Customs Inspector, Lesotho

“I enjoyed the flexibility of the course, that we could do it at our own leisure times without any exerted pressure, clear and nicely articulated voiced that narrated through the course, it was amazing. Big ups for that!”
Yassin Mwachande

Industrial Development Officer, Malawi

“This has been a very interesting and insightful experience as I have learnt a lot of new stuff. In future, we members of the Ministry of Industry should be given a greater role to play as we are there to provide our friends in Ministry of Trade the goods to trade. Currently, I feel the TFA is seen as a Ministry of Trade thing, while in essence it’s for all of us, in order to see Malawi growing.”
I enjoyed how the Trade Facilitation issues were unpacked and how the different organizations work together to ensure smooth trade across borders.
Bolpele Gofhe Baikanyang
Manager, Botswana Trade Portal at Botswana Investment and Trade Centre

One of the interesting components that I enjoy the most is the final assignment. Please keep this module as it is for next participants from Timor-Leste.
Decio Ribeiro Sarmento
Director, Investment and Export Promotion Agency TradeWest Timor-Leste

The videos are interactive and easy to follow. It is a self-pace program, it was easy for me to do the modules in my free time.
Dívida Crescêncio de Fátima Mesquita
Marketing and Branding Specialist Coordinator at the office of the Vice-Minister of Commerce and Industry of Timor-Leste

You did a great job bringing in a good mix of experts to provide many great knowledge and practical insights. Overall, the course was very insightful.
SOK Khai
Cambodia Trade Facilitation Advisor of ARISE Plus

Every topic was unique in its own and I appreciated how the topics interconnected.
Mamolola Raphuthing
Planning and Research Manager at the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC)

This course was one of the best online courses I have ever experienced. The material was well aligned and easy to follow.
Bwetepe Lombanya
Meteorology Engineer Zambia Meteorology Agency