FEATURE
Pause, Reflect, Restart in Ghana

SPECIAL REPORT
Farm sustainably, build peace in Guatemala

ITC IN ACTION
Turning the tide in Central Asia
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unparalleled global health crisis and disrupted every aspect of society and business, putting the world’s economic activity under stress.

Although the pandemic has affected every corner of the world, the economic earthquake unleashed by COVID-19 does not affect everyone in the same way.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises provide 70% of all jobs worldwide – but with fewer resources to ride out the storm, they have been particularly vulnerable to the crisis, especially those living in least developed countries and small island states.

Through our network of business support organizations, we reached out to small businesses to understand their concerns and needs. In the Fast Facts section of this edition of International Trade Forum, we are proud to show you some key findings of our COVID-19 Business Impact Survey.

We also developed a 15-point action plan, with advice for small businesses, business support organizations and governments to help them get through this crisis and look towards the future. Today, attention has shifted to how these actors can adapt to post COVID-19 realities.

In this issue, we are keen to share with you some examples we have come across these past few months – the reactions of businesses as well as possible solutions offered by organizations or governmental institutions in supporting small businesses in their fight for survival.

For instance, in our feature story about Ghanaian cosmetics business KAEME and our interview with eco-lodge owners in Myanmar, you can read how keeping employees and having a steady online presence has paid off.

From the perspective of building business ecosystems in a volatile environment, the International Chamber of Commerce and the Permanent Conference of African and Francophone Consular Chambers depict how they, as support organizations, can act as a lifeline for small businesses.

Going deeper into the challenges Africa is facing as a continent, the Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area shines light on how implementing the new Agreement can benefit the continent’s economic situation.

Finally yet importantly, investment and digitalization of trade during these difficult times are indispensable for building any post COVID-19 economy – the contributions by the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the WTO and private deal-matching Opportunity Network give the needed inspiration.

Our ITC in Action stories of textile producers in Central Asia who are moving into producing masks, our global e-learning programme, and how logistics work in Guinea, reflect our efforts to make business work in the ‘new normal’.

As the only international organization fully dedicated to supporting the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, ITC continues to assist our stakeholders with weathering this crisis and preparing for the future. I hope this edition gives you insight into this complex topic.
ITC EMPLOYMENT

ITC is recruiting qualified professionals within different areas of expertise. If you would like to contribute your skills to increasing export competitiveness for developing economies, and are motivated to work in an international environment that promotes diversity, please check our jobs website, which is updated weekly:

www.intracen.org/about/jobs

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How one Ghanaian Company is staying afloat in a crisis

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News Brief

Young business owners find new ways to deal with COVID-19, ITC survey reveals

The COVID-19 pandemic has left firms owned by young people in developing countries looking for new ways to survive and grow, a recent survey by ITC reveals.

Answering the question 'How has COVID-19 affected your business?' survey respondents said they had seen a drop in sales — more than any other single consequence at 60% of responses.

‘Running a business during COVID-19 is very challenging in general,’ said Maresha Beniam, the founder of Ethiopian company OmniTech, which works in schools to increase technology awareness.

ITC’s Youth and Trade Programme quizzed small business owners aged 35 or younger to understand how they are responding to the economic and social shockwaves of the global coronavirus pandemic.

Temporarily reducing employment for all or some employees was the most-cited coping strategy identified by the survey’s respondents. Pivoting to remote working, increasing communications and marketing activity and developing online sales channels were the next three strategies identified.

‘The strategy we adopted in response was going online,’ Beniam said.

The survey was conducted from April to June 2020 with 353 business owners, 30% of whom were women, and with most business owners employing between one and 19 people.

ITC and Twill by Maersk to offer coaching for women entrepreneurs in Kenya, Nigeria, Mexico and India

ITC’s SheTrades initiative and Twill by Maersk have launched a new one-on-one coaching programme for women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises in Kenya, Nigeria, Mexico, and India.

While more than 95% of all companies are small businesses, only one-in-five exporting businesses are owned by women. They are also more likely to face obstacles to trade according to ITC research.

ITC and Twill by Maersk, a freight logistics service, have joined forces to offer highly specialized coaching to help women entrepreneurs overcome these obstacles.

During a four-week pilot phase in April 2020, four Twill employees based in the Netherlands were paired with four women-owned businesses from Nigeria and Kenya.

Before participating in the coaching sessions, Caroline Chepkemboi Tormoi, Eldo Tea Enterprises Ltd., Kenya, found it challenging to establish favourable rates for her customers. Twill coach Matt Gielkens helped Caroline use Twill’s platform to find fair rates transparently and cost-effectively.

‘Having a logistics partner with an international presence gives us a credible image and more trust from our customers,’ Caroline said.
UN task force says the digital economy could ‘transform’ development

A United Nations task force set up to look into the risks and benefits of the digital economy has concluded in a new report that this could have a transformational impact on sustainable development, according to UN News.

The report, ‘People’s Money: Harnessing Digitalization to Finance a Sustainable Future’, was released by the UN Secretary-General’s Task Force on Digital Finance in August 2020.

The task force, made up of senior figures from the tech sector, financial institutions, governments, and UN bodies, was set up in 2018 to improve understanding of the benefits and risks of the fast-moving financial technology and digital finance sectors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the popularity of digital tools has snowballed. It demonstrates the potential of digital finance to provide relief for millions around the world, support businesses, and protect jobs and livelihoods.

G20 merchandise trade hit by pandemic

COVID-19 measures introduced in most countries sent G20 merchandise trade plummeting in the second quarter of 2020, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said in late August 2020. Compared with the first quarter of 2020, exports fell by 17.7% and imports by 16.7%, the largest fall since the 2009 financial crisis.

The second quarter’s monthly data revealed that the collapse in trade occurred in April 2020, when most countries had stringent COVID-19 containment measures in place.

Compared to March 2020, G20 exports and imports fell by 18.7% and 16.0%, respectively. However, May and June’s data point to a partial recovery from the April lows in nearly all G20 economies, as containment measures eased. July data, in those economies where data are available, point to continued improvement.

China was the only G20 economy to record export growth in the second quarter of 2020 (up 9.1%), following a 9.3% fall in the first quarter. Chinese imports, however, continued to fall by 4.9%.

Pamela Coke-Hamilton takes the reins at the International Trade Centre

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Pamela Coke-Hamilton as the new Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC) in July 2020.

Ms. Coke-Hamilton brings a breadth of experience and expertise in trade-related capacity building and sustainable development.

She served most recently as Director of the Division on International Trade and Commodities at the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development. She previously had roles with the Jamaican government and multilateral institutions including the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank.

She also served as Executive Director of the Caribbean Export Development Agency.
COVID-19 impact on business

55% business operations **strongly affected** by pandemic and imposed measures such as lockdowns

60% difficulty accessing **inputs**

75% face **reduced sales**

Micro and small firms more impacted than large firms

Hardest hit continent is **Africa**

2 out of 3 companies

Services sector hit hardest

almost 80% of food and accommodation businesses
Coping with the pandemic

Almost **40%** face liquidity crisis with clients not paying bills

Majority calls on governments for tax waivers or other financial support

Over **50%** struggle obtaining information about COVID-related assistance programmes

Boosting transparency and access to information is critical

Risk of closing within 3 months

Over **20%** of small businesses risked shutting down compared to 10% of large companies

Almost **0.5 billion** people are at risk of losing their job

Businesses led by youth at higher risk of closing down

Source: ITC calculations based on ITC COVID-19 Business Impact Survey with data collected between 21 April and 2 June 2020 from 4467 companies in 132 countries.
As businesses around the world navigate the economic effects of a global pandemic, KAEME is determined to remain resilient in pursuing its mission.
And there were issues on the logistics side.

Despite being a well-established online shop that should ideally withstand physical lockdowns, the shop owner was facing logistical problems.

‘We were not able to ship any orders as logistics providers shut down. The lockdown meant practically zero sales for close to six weeks,’ says Freda.

But Freda kept on paying her employees.

‘This was a tough decision we had to make at KAEME, but we feel it’s the right thing to do because our employees are our biggest assets. They are also like family. We invest in training them, so we would like them to stay with us as long as possible.’

Sourcing materials was another challenge Freda had to overcome like many small businesses in Africa. Looking for quality yet affordable materials, businesses tend to turn to Asia.

‘Even though I tried to use local resources only, I had to import some of my materials. I invested so much in trying to find a solution in Ghana - without return.’

But with COVID-19, deliveries from abroad were delayed.

The pandemic showed that importing materials is unsustainable in a crisis. KAEME had to put critical procurement decisions on hold after undertaking a thorough risk assessment.

Using local packaging was not an option when first launching KAEME, but Freda knew going local was the right choice for the long-term. The lockdown confirmed this. The 35-year-old would like to source her packaging material locally and sustainably. Options are collaborating with other local businesses, or even building a manufacturing factory through an association of cosmetics producers. Finding local solutions would not only de-risk business but also add value to the whole production chain at home. And that’s not all.

‘I’d be so happy if we could trade freely in the sub-continent. I could export my products to Benin, Nigeria, Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire without facing multiple issues. I am looking forward to the operationalization of the new African Continental Free Trade Area. But how tangible will it be? The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should have removed several bottlenecks, but unfortunately getting anything across the border to neighbouring Nigeria or Togo or Côte d’Ivoire is more expensive than shipping to the United States. Border controls are a hassle. How can that be? Nigeria is a good market for KAEME but I cannot fully explore its potential,’ concludes Freda.
Beyond the crunch

Early in July, after the government lifted restrictions in Accra, the number of COVID-19 cases rose again. KAEME has decided to take its time reopening its store and ensured protective health measures are in place. The business only allows one salesperson and one customer in the store at a time, with hand washing and sanitizing protocols. Freda constantly reminds her staff to remain cautious.

Even though KAEME’s online sales have slumped, maintaining an active virtual presence has allowed the brand to engage customers.

With the right networks and visibility, you can be resilient.

KAEME joined a community of entrepreneurs who are like-minded in producing local, high-quality products. Considering the logistical problems around COVID-19, the online platform THRIVE TOGETHER serves as an ideal one-stop shop where customers can buy from different brands by only using one channel, one delivery.

Adapting her business plan was another essential step.

‘We are looking at how we can diversify our products, working on different recipes and potentially partnering with big businesses, for example, by offering sanitizers in bulk. There are quite a few options we have been exploring.’

For KAEME, surviving the lockdown meant finding opportunities to work with others and doing things differently.

‘The pandemic showed how resilient we can and should be. It is a good test for us as a business. It is indeed hard, hard work. But with the help of our partners and customers, small businesses can recover.’

The new normal definitely looks different for KAEME.

Uncertainty and scenario planning will be the norm, not the exception, explains Freda, and it will involve more creative thinking to engage customers.

‘If you had spoken to me in May about offering Christmas sales, I would have answered differently. Our plan is constantly evolving and our customers can look forward to an enhanced version of KAEME very soon.’

Despite having lived in the United States, France, Hong Kong and the United Republic of Tanzania, Freda never forgot where her heart is — in Ghana. And this is what KAEME stands for: The Ghanaian name means ‘remember me’, but for Freda it also stands for pure ingredients, healthy living, nostalgia and warm feelings. May that feeling never cease!

KAEME has been a beneficiary of the International Trade Centre’s project SheTrades.

KAEME Body Care Limited (KAEME) uses natural, local raw materials and empowers the people within its supply chain. If you are interested in seeing their products or buying them, please visit www.kaeme.com.
1. The KAEME team
2. Proud owner and chief mixer of KAEME, Freda Oteng-Ampofo
3. Shea butter is the main ingredient in KAEME’s products
4. Collaboration is key for a small business
5. Collaboration is key for a small business
Freda with business partners of online platform THRIVE TOGETHER
6. Regular team meetings are important to KAEME
7. Employees check packaging and stock in KAEME’s shop in Accra
8. Employees check packaging and stock in KAEME’s shop in Accra
9. & 10. Customers appreciate the experience in store
African growth: A new model for a post-COVID-19 world

WAMKELE MENE, Secretary General, African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat

More than ever, the creation of a single continental market remains a game changer

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered a new economic paradigm that is as unprecedented and radical as the Great Depression. Although the economic consequences of this global crisis are still unfolding, its impact on African economies is already alarming.

For the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other multilateral bodies, mitigating the effects of the pandemic is not only the priority for today. It is also vital to salvage past gains and to maintain carefully laid plans for the future.

The AfCFTA is a far-reaching initiative, designed to foster industrial development and ensure Africa’s prosperity. To this end, it seeks to create an institutional ecosystem to address the continent’s marginal role in global value chains, its structural trade imbalance and its overreliance on bumpy commodity markets – namely, mineral resources and fossil fuels.

The global drop in industrial production means less demand for key African exports amid a collapse of international trade and a disproportionate decline in the terms of exchange. The pandemic has not only crippled the production sector; it has also ruined the travel and hospitality industry, which had flourished for two decades. The obliteration of services trade and the predicted sharp decline in international remittances due to the global recession are shaking the foundations of the prevalent model of growth, steered by the tertiary sector.

Calls for debt relief in international fora overshadow the perennial reality of Africa’s marginal role in global supply chains, which creates a recurrent shortage of foreign exchange. This limits the continent’s ability to absorb the fallout of a sharp downturn in the global economy. As the effects of the pandemic deepen and the crisis grows in magnitude, it is clear that a model of development that depends heavily on raw commodity exports has reached its limits.
Africa must step up production of drugs and medical supplies

The pandemic highlights the need for African Union members to manufacture more pharmaceuticals. Some countries, such as Egypt and Morocco, rapidly boosted production to meet demand. However, many African governments face limited access to essential drugs and health equipment due to shortages aggravated by restrictions that many countries imposed on exports of medical supplies (including personal protection equipment).

The AfCFTA is anchored on trade liberalization, even as global supply-chain disruption is likely to further deteriorate the world’s overall sanitary position. Member states require fair access to critical equipment. The AfCFTA Secretariat encourages member states to turn this crisis into an opportunity by redeploying their production so there is an extraordinary increase in the fabrication of drugs, personal protective equipment, soap, hand sanitizers, intensive care unit beds, testing kits and even ventilators.

The AfCFTA has a dual track approach. In the short term, its priority is to ensure that intra-African trade continues to grow, by alleviating trade restrictions while promoting a policy of ‘local production first’ whenever available and competitive. In the medium term, the AfCFTA’s strategy is to champion the development of a credible pharmaceutical industry capable of meeting Africa’s growing demand, and even playing a role in the global market.

Recognizing the effect of border closures on trade, the Assembly of Heads of States of the AU established trade corridors or ‘green lanes’ that allow for the free flow of essential medical goods used in the fight against the pandemic. Support and resources also were garnered for the pharmaceutical industry to produce affordable medicines and medical equipment to meet African demand.

The AfCFTA plays a vanguard role in spurring rapid industrialization through regional trade integration: a focus on small industrial enterprises to boost trade among African states and create jobs. As a by-product of regional integration, industrialization will strengthen economic diversification and resilience.

Resetting priorities

The AfCFTA is a nascent giant. It is respected by its partners for its potential strategic significance to become the largest and most dynamic regional market by 2030. Unfortunately, the pandemic struck just as the AfCFTA’s organizational framework was being finalized, delaying many milestones scheduled for 2020.

Nevertheless, the AfCFTA has capitalized on the goodwill of member states to provide the impetus to coordinate national and regional institutions that ensures coherent policymaking and better coordination with the private sector, by bridging the information gap. In a sense, the disruption in the global supply chain caused by COVID-19 – and the economic downturn that followed – provide a powerful rationale for the immediate implementation of AfCFTA, as a vehicle to spur economic growth and build resilience across the continent.

African businesses, mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, have been at the forefront of the pandemic response. They have unveiled many innovations, from providing medicines and medical equipment to redesigning new supply chains to prevent shortages. The AfCFTA must embrace this new spirit of industrial development in Africa.

The AfCFTA Secretariat supported this positive development by advocating for the establishment of deep value chains to boost intra-African trade and accelerate investment in pharmaceutical industries. While trade information was non-existent at the beginning of the pandemic, a catalogue of African drug companies and production is now being compiled. It will be circulated to relevant national authorities. With the African Union

Commission, we are looking into harnessing digital trade and e-commerce as key drivers to implement AfCFTA effectively.

Fighting the pandemic has led us back to the drawing board to reset our priorities for AfCFTA. We called for adequate support (including financial) for small drug companies so they could expand their production capacity and improve the range and the sophistication of their output. Seizing the crisis to unlock the vast potential of Africa’s pharmaceuticals market will indeed be a key achievement for the AfCFTA in its early years of existence. ◊

This is an excerpt from the SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020 edition. For the full version, please visit: https://www.intracen.org/smeoutlook/epub/
A century ago, when pandemic influenza struck a war-torn world, few multilateral institutions existed. Countries fought their common microbial enemy alone. Today, an array of multilateral mechanisms exists to confront global public health emergencies and address their economic, social, and political effects. The global nature of the current pandemic requires a global response. Let us make sure we leverage existing multilateral mechanisms to help fight the virus and overcome the current crisis.

The most acute health crisis in a century has provoked the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes. The social and economic impact has already been tremendous: shrinking output, massive job losses and rising hunger. Years of hard-won development progress risk being reversed. An unprecedented crisis requires unprecedented solidarity in response — and this includes cooperation on trade.

The continuous and efficient flow of medical supplies, agricultural products and other goods and services across borders will be critical to an effective response, to help minimize global impacts on supply and demand, and particularly to help small businesses. Therefore, the multilateral trading system should work to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade and global supply chains, taking only specific, proportional, transparent and temporary emergency measures that are consistent with our obligations to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Keeping flows open and monitoring measures taken by governments is of systemic importance.

With so many challenges facing the international trading system it would be a mistake not to use the tools and bodies there to help solve them: an international forum on trade was hard-won and would be difficult to recreate. The coronavirus crisis demonstrates the value of common
agreements on how to deal fairly with one another and prevent a race to the bottom.

**Strengthen digital services**

The COVID-19 pandemic confirms that connectivity is critical, which gives further impetus to the digital economy. Policies to improve affordability would clearly represent a huge leap forward in putting digital services within the reach of billions. In this post-digital age, not being connected means being shut out of employment, of education, of access to vital health care services and information – in short excluded from the full economic and social participation every citizen should enjoy.

Affordable, meaningful connectivity is a crucial step for engaging in digital trade and reaping the benefits of digitalization. Trade rules can impact the cost of connectivity and contribute to bridging the digital divide. In developing such rules, you need an inclusive dialogue between telecommunications experts, trade negotiators, the private sector and civil society.

The crisis has also shown that trade digitalization is more urgent than ever. Trade remains notoriously reliant on paper-based processes. The Boston Consulting Group has estimated that four billion documents are circulating because of trade. This inevitably leads to many errors, redundancies, delays, and costs that weigh heavily on the smallest players.

The current situation has exposed the inherent weakness of this system—with difficulties in the physical exchange and review of trade documents creating significant bottlenecks to global trade. This has revealed the importance of trade facilitation and digital solutions to speed up processing and ensure that trade is as frictionless as possible.

The International Chamber of Commerce has called on governments to void legal requirements for trade documentation to be in hard copy (such as bills of lading, promissory notes and commercial invoices). While this is essential in times of crisis, in the longer-term we need governments to recognize e-signatures and e-documents legally.

Moreover, many private-sector representatives call on governments to transpose into their national legislation the UNCI-TRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records, which provides a robust legal framework for electronic trade documents, both domestically and across borders. Such measures will help small businesses operate now and develop efficiently in the longer-term.

Digitalization is critical in this respect. It can help micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) overcome damaged supply chains by tapping into a wider range of international buyers and alternate suppliers. On average, 97% of internet-enabled MSMEs export, while export participation rates for traditional MSMEs range between 2% and 28% in most countries.

MSMEs using digital technologies, such as e-commerce, may be better adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. All this has underscored the importance of the digital economy in providing small businesses with a market as well as the need to support public-private partnerships – given that the new digital economy requires access to infrastructure from basic electricity to high-speed internet. Furthermore, there is a need to increase digital literacy so populations in developing economies are aware of e-commerce and online opportunities.

At the multilateral level, this shows the importance of adjusting the WTO rulebook to support digitalization efforts. The multilateral trading system will be an important ingredient in the economic recovery. The dramatic fiscal and monetary measures we have seen are essential. But trade policies must also pull in the same direction.
In many economies, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises either are the economy or account for a huge proportion of economic and employment activity.

When we look at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the huge macroeconomic shock that followed, we can clearly see that we need to take action to save small businesses.

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) was founded in 1919 – in the wake of the First World War and during the global Spanish flu pandemic – on the conviction that international commercial exchanges are conducive to both greater global prosperity and peace among nations. A century on, we are still convinced that open world trade is essential to delivering peace, prosperity and opportunity for all.

However, the notion of open world trade underpinned by a rules-based multilateral system has been increasingly challenged in recent years. The current health and socio-economic crisis has exacerbated this. Three key drivers in trade policy are having significant implications for small businesses in particular.

First there is a misconception that open trade is a cause of social and economic ills, rather than one of the key instruments in the policy tool kit that can alleviate them. ICC believes that generating more opportunities for small businesses generally, and women entrepreneurs in particular, will not only help make the system fairer and more efficient but also address some of the underlying political dynamics hindering the multilateral trading system.

Secondly, the abrupt halting of economic activity triggered by COVID-19 has led to a rethinking of global value chains. Governments and businesses alike are rightly focused on improving their resilience in the face of further possible unsynchronized shocks. Many of the risks posed by the current global economic downturn, changes to supply chain operations and policy interventions designed to move production will inevitably affect small businesses and vulnerable groups. Both governments and multinationals must ensure that the impact on small business is the first priority when making any changes to complex supply-chain trading systems.

Thirdly, the economic shock of COVID-19 is likely to include a significant trade finance shortfall once borders open and demand increases. ICC estimates that $2-$5 trillion in credit is needed to support the recovery of imports and exports.

Given that small businesses, businesses in developing countries and women entrepreneurs tend to face greater obstacles accessing trade finance, the private and public sectors must work together to address this and ensure greater access to capital for these groups.

With this in mind, ICC’s #SaveOurSMEs campaign calls for governments to design interventions that focus on small businesses and the two billion workers employed by them in the real economy, as well as for multinational companies to protect smaller businesses that are part of their value chains.

The path to a resilient recovery from the current crisis will be not be simple. We need to understand better the challenges small businesses are facing, and develop a suite of policies that provide them with appropriate support and better access into global markets.

Only then, can we squarely address two of the fundamental fragilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic: economic exclusion and social inequality.
Chambers: The first recourse for small businesses

DENIS DESCHAMPS, General Delegate of the Permanent Conference of African and Francophone Consular Chambers (CPCCAF)

At the heart of their ecosystem, chambers are ideal business supporters in a world of crisis

Chambers are agile and reliable intermediaries between small businesses and public authorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted their central role of providing immediate support to businesses and advising administrations and public authorities.

Given their place at the centre of their national or local business ecosystem, and their role as private-sector representatives, chambers offer solutions and follow-up adapted to the needs of companies. As such, they are ideal counterparts for small businesses when mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A study by the Permanent Conference of the Consular Chambers in Francophone Africa (CPCCAF) on the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on small businesses reveals the immense difficulties they face, and reports on the actions chambers are taking to remedy these.

Covering 31 chambers and organizations within its network of 17 countries, the CPCCAF survey shows a drop in sales for nine out of ten companies across French-speaking African countries, while eight out of ten companies experienced temporary closures and export difficulties. Companies in the Sahel region (Mali, Niger, Chad and Senegal) suffered the greatest impacts. Forecasts from the African Union show that imports and exports from the continent could drop by 35%, which would account for around 250 billion. In addition, the consequences of COVID-19 induced lockdowns threaten more than 20 million jobs in Africa.

Businesses call out for support

The survey results show that companies are in need of support in logistics and input supply as well as cash management. The results also indicated a need for support with relations with external operators and suppliers, as well as with training of staff. To this end, one in three responding chambers organized training for companies.

Although the CPCCAF survey questions did not address the informal sector, many chambers expressed concerns, especially with regard to the consequences of government confinement measures. Chambers play a decisive role in managing the crisis

Three-quarters of the chambers and intermediary organizations interviewed report that public authorities asked for their expertise during the crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the very real digital challenges Africa is facing. Two-thirds of chambers in French-speaking Africa reported that they were unable to promote teleworking as companies lacked adequate digital tools and devices. One solution offered by chambers was to encourage companies to adapt their leave calendars. Chambers, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Gabon, have also played a role by accommodating the National Monitoring and Response Committee of COVID-19 in their premises.

This unprecedented crisis has brought many challenges with it. Public authorities need to strengthen consular chambers in their efforts to provide information and support businesses in the field. The services that chambers offer are essential for the development of the business ecosystem in these challenging times.
Removing barriers to growth through digital deal-matching

BRIAN PALAS, CEO, Opportunity Network

For decades, business leaders have cultivated ecosystems centered on the potential to do business. Taking the form of social clubs, networking events, industry conferences and professional networks, these ecosystems create a hub of powerful investors, influential partners and top talent. However, barriers such as revenue thresholds, geographic location or lack of personal connections often keep small businesses from accessing these ecosystems, making it difficult for them to seek growth opportunities.

But not anymore. Today’s technology makes it possible to remove these barriers and to create a network of opportunity that is not constrained by location or personal connections. This is the basis of Opportunity Network. Opportunity Network is the largest global digital deal-matching platform, used by 30,000+ vetted chief executives, business leaders and investors from over 130 countries. Through the network, members can anonymously post their business deals and connect directly with global counterparts.

With the launch of a new tier, Opportunity Network LITE, small businesses of all sizes can access these deals. LITE specifically caters to smaller companies and start-ups, enabling those with revenues of over $250,000 to connect with counterparts around the world and put their deals in front of large investors and experienced partners.

This functioning digital ecosystem creates a secure point of connection for business leaders anywhere in the world. For small businesses, it is a one-step route to exponentially increasing their growth potential: accessing deals nationally and internationally, speaking directly with influential partners in their fields and discovering development options that they had not thought of before. With $300 billion in total deal flow distributed among 100+ industries, the platform is rife with options.

For our small business members, these options have been key to their survival in the past few months. Ivan Mangone, General Manager of Italian-based Progetti Medical Equipment, has relied on the platform to fill gaps in his supply chain, enabling him to get personal protective and medical equipment to hospitals at the height of Italy’s lockdown.

Through travel restrictions and economic fallout, COVID-19 has further raised the barriers to business opportunity. Where digital networks and communication platforms were once seen as extras, they are now an integral component of business development. When a link in the supply chain fails through, investment opportunities in the region dry up or brick-and-mortar stores close. Opportunity Network can provide connections to new partners, international investors or e-commerce platforms. On one single platform, Opportunity Network removes barriers to growth and provides every reliable CEO with access to global business opportunities.
Sustainable farming in remote, conflict-ridden Putumayo in Colombia can save lives and fight violence – now more than ever

Edgar Montenegro is worried about the farmers he works with in the remote region of Putumayo: getting to this part of Colombia, which borders Peru and Ecuador and is 500 km from Bogotá, is already a hike on normal days. Now with COVID-19 and the country’s lockdown over the past few months, the region is barely accessible. Villagers are putting up barricades because they are scared. With no hospitals around, they do not wish to risk infection.

Fear and a lack of economic opportunities have led to a return to illegal activities and violence in this already troubled region. ‘The lockdown costs access to everything – you are stuck with produce that no one can come pick up and bring to town. So the farmers don’t earn any money and some return to illegal coca production’, says Mariana Cobo, project manager at Corpocampo NGO. ‘Putumayo is an area left behind as we say here. It is time-consuming and expensive to get there. You need permits. It is a complicated situation and people are tired.’

Mariana works for family-owned natural food company Corpocampo that specializes in the production and distribution of açai berries and palm hearts, with all products deriving from sustainable farming practices from over 500 hectares of critical rainforest in the Colombian Amazon. The goal of company founder Edgar Montenegro is to improve peoples’ lives by providing a legal and reliable source of income. He therefore only employs vulnerable Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in areas affected by violence and poverty.

The Colombian Amazon region has long been affected by the country’s internal conflict, leading to widespread poverty, violence, and illegal coca crop production. Operating in several locations in Colombia, including Cauca, Nariño, Valle del Cauca and Putumayo escarpments, Corpocampo has so far provided jobs for over 240 women-headed households, impacting over 1,300 families.

After winning the 2018 Oslo Business for Peace Award and joining the UN
impossible’. Lockdown in Colombia is still ongoing.

Açai and palm hearts, Corpocampo’s two staple products, only grow in the Amazon and Pacific regions, making them hard to find. The COVID-19 pandemic has made finding raw material very difficult because Corpocampo has been unable to cross the border to Ecuador, the biggest palm heart provider.

‘Moreover, with the lockdown, we are not able to operate trucks. Every product we have is perishable and lasts only eight hours after picking it – you need to move fast to get the produce to the production plant’, explains Mariana.

A month ago, CorpoCampo NGO started providing some technical assistance again and buying everything available for export.

But the wild collection of açai is over, the berries will only be ready for harvest in 10 months.

‘We establish long-term relationships with the farmers for ten years because the first four years the crop is most vulnerable and the farmers will not receive much income from that. Once açai grows, the plant will give produce for over 30 years.

To overcome this critical time we give the farmers cash crops, such as cassava and papaya that they can sell on local markets – but this is badly paid.’

With COVID-19, some farmers who only signed up recently, started leaving the project. As they have not received any income yet, they opted out. Moreover, with no internet or mobile service, Corpocampo was unable to connect with the farmers and their plant nurseries.

Fortunately, now that they are able to move more freely they have found an interim solution.

‘We now work through community leaders. We ensure that through them we can get through to everyone. We are creating videos for technical assistance to show how to take care of the crops while we cannot go. We want farmers to be productive – as an alternative to illegal crops or earning nothing. With açai we look for long-term solutions that are sustainable’, says Mariana.

Mission impossible?

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have turned what was already a time-consuming and work-intense harvest production into what is almost ‘mission impossible’. The Development Programme’s Business Call to Action, Corpocampo created a non-governmental sub-unit, sponsored by international donors: Corpocampo NGO.

As part of its social commitment, Corpocampo has pledged to integrate 600 new families into its açai palm value chain by the end of 2020, providing smallholder suppliers and local plant employees with sustainable livelihoods through the production of its wild-harvested natural products. The teaming of the NGO with the company seemed an ideal solution to connect farmers to markets.

Açai is a native species of the Amazon region. Corpocampo plants organic crops deriving from palm trees not as mono crops but in agroforestry systems with Amazonian products. By establishing agroforestry systems with native species, Corpocampo contributes to the reforestation of the Amazon forest.

1. Farmer on Corpocampo’s first verification visit, before planting açai
2. Açai collector at a Corpocampo crop facility
3. Nursery facility for growing açai plants that are then delivered to farmers
4. Bowls using the açai pulp
Our employees make it possible

Interview with SWE YI and JENS-UWE PARKITNY, owners, Loikaw Lodge Myanmar

What did the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences mean for your business?
We had to close our lodge. Our last guests left on 25 March and at the time, we did not know when we would be able to receive guests again. We felt the financial impact immediately. The high season lasts until the end of April and every week without guests meant losing several thousand US dollars in revenue.

Nevertheless, we decided to keep our staff and continue to pay them their full salaries, using our personal savings. We felt a moral obligation to do so and show our appreciation for their commitment.

We also introduced reduced working hours and weekly shifts with no more than four to five staff members at a time. We focused on renovation, maintenance, cleaning and sanitization of our property in the weeks that followed the closure of our lodge.

How was your business going before the lockdown and then during it?
Before the lockdown, our business was thriving. In fact, it was our strongest high season in terms of numbers of bookings and average length of stay since our opening in October 2016.

The situation that the pandemic created not only ruined our business momentum but also that of everyone we normally interact with: the community-based tourism

Myanmar reported its first case of COVID-19 on 23 March. The government responded with restrictions to prevent the virus from spreading: banning mass gatherings, suspending visas, issuing stay-at-home orders, quarantining, promoting social distancing and imposing legal actions against those who broke the new laws. It seems that thanks to these prompt actions, the case numbers remained low. But the economic impact for businesses, especially for restaurants and hotels, was devastating.

Myanmar eco-lodge owners Swe Yi and Jens-Uwe Parkitny tell International Trade Forum how they survived the country’s lockdown and were able to welcome guests again.
programme, tour guides, drivers, restaurants and cafés, souvenir shops as well as the suppliers of fruits, vegetables, meats, fish and beverages.

The impact on all our partners and suppliers was huge, since local and international guests stopped coming from one day to the next. Not being able to understand how long this situation would last and what the ‘new normal’ would look like was an uncertainty of a magnitude we never had to deal with before in our professional and personal lives.

How is the situation now?
On 26 June, we reopened our lodge after local authorities inspected our property and approved the health and safety protocols we implemented.

Thanks to having kept our employees, it was easy for us to reopen. Even before opening, we had inquiries from in-country guests who desperately wanted to escape Yangon. This was incredibly encouraging. Even though we have no guests from abroad now, we can still count on locals and expats who remained in Myanmar and are looking for opportunities to spend a weekend in tranquillity.

How did you attract these new guests?
People thought of us thanks to word-of-mouth, great TripAdvisor reviews and consistent marketing on Facebook and Instagram. In July, we luckily had a number of guests from Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw staying with us. That way we were able to cover our operational costs for the month. August and September still look uncertain, as we have not received any bookings yet. But we are confident about getting bookings at short notice as people seem to decide more spontaneously these days, rather than planning ahead.

Did you look into adapting your business?
Living in a town with rural character, we could not simply switch to another business model. We usually get excellent feedback for our food. However, there is no demand from locals in Loikaw for our type of Western food. Had we been in Yangon, we would have offered take-out food and delivery. Many hotels in major cities are actually doing exactly that to survive.

So we decided to ride out the storm and focus on projects that will help us to recover fast once the situation swings back to normal: updating our website and positioning us not only as an accommodation provider but as an ‘experience provider’ with special ethnographic knowledge on the region’s tribes, that supports the community. With the first guests returning, we strongly feel that we have made the right decision so far.

Given possible future pandemics or restrictions, which measures are you taking to stay resilient?
As a service provider in the travel industry, we will always be very vulnerable to this kind of situation. The only way to become more resilient is to diversify. There is a saying that in order to survive in Myanmar, you need more than one leg to stand on. That is why we are looking into other business opportunities to build or to invest in, so we become less dependent on a single source of income. Many other business people we know are having the same thoughts.

But we are confident that new opportunities will unfold post-COVID-19. We have created a successful business model and we can imagine expanding into consulting. This could be either for private investors or for existing, smaller hotels that survived the pandemic and need marketing consultancy to maximize existing channels or build new ones to resume their business quickly.

Would you share some advice with fellow lodge owners?
Our first advice would be to keep your team, if you can afford it. It will allow you to resume operations quickly and provide the
same quality service as before, simply because your team knows your business and will be very loyal to you if you keep them. To gain customer confidence, it is crucial to invest in health and safety protocols, train staff accordingly and clearly communicate to guests the kind of measures you implemented.

The downtime during business closure allowed us to think about our strategy. We suggest that fellow lodge owners do the same: think about how you can position yourselves in a post-COVID-19 environment, what differentiates you from your immediate competitors, and what you might need to change to compete successfully in the future.

In our opinion, there will be a significant shift in customer behaviour post-COVID-19. Price consciousness, bargain hunting and value-for-money-seeking will prevail among those with lower or temporarily no income. People in the affluent or high-income bracket will travel again, driven by backlog demand. They will most probably look for upscale or luxury treats, for unique and authentic stays, dining, tours and special experiences.

Our Loikaw Lodge story has always been about providing a holistic experience that includes local communities. We consistently made community-based tourism and our knowledge about different ethnicities the core of our brand – which makes us unique in the area.

Now is a good time to think about your story and whether it still works for you. If guests can only be enticed through deep discounts, then something is wrong with your brand – and your business recovery will not be sustainable.

What exactly makes your brand special?
We strongly believe in tourism as a catalyst for economic and social development and change, specifically in former conflict areas.

We were aware that it is challenging and risky to develop even a small-scale project in a region that conflict had ravaged for so long. But we went ahead with our vision: a small but charming lodge that could serve as a role model for similar small hotel projects, not only for Kayah State but the wider region. After all, the majority of visitors to Myanmar are looking for hotels that reflect local architecture and artisanship as well as respecting tradition and fitting nicely into the landscape. Sustainable development principles guided us during the planning and after we became operational.
Since then, the UN in Tanzania has been developing new ways of working with the government to achieve greater impact by being more results oriented, reducing duplication of efforts, and improving coherence and efficiency.

Tanzania Development Vision 2025, Zanzibar Vision 2020 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals are central to the efforts of 23 UN agencies whose work is coordinated from my office.

Agricultural production contributes significantly to the country’s economy. Therefore, in our collective pursuit to navigate the COVID-19 storm, resilient and organized agricultural and trade sectors hold fundamental importance for standing tall in the post-pandemic world.

Collaboration can go a long way

A dynamic member of the United Nations family, the International Trade Centre (ITC) has been supporting the strengthening of trade capacity in the United Republic of Tanzania. ITC has designed and implemented a series of programmes: its activities range from large projects focusing on regional trade integration in the East African Community (EAC), to targeted actions for building the capacity of remote areas to sustain migration and refugee settlements.

The European Union—East African Community Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP) is a regional development initiative conceived by the EAC Secretariat in partnership with the European Union (EU) and implemented by ITC and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The EU funds the programme.

From its headquarters in Arusha, MARKUP is working to increase exports of agribusiness and horticultural products from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. It also promotes regional cooperation.
integration and access to the European market by addressing the specific challenges that small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and investment support institutions and policymakers face in accessing regional and EU markets.

Within two years only, the programme has achieved milestones in the country for developing value chains of avocado, coffee, tea and spices. The collaboration with Tanzania Spices Association (TASPA) to revamp the organization mobilized around 1,000 cinnamon farmers who joined the trainings on quality, new cultivation and processing techniques for the improved value addition of cinnamon. As a result, TASPA is now officially part of the European Spices Association.

In addition, a Dutch-Tanzanian joint venture, Trianon Investments was launched for processing and exporting high quality spices from Tanzania. This collaboration is another result of efforts organized through MARKUP.

Tanzanian companies are benefitting a great deal by participating in online versions of trade fairs such as the recent United Fresh Live! trade fair that had four Tanzanian representatives from the private and public sectors.

MARKUP also exhibited at key national and international trade fairs in Tanzania. Its most recent participation was in the Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair, also known as Saba Saba, in July and the Nane Nane trade fair in August this year.

Another ONE-UN effort in Tanzania is the Kigoma Joint Programme under the framework of UNDAP II and funded by Sweden and Norway.

The region of Kigoma is host to a community of over 300,000 refugees coming from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The government's priority is to turn Kigoma into a trade and business hub at a crossroad with the neighbouring countries.

Online systems and mobile applications are emerging as an integral part of efforts to deal with the coronavirus and its lasting effects. These digital solutions will certainly benefit the Tanzanian business community, in particular young entrepreneurs, by contributing to a stronger and smoother economic recovery.

The Agribusiness Tanzania App, which is also in the works, will be the fruit of the Kigoma Joint Programme’s collaboration with a local youth organization. This digital platform will offer access to markets through mobile and other networks, enabling smallholder farmers and buyers to access real time information about specific agricultural products, market availability, prices and intelligence.

Within the framework of the UNDAP II, ITC’s joint efforts with 16 other UN agencies in supporting women and youth from the districts of Kasulu, Kibondo and Kakonko for building sustainable livelihoods in the agricultural sector are praiseworthy. These efforts will benefit both the host and refugee communities.

Jointly with United Nations Capital Development Fund, ITC is supporting the extension of the Mvugwe aggregation centre in Kasulu District, which will provide a venue for capacity building on standard operating procedures for farmers and cooperatives, in addition to a storage facility.

Sustainable recovery is viable

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it numerous problems and challenges. At the same time, it has obliged all UN organizations to unite their forces and work together even more closely. This is an opportunity to join hands to overcome our common challenges for sustainable recovery.

Tanzania has recently made some remarkable economic developments. The UN and all organizations working under the UN Country Team are privileged to have had an opportunity to contribute to these efforts in creating an enabling environment to support the economic, social and human development of the country.

1. MARKUP team meeting with stakeholders in Tanzania
2. UN Resident Coordinator, Zlatan Milisic
3. MARKUP Senior Regional Technical Advisor demonstrates market research tools on market access, trade performance and export requirements at Nane Nane Exhibition 2020
4. ITC project Green House for Horticulture
Textile and clothing companies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan adopt a forward-looking approach to beat the repercussions of COVID-19

Saparbek Asanov is the President of the Association of Light Industry Enterprises of Kyrgyzstan, Legprom. According to him, textile and clothing companies in Kyrgyzstan have suffered a severe blow from the coronavirus. Out of 1000 factories in the capital Bishkek, only around 17 have managed to continue operations.

These factories have shifted their production towards meeting new consumer demands. One such factory is Aktis, a women’s garment manufacturing company, located in the suburban area of Bishkek.

During a critical shortage of masks and other protective equipment, Aktis completed an order of 2,500 facemasks and 350 personal protective garments for the civil volunteer movement, Narodnyi Shtab, which helps frontline workers fighting the coronavirus. Hundreds of more sets are in production.

The companies are not only determined to deliver high quality products but also to ensure the safety of their employees. All employees have received new uniforms including protective gloves and masks. Workshops are regularly disinfected.

A sense of duty towards those in need rather than economic interest drove these workers to leave their homes during the difficult times of the national lockdown.

As part of the recovery plan, the Legprom Association, in close contact with garment manufacturers, is devising a post-COVID-19 strategy to support the textile and clothing sector in Kyrgyzstan.

New opportunities in Tajikistan

As a popular Tajik proverb says, when one door closes another opens. The pandemic opened up new opportunities for textile and clothing companies in the country. Products such as protective facemasks, medical uniforms, bed linen, hospital clothes, cotton bandages and other medical and sanitary products are in great demand these days.

Resandai Qurghontepp, one of the International Trade Centre’s (ITC) partners, produced and donated 100,000 facemasks to medical facilities in Bokhtar, the third-most populated city in the country. This example encouraged other ITC partners to engage and help. As a result, another two companies, Mehrovar and Guldaston, started producing masks and donating them to schools and hospitals in their region.

COVID-19 response initiatives were an opportunity for ITC partner companies to use the knowledge and information they had gained at a training on corporate social responsibility.

More than 10 textile and clothing companies working with ITC have now shifted to the production of protective facemasks and other sanitary products.

Global Textiles and Clothing Programme

The International Trade Centre’s Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX) provides support to these companies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The programme promotes Textile and Clothing (T&C) exports from countries in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The aim is to stimulate employment and income generation along the value chain.

The GTEX programme is funded by the Government of Switzerland.
E-learning: The way to go

WAQAS RAFIQUE, Public Information Officer, and SHAUN LAKE, E-learning Expert, International Trade Centre

Mahfuzul, an aspiring entrepreneur from Bangladesh, has no doubt that he will be able to turn his dream of running his own business into reality.

‘During the COVID situation, and since January this year, I have been planning to begin my start-up. It will help me a lot in the future to start my business and manage funds,’ he says as he speaks confidently about the online course he took recently on raising funds for businesses.

With dreams of making it big, many entrepreneurs are making full use of online learning tools.

Carla from Bolivia has her eyes on the future, too. Believing that online business transactions are the ‘new normal’, she completed an introductory course on e-commerce to equip herself with the knowledge she needed to start.

In these times of immobility, innovative ways of learning have proved to be an asset.

During the first four months of the year alone, the International Trade Centre’s SME Trade Academy counted 53,000 enrolments for online courses, including Mahfuzul and Carla.

The Academy has seen an unprecedented rise in enrolments since the imposition of sanitary measures worldwide. The start of these restrictions in mid-March also coincided with a sudden jump in Academy users, from roughly 1,500 to over 8,000 unique users.

A real thirst for knowledge is almost unquenchable and the SME Trade Academy has emerged as a major learning resource, available in just a few clicks.

The SME Trade Academy is supporting business people from all around the world in making the most of their time under the imposed lockdowns to boost their skills in export development and entrepreneurship. It stands ready to assist with continued skills development to face the challenging times ahead.

The SME Trade Academy offers more than 60 courses over a wide range of topics. The courses are free of charge and available to anyone. They run for two weeks with the support of a tutor.

SME Trade Academy platform
Urban logistics in Guinea

WAQAS RAFIQUE, Public Information Officer, and WATHIRA MBAGE, Associate Programme Officer, International Trade Centre

Home delivery services, improved hygiene measures and online sales make it work for retail start-up

I will be forced to close some of the sales points and cut wages to keep my workers. Increasing costs for raw materials and the need to maintain my business prices have left me with no choice,’ says Mamoudou Barry.

The business manager operates several retail stores and employs four full-time and 20 seasonal workers. Launched three years ago, his start-up Aoudi Food produces and markets organic honey-based products.

Business was booming for the 32-year-old with satisfied customers in Morocco, France and Senegal. But when Guinea declared the state of emergency on 27 March, he felt overwhelmed. The measures put in place to help curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic pointed to turbulence ahead for micro, small and medium businesses in the country.

With commercial flights grounded, his products were not able to take off for their destinations and his customers cancelled their orders.

Closing down is not an option for Aoudi Food. Mamoudou is switching to new ways of reaching out to his local customers. His business is back on track thanks to support from the INTEGRA project: with an updated website, the young CEO can now sell his products online. Market advisors are also helping him improve Aoudi Food’s presence on social media to engage and share information with buyers who can pay their bills using a mobile money transfers system.

In addition, Aoudi Food is now ready to provide home delivery services. Staying safe by adopting good hygiene practices, kits with masks, gloves and hand sanitizer are ready for use in isothermic bags on delivery motor bikes. Mamoudou is happy to have found a responsible way of doing good business in the unusual circumstances.

Urban logistics has emerged as the solution for many small businesses in the current situation. It not only helps stay safe by preventing people from visiting markets, but also keeps the business generating revenue.

Funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund, the International Trade Centre’s INTEGRA project remains true to its commitment to increase the capacity of the private sector to create sustainable economic opportunities for growing businesses and entrepreneurship.

Mamoudou Barry, business manager of Aoudi Food
The International Trade Centre (ITC) is hosting a novel summit in a year that sees most major events cancelled or postponed.

In these extraordinary times, we all need to adapt, streamline and innovate, and The Good Trade Summit reflects exactly this approach.

The summit responds to the interconnected trade and development challenges brought to the forefront by the COVID-19 crisis and merges SheTrades Global, the premier global event linking women entrepreneurs with buyers and partners, with the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Forum, one of the leading global events on sustainable value chains.

The crisis has exposed the frailty of our value chains and has disproportionally affected women. How can we use this moment to hit the reset button and build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable value chains? How can we ensure that ‘good trade’ for positive and inclusive economic, environmental and social impact is the way forward in a post-COVID world?

Join high-level discussions with global experts, brainstorming sessions and networking opportunities at The Good Trade Summit. The online summit will take place on two consecutive afternoons from 14:00.

For more information and to register visit: https://www.intracen.org/good-trade-summit/
NEW ITC PUBLICATIONS

Resources on trade and export development for exporters, trade support institutions and policymakers

For free download, please visit: www.intracen.org/publications

KICK FOR TRADE
The International Trade Centre’s Youth & Trade Programme in collaboration with UEFA Foundation, Kick4Life and Streetfootballworld developed this life-skills curriculum for youth entrepreneurship and employability for children. The toolkit enables youth to build transferable skills through football, with interactive sessions on youth employability and entrepreneurship. https://www.intracen.org/publication/Kick-for-Trade/

INVISIBLE BARRIERS TO TRADE - PAKISTAN: BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES
Upgrading quality infrastructure and enforcing quality compliance are key to Pakistan’s export development. A survey of almost 1,200 companies on non-tariff measures found that more than half of Pakistani exporters face regulatory or procedural trade-related obstacles. The report recommends strengthening the quality and customs infrastructure in Pakistan. Adopting digitally oriented solutions such as an integrated trade portal is essential to give necessary guidance to exporters. https://www.intracen.org/NTM-Pakistan/

MEDICAL INDUSTRIES IN AFRICA: A REGIONAL RESPONSE TO SUPPLY SHORTAGES
COVID-19 has severely strained the supply of certain healthcare products. This report shows that Africa can position itself strategically and develop a regional response to avert future shortages of such products. Supporting health and positioning the continent strategically in the future trade landscape of the global medical industry are compatible objectives. Opening markets, diversifying supply and reinforcing regional value chains to combat COVID-19 would build resilience to future pandemics and help Africa become a competitive supplier of certain health-related goods. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has a vital role to play in supporting these value chains. Also available in French. https://www.intracen.org/publication/Medical-Industries-in-Africa/

TECH HUBS IN AFRICA: SUPPORTING START-UPS (SECOND EDITION)
African tech hubs play an important role in building fledgling entrepreneurial ecosystems and helping start-ups, but they struggle to earn revenue and become financially sustainable. This second edition has expanded its coverage, adding insights from East African hubs. The report, based on interviews with dozens of hubs across Africa, examines what hubs do, how they make an impact and what they can do to become viable. Learning from best practices on hub operations and business models should help founders think differently about how to achieve financial stability. This report is also meant as a toolkit enabling governments and funders to invest successfully in tech entrepreneurship support infrastructure. https://www.intracen.org/publication/Tech-Hubs-in-Africa-Supporting-Start-Ups-Second-edition/
**SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020**

COVID-19: The Great Lockdown and Its Effects on Small Business

The SME Competitiveness Outlook 2020 analyses the impact of the pandemic on small firms, international supply chains and trade. It provides projections and a 15-point action plan for businesses, policymakers and business support organizations to weather the crisis – and gear up for a ‘new normal’ that needs to be resilient, digital, inclusive and sustainable.

The report combines analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on firms based on a large-scale global survey, with case studies and a thought leader viewpoint. The projected drop in supply chain trade is evaluated by region, and in 85 country profiles.

https://www.intracen.org/publication/smeo2020/

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**World Tariff Profiles 2020**

Jointly published by ITC, WTO and UNCTAD, this annual report presents tariff-based market access conditions for goods applied by 164 WTO member states and other countries. This year’s focus is an overview of global tariff conditions (bound and applied) on COVID-19-related medical products and medicines.

The report contains aggregated product statistics; tariffs imposed and faced by each economy; and an overview of non-tariff measures. ITC’s Market Access Map database is a main source of applied tariff data in the report. Also available in French and Spanish.

https://www.intracen.org/publication/World-Tariff-Profiles-2020/

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**Promoting SME Competitiveness in Francophone Africa - COVID-19: Strengthening Companies’ Resilience**

Companies in French-speaking Africa have not been spared by the COVID-19 pandemic. One-third are on the verge of bankruptcy, according to a joint study conducted by ITC and the Permanent Conference of African and Francophone Consular Chambers.

Facing a fall in turnover, supply chain disruptions and cash flow difficulties, companies have been seeking financial aid. However, seven out of ten businesses report difficulties accessing information on government support. Yet the majority of firms have demonstrated remarkable resilience. In fact, smaller businesses seem to be more agile than their larger counterparts: one micro-sized business out of five has created new products or services in response to the pandemic, as compared with just one in ten large businesses that could say the same. Only available in French.


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**Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements**

This report presents recommendations to boost the participation of women in trade through free trade agreements. Policymakers and trade negotiators will find a new toolkit to gauge gender responsiveness in their agreements. These lessons are based on a research assessment of 73 selected free trade agreements in force among 25 Commonwealth countries, and top-line recommendations and model clauses for countries to adapt.

The recommendations include embedding gender provisions in the preamble, leveraging corporate social responsibility, using reservations, waivers and general exceptions, and strengthening monitoring and dispute settlement mechanisms.

https://www.intracen.org/publication/mainstreaming-gender-FTA/
Agenda

from September 2020*

Upcoming events

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*subject to cancellation or postponement due to COVID-19.

Join the International Trade Centre at these major trade development events.
For updates, see www.intracen.org/events

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