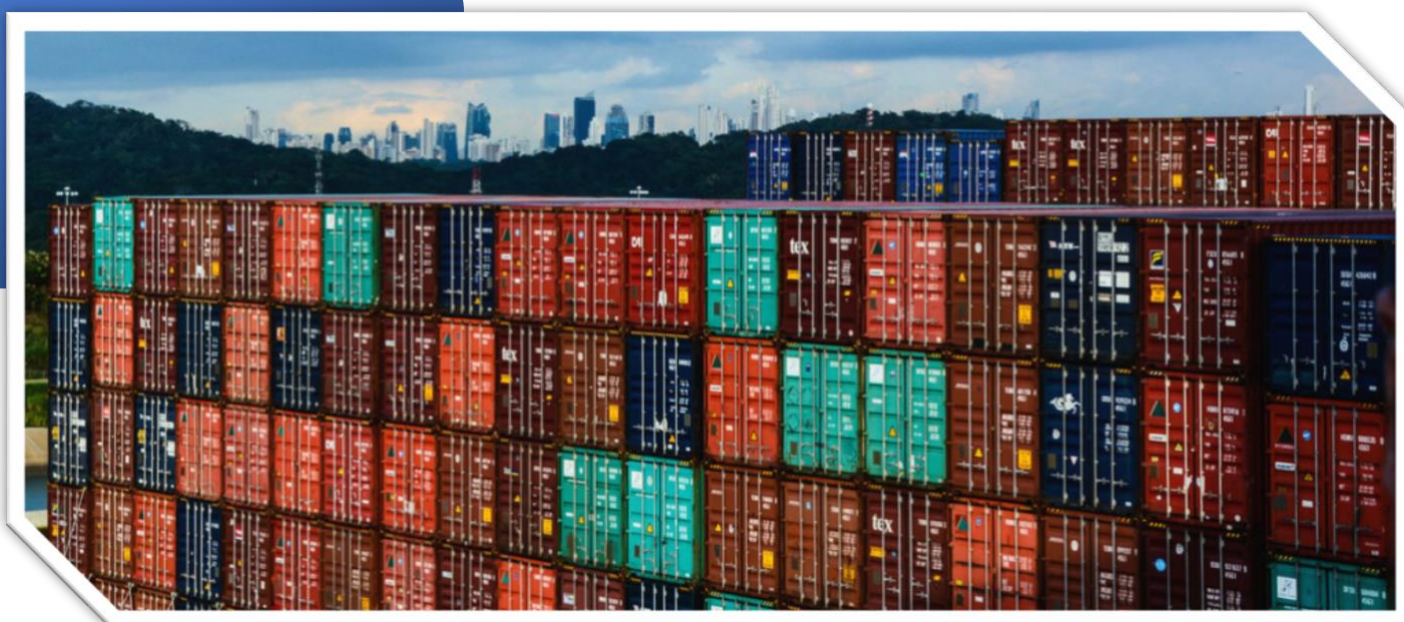




UNCTAD - TRADE FACILITATION COVID-19 & CRISIS RESPONSE

RAPID SCAN OF TRADE FACILITATION PREPAREDNESS IN TIMES OF CRISIS



TECHNICAL NOTE No. 25

2022



“ A Rapid assessment that aims to identify and understand the effectiveness of trade measures and regulations in times of crisis ”

I. OBJECTIVES

Developing Countries and Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) that wish to improve their national and/or regional capacity to better respond against future crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic as well as ensure the minimum disruption of trade flows are invited to carry out a focused yet rapid review of the available national emergency regulations pertaining to trade facilitation and its application in times of crisis based on the Rapid Scan methodology developed by UNCTAD.

This includes providing a rapid assessment addressed to the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) and relevant authorities involved in cross-border trade of the national preparedness in times of crisis, with a view to ensuring the continuation of supply and value chains and maintaining the flow of imports, exports, and transit, including essential goods, while ensuring compliance controls such as Customs, health, and sanitary among others.

The rapid scan also aims to identify and understand the effectiveness of trade measures and regulations in times of crisis, particularly by assessing the awareness of the existence of the measures, how to implement them and the impact they have in alleviating the negative trade effects of the crisis.

Through an adaptable methodology, and with substantive and specific input by the beneficiary country, the outcome of the rapid scan will consist of tailor-made recommendations for recovery vis-a-vis Covid-19 and recommendations for future crisis preparedness including a Rapid Response Plan to be deployed in case of future crises.

II. SCOPE

This initiative focus on identifying all essential regulations and measures relating to cross-border trade and transit facilitation for mitigating the impact of crises such as the global health COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the challenges to cross-border trade, supply chains and compliance with trade-related regulation, coordination structures and partnerships, timely information availability and transparency, as well as available solutions.

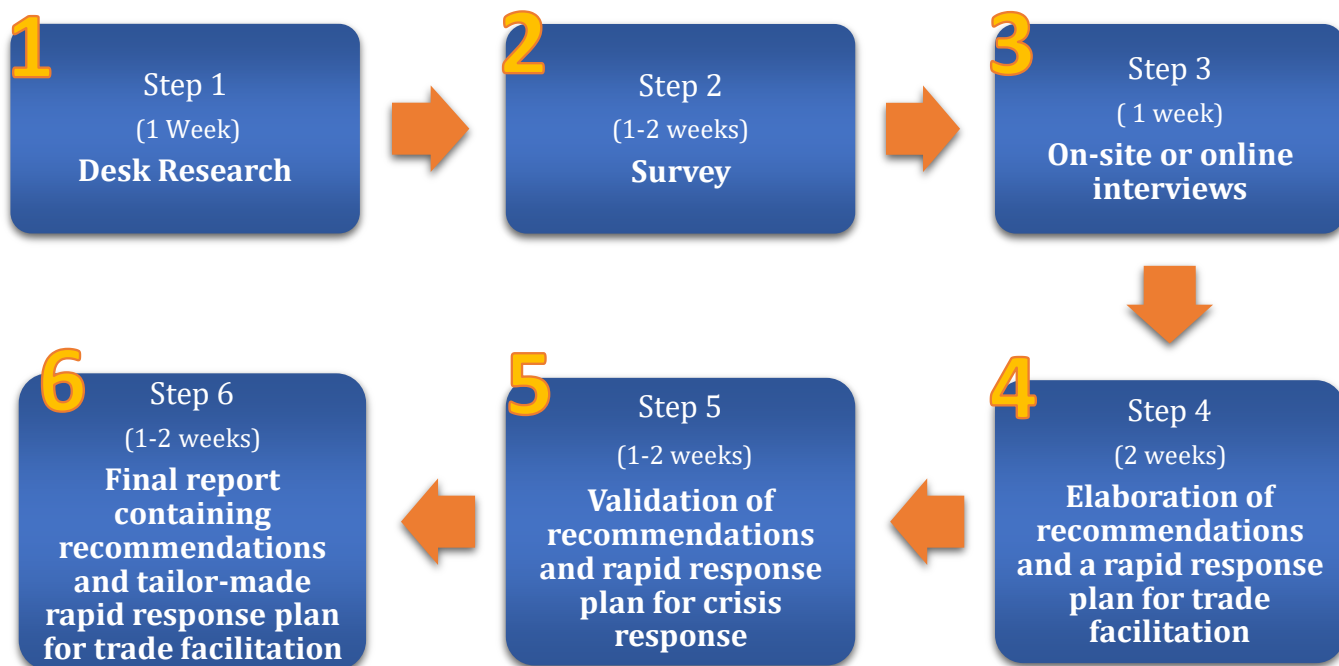
III. METHODOLOGY

Remotely and in-country collection of information and data will be necessary. While the undertaking of the rapid scan can be adapted to best accommodate the needs and realities of each country, in essence, the following step-by-step methodology should be applied, where each step should be

proactively and timely carried out in sequence within a reasonable time period to ensure the rapidness criteria of the assessment

To assist with the above, It is recommended to recruit a national consultant based in the beneficiary country

Rapid Scan Methodology



Step One: Desk Research

It is recommended that the desk research will be conducted in two sets of searches to identify and collect relevant national emergency regulations and measures, particularly as they relate to international trade and transit facilitation, as well as the means of communicating these emergency measures to the relevant stakeholders, and the current coordination structure amongst the relevant authorities.

In the first set of searches, the focus is given to the legal regulations commonly and widely accepted and practised, present on the main websites of national Ministries and agencies etc., while the second set of searches focuses on the practical implementation aspect of common and widely accepted and practised regulations in the time of crises.

Both sets of searches include not only relevant legal documentation and procedures - including existing and new emergency regulations linked to a crisis - publicly made available by relevant authorities, but also de facto measures adopted by the country at the onset of the crisis.



Searches should be based on the following principles:

- 1- **Research** the five main government sites e.g.: Ministry of Commerce, Customs agencies, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. and identify publicly available information regarding new and existing legislation, regulations and procedures involved in crisis response.
- 2- **Identify** most affected sectors or subsectors and agencies involved by mapping all the measures found by name of the measure; year of creation; entities involved; leading agency; scope of the measure; organizations/sectors or sub-sectors affected by the measure; means of communication; and level of impact at the short and long term.
- 3- **Prepare** a matrix showing and explaining how the regulations of different entities relate to each other, and how are coordinated. In addition to showing how specific transport modes such as ports, airports, and inland border crossing for roads and rails are related to the specific regulations.
- 4- **Make** a parallel between the laws, regulations, and procedures existent for a period of crisis v/s the ones that are effectively implemented during such crisis periods. Comparing its: coverage, relevance, time of implementation and awareness of different affected sectors.

In addition, the desk research can include a regional analysis which to enable the recipient country to know what the neighbouring countries and partners in the region are doing, so as to learn from their experiences and best practices.

After conducting this research, a number of trade facilitation measures in times of crisis should be identified and it is recommended to have it grouped (if possible) into one of these four categories: Process and procedures optimization; Cost reduction; Transparency and cooperation enhancement; Full display of technology.



Step two: Survey

A Customized online survey should be developed and addressed to relevant national stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the Chamber of Commerce, the National Crisis Management Unit/team as well as the NTFC among others.

The survey should focus on four key aspects relating to crisis-related regulations and measures on international trade and transit:

- (i) The existence of these regulations and measures.
- (ii) Their implementation.
- (iii) The Impact of the implementation, including both benefits and challenges.
- (iv) Transparency of regulations and measures.

The results of this survey not only confirming the relevance and effectiveness of particular emergency measures on international trade and transit at the national level, but also on the regional analysis carried out in some countries. The survey could also assist in identifying the implications on the regional level by pointing to the most vulnerable and most heavily impacted sectors. Some questions can be included to address this regional context, such as:

- (i) Awareness of relevant crisis regulations and measures applied in the neighbouring countries or across the region
- (ii) Best practices and lessons learnt from the experiences of other countries.
- (iii) Identify the perspectives and experiences of the private sector

In order for the survey to reach a higher number of key stakeholders' representatives from the public and private sectors (including but not limited to SMEs, Ministries, local business organizations, services providers, NTFC, etc.), it is recommended to share and distribute a link to a survey platform via **email** and **WhatsApp**

It is recommended that the survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to be completed and to be available and accessible for a period of 14 days.



Step Three: In-person and Online Interview

Bilateral interviews should be undertaken to collect additional and more detailed information from key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, managing and/or impacted by crisis-related regulations and measures, this could include Ministries, National Crisis Management Unit/team, NTFC, Chamber of Commerce, SMEs, local business organizations and services providers, among others.

Interviews should be undertaken to gather more detailed information as well as to deepen understanding of the issues raised by the survey's questions.

Selection of the interviewees and preparation of a contact list could be initiated in Step 2 and would be decided in collaboration with members of the National Crisis Management Unit and NTFC if any. Depending on the situation of the crisis, these interviews may be carried out online, by telephone or in person. .

The interviews should be structured using open questions permitting the interviewees to freely add information and interpretation. Questions could be based on a tailor-made questionnaire that will be prepared based on the outcomes from the desk research and survey results. UNCTAD can assist countries to formulate the interview questions.

Two different sets of interviews are foreseen. The first series of interviews targets representatives of government agencies involved in crisis management. The second set of interviews addresses key representatives of private sector organizations and SMEs impacted by crisis regulations, procedures, and measures implemented.

UNCTAD has developed an Interview Guide to ensure a uniform approach. Interviews could be guided by this document. Specifically, the Interview Guide includes, inter alia, the questions classified into 5 categories:

Category 1	Background Information
Category 2	Existence of national crisis related regulations and measures on international trade and transit
Category 3	Implementation of such regulations and measures
Category 4	Impact of the implementation
Category 5	Regional relevant regulations and measures



STEP FOUR: ELABORATION OF A REPORT AND A RAPID RESPONSE PLAN, INCLUDING TRADE AND TRANSIT FACILITATION SOLUTIONS

Based on the information and data collected throughout the previous steps the outcome should result in a report and a rapid response plan including trade and transit facilitation recommendations and solutions. This plan may complement already existing plans developed by the beneficiary country.

The National Crisis Management Unit and the NTFC should play an essential role in firstly assisting in the elaboration of the document and then in coordinating the implementation of the recommendations as the measures need to be carried out by different agencies at the same time.



It is recommended that the **report contains the following elements:**

Lists of all involved and contacted organizations/agencies/people from the public and private sectors throughout the project stages, including title, gender and contact details among others

Listing for identified vulnerable and most affected sectors / sub-sectors of the economy

Survey and interview questions, in addition to a thorough analysis of the results and explanation of key findings

Comprehensive explanation and analysis of the identified relevant national emergency regulations and measures, particularly those related to international trade and transit facilitation, that are available and implemented.

A clear analysis showing the parallel between existents laws, regulations, and procedures for times of crisis v/s the ones that are affectively implemented during such crisis periods.

A matrix with the identified challenges and benefits for the implementation of crisis regulations and measures.

A tentative rapid response plan with recommendations and actions, including trade and transit facilitation solutions that could be implemented to assist in the mitigation of the socio-economic impact of crisis periods.

To ensure uninterrupted cross-border trade during a global health crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the rapid response plan with recommendations should cover trade and transit facilitation solutions on the following aspects:

A. Process and procedures optimization

An efficient response to a crisis requires speeding up and streamlining the release and clearance of essential goods, which include medical supplies in the event of a major public health crisis.

B. Cost reduction

Trade costs represent a significant burden for traders during the crisis. In order to streamline trade, relevant trade and transit facilitation measures for alleviating traders' financial situation should be adopted.

C. Transparency and cooperation enhancement

Increasing transparency helps expand and deepen cooperation and vice versa. The two have mutually reinforcing effects; both play an essential role in responding to the crisis and facilitating trade across borders.

D. Full display of technology

Making full use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) not only ensures the continuity of cross-border trade and helps improve efficiency, but also is particularly important during a global health crisis, as it helps reduce the direct contact among people through remote operation.

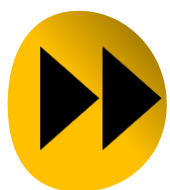
To provide effective, relevant, and timely recommendations on the four aspects mentioned above, data collected during desk research, survey, and interviews, will be contrasted. This will enable the determination of the current situation in the country and what could be concretely and efficiently implemented and executed during crisis period.



STEP FIVE: VALIDATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

It is recommended that the rapid response plan and its recommendations be shared with key stakeholders of the country including the National Crisis Management Unit/team and NTFC by organizing a validation meeting.

A formal peer review will be conducted at the presentation meeting, of which the aim is to provide an opportunity for participants/stakeholders to provide feedback on the recommendations, as well as to advise on further fine-tuning changes to best meet the country's actual needs and particularities.



STEP SIX: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING TAILOR-MADE TRADE FACILITATION MEASURES

Based on the feedback and comments from the validation and peer-review, the report and national response plan will be adjusted, to provide an advanced version of the document which will include the vision of both public and private sectors. Then, the document will be circulated again and once it has been approved by all stakeholders of the recipient country, the final version of the recommendations and rapid response plan, including tailor-made trade facilitation measures will be finalized.

It is recommended that the adopted assessment will act as a guiding document for the national Trade Facilitation Committee and relevant authorities to ensure that cross border trade procedures are adapted to and up-to-date with regard to crisis management.

Recipient countries may request UNCTAD to provide further assistance and provide support during the implementation of the recommendations mentioned above, including assisting in monitoring and evaluating the progress and impacts of measures' implementation, empowering the NTFC with tailor made trainings through the UNCTAD Empowerment Program for NTFCs and making corresponding adjustments to the recommendations or to the plan in accordance with the country and evolving global situation and needs.