

FOREWORD

The Aid for Trade initiative was launched in 2005 with the aim of addressing the supply side and trade-related infrastructure constraints that often hamper developing countries' participation in global trade. We are proud that more than USD 300 billion has been disbursed for aid-for-trade programmes and projects since the Aid for Trade Initiative was launched. We note that 27% of this total has gone to least-developed countries and recall the ongoing challenges they face.

The analysis collected for this report, from developing and least developed countries, regional economic communities and their development partners, underscores that aid for trade results in inclusive trade and development outcomes. The positive impacts reported from Trade Facilitation Agreement implementation actions are encouraging.

Promoting inclusive trade for sustainable development requires us to improve connectivity—both physical and digital. Without connectivity, trade does not take place, and we are all poorer. More and better aid for trade must be mobilized to address this challenge. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development gives the Aid for Trade initiative even greater relevance.

High trade costs price many firms out of markets and reinforce economic isolation. This is also evident in the digital networks that intertwine with physical trade infrastructure and which are integral to trade. Some 3.9 billion people are still offline, with only 1 in 4 people in Africa using the internet and only 1 in 7 people in LDCs.

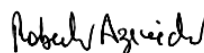
The digital divide is also a market access divide. Without an affordable connection, individuals and firms cannot access the market place of the world-wide web. And without the necessary skills and regulatory environment in place micro, small and medium sized enterprises cannot thrive.

This needs to change. We must bridge these gaps in connectivity. Failure to act may reinforce existing inequalities between developed and developing economies, and within countries between women and men, rural and urban, and large and small firms.

This joint OECD-WTO publication, with contributions from other organisations, looks at what is being done today and what more needs to be done tomorrow to build the human, institutional and infrastructure capacities which will allow developing countries, and especially the least-developed, to benefit more from trade opportunities.



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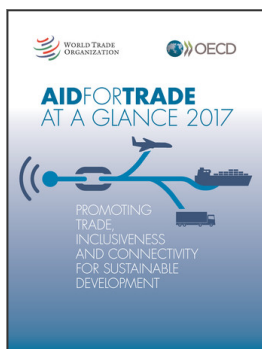
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