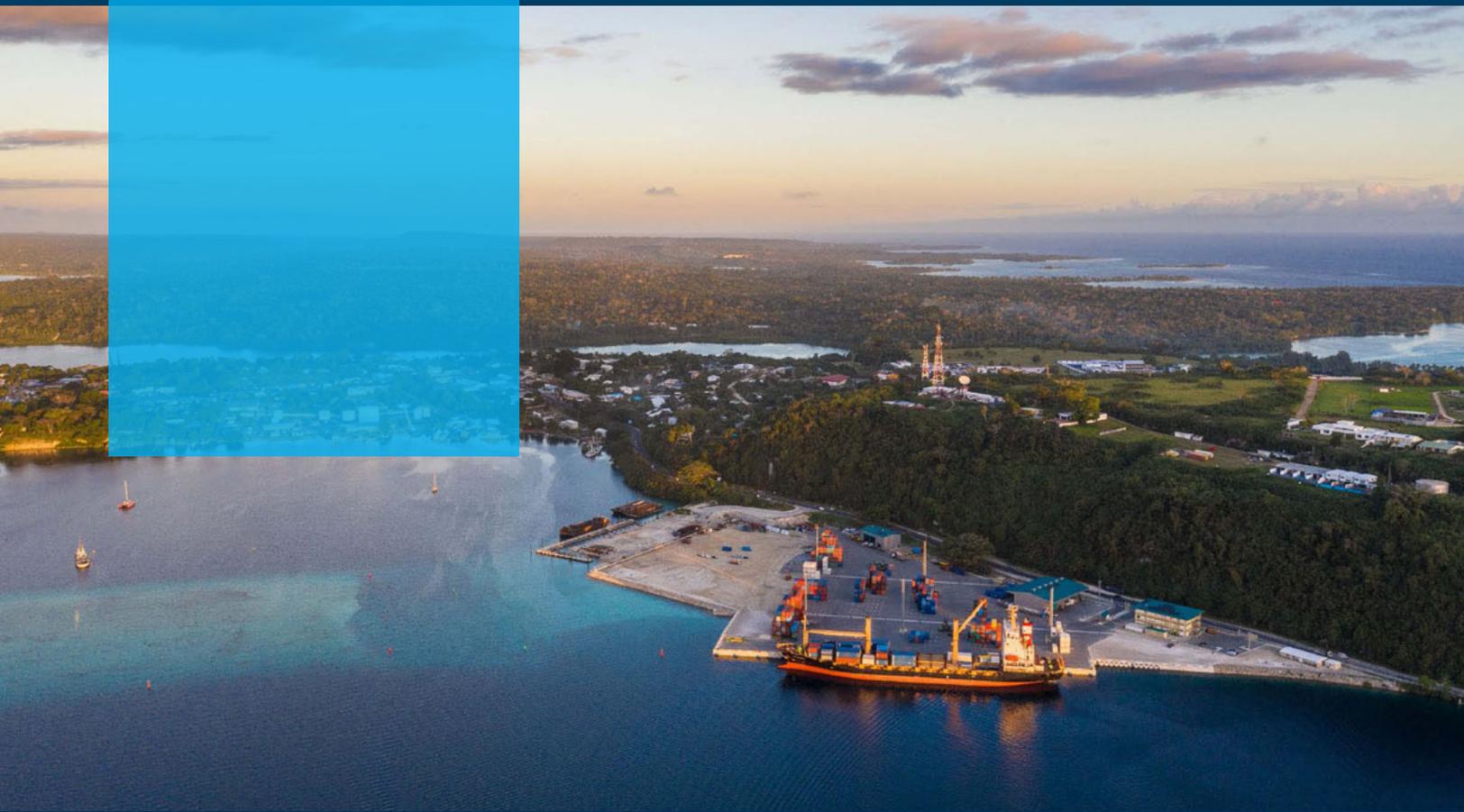


Trade Facilitation Support Program

Annual Report

JULY 1, 2020–JUNE 30, 2021



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1818 H Street NW
Washington DC 20433
Telephone: 202-473-1000
Internet: www.worldbank.org

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEO	Authorized Economic Operator
ANSA	National Food Safety Agency (Moldova)
AO	Authorized Operator
AR	Advance rulings
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
AW	ASYCUDA World
BAF	Biosecurity Authority of Fiji
BCP	Border crossing point
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
C4D	Collaboration for Development
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CBM	Coordinated border management
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CFS	Customs freight stations
CN	Concept note
COMEX	Ministry of Foreign Trade (Costa Rica)
COMIECO	Council of Ministers of Economic Integration
CONAFAC	National Council for Trade Facilitation
COOs	Country of Origin
COVAX	COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access
DB	Doing Business
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development
EFI	Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
ePhyto	Electronic phytosanitary certification
eSW	electronic Single Window
FCI	Finance, Competitiveness & Innovation
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FRCS	Fiji Revenue and Customs Services
FTA	Free trade agreements
FTAP	Free Trade Agreement Portal
FY	Fiscal year
GASI	General Agency for Specialized Inspections (Mongolia)
GBP	British pound sterling
GDC	General Directorate of Customs (Albania)
GDCE	General Department of Customs and Excise (Cambodia)
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
GNI	Gross national income

GRS	Georgia Revenue Service
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICD	Inland container depot
ICRP	Investment Climate Reform Program
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFD	Investment for Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ISO	International Standards Organization
ITC	International Trade Center
JCA	Jamaica Customs Agency
JSC	Joint select committee
JSWIFT	Jamaica Single Window for Trade
JTIP	Jamaica Trade Information Portal
KFVA	Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency
LDCs	Least developed countries
LNDC	Lesotho National Development Corporation
LNSW	Lesotho National Single Window
LRA	Lesotho Revenue Authority
LTA	Land Transport Authority (Fiji)
LTIP	Lesotho Trade Information Portal
MBS	Malawi Bureau of Standards
MDAs	Ministries, departments, and agencies
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (Tajikistan)
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance (Cambodia)
MOH	Ministry of Health and Medical Services (Fiji)
MOIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade (Vietnam)
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MRA	Malawi Revenue Authority
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
MTED	Minister of Trade and Economic Development (Tonga)
MTI	Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment
NAQIA	National Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection Authority (Papua New Guinea)
NIRTTP	Nepal-India Regional Trade & Transport Project
NRA	National Revenue Authority (Sierra Leone)
NSW	National Single Window
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
OBRA s	Other border regulatory agencies
ODA	Official Development Assistance (UK)
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OLM	Online Licensing Module
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PCE	Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation

PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PIU	Project implementation unit
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PR list	Prohibited and restricted list (Cambodia)
SADs	Single administrative documents
SAI	State Agriculture Inspectorate (North Macedonia)
SARTI	South Asia Regional Integration in Trade and Investment
SCTF	Sea Containers Task Force
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Switzerland)
SIDA	International Development Cooperation Agency (Sweden)
SIECA	Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration
SIIC	Integral and Unique Service Model of Information on Foreign Trade
SMEs	Small or medium enterprises
SOP	Standard operating procedures
SPECA	United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SPS	Sanitary and phytosanitary
SRA	Swaziland Revenue Authority
STDF	Standards Trade Development Facility
TACB	Technical assistance and capacity building
TBL	Trade Board Limited (Jamaica)
TFAF	WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility
TFSP	Trade Facilitation Support Program
TIP	Trade Information Portal
TORs	Terms of References
TRS	Time Release Study
UFT	Umbrella Facility for Trade
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTIP	Vietnam Trade Information Portal
WBG	World Bank Group
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO TFA	World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement
ZCSA	Zambia Compulsory Standard Agency
ZMA	Zambia Metrology Agency
ZRA	Zambia Revenue Authority

Executive Summary

This report presents the highlights and progress of the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) during the period of July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, in accordance with the fiscal year 2021 (FY21) of the World Bank Group (WBG).

THE PROGRAM

The TFSP was launched in June 2014 to support countries seeking assistance in aligning their trade practices with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). The TFSP's funding helps countries—particularly developing countries—achieve **full and effective** implementation of the WTO TFA and related trade facilitation reforms. TFSP funding helps client countries:

- Identify existing constraints and bottlenecks to cross-border trade
- Design and plan for implementation of practical reform strategies
- Increase the predictability, transparency, and harmonization of systems and procedures in line with international standards covering import, export, and transit activities

Key areas of assistance include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting the ratification and notification of the WTO TFA
- Undertaking WTO TFA Gap Assessments and implementation of reform action plans
- Supporting the establishment and strengthening of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs)
- Assisting with the design of risk-based approaches for border clearance
- Preparing for Single Window implementation
- Leveraging global and regional partnerships and knowledge sharing to ensure optimal delivery of support [see **section 1.1** for more details on the technical assistance supported by the TFSP]

Activities funded by the TFSP are implemented by drawing on the expertise of both the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), bridging the important roles of the public and private sectors in reforming trade facilitation laws, procedures, processes, and systems to align with the WTO TFA. A stocktaking undertaken of TFSP in FY19, found that the program was highly relevant and strongly aligned with the WTO TFA. It also found the program to be very efficiently managed. Activities are implemented through a whole-of-government approach, which has been especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARTNERS

The TFSP is financed by nine development partners: Australia, Canada, the European Union, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The WBG draws on its unique network of global and regional partners in delivering joint initiatives and activities to ensure a coordinated and complementary roll-out of technical assistance and capacity building, such as collaborating with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF) to host a joint webinar at the Aid-for-Trade stocking event. In the reporting period, the TFSP supported also increased **collaboration** with other organizations such as the Standards Trade Development Facility (STDF) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The WBG worked with the STDF to ensure synergies between STDF and WBG projects and inclusion of WTO TFA objectives in the projects. See **section 1.4** and **box 8** for more information on collaboration with other donor partners.

PORTFOLIO

The TFSP provided assistance to one new country in FY21 (Tonga), bringing the total number of countries that have received financing for TFA implementation since inception to 48 countries. Within the program's portfolio, 56 percent are International Development Association (IDA) countries, and 17 percent are countries on the WBG's FY21 list of fragile and conflict-affected situations.¹

¹ Based on the World Bank Group's FY21 List of Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations, these are Burundi, Kosovo, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Liberia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste. FY21 classification is based on calendar year 2020 data.

Enhanced focus has been placed on women-led firms in cross-border trade, with an emphasis on trade facilitation, over the last two reporting periods. In an effort to collect gender-disaggregated trade facilitation data that can help make the design of trade facilitation projects more gender neutral, the TFSP supported surveys of over 1,500 firms in the Pacific Islands region.² In this reporting period, [four individual country reports³ and one comparative regional report](#) were disseminated broadly to governments, the private sector, and civil society in and beyond the surveyed countries. An [animated video](#) highlighting the main findings was also produced to publicize the study in an easily sharable and digestible media format. The survey results from the Pacific work are feeding into a new regional project, and the survey methodology is being replicated in other regions (see [box 7](#) for more details on the regional findings).

PROGRESS TOWARDS INCREASING ALIGNMENT WITH THE WTO TFA

Since 2014, the WBG team has conducted over 50 TFSP-supported TFA Gap Assessment missions to assess the alignment of a country's processes and procedures with the WTO TFA. The Gap Assessment feeds into the TFA Tracking Tool developed by the WBG that monitors progress towards meeting the TFSP's objective of helping countries improve alignment with the WTO TFA. The TFA Gap Assessment covers legal/policy aspects, implementation procedures, and operational checks for each measure of the WTO TFA. The most recent data indicates that TFSP-funded activities have helped improve client countries' alignment with the WTO TFA along the three dimensions, and the overall alignment score has risen from 41 percent to 51 percent.⁴ See [section 1.5](#) for more details on the TFA Tracking Tool.

PROGRAM FINANCES

Between the program's inception in 2014 and the end of this reporting period, USD 53.7 million was received in financial contributions, which equals to 94 percent of overall partner commitments. Cumulative disbursements and commitments were at 81 percent at the close of FY21. The disbursement-only rate was at 78 percent

at the end of FY21. Total disbursement amounts in the reporting period were significantly lower than previous years due to the impact of the pandemic.

Leverage of TFSP support is achieved either by directly informing World Bank lending and IFC operations or by complementing ongoing operations through support for the trade facilitation components of larger lending and advisory projects. TFSP funds also inform and/or complement bilateral support from developing partners to trade facilitation reforms.

LOOKING FORWARD

The duration of the COVID-19 pandemic remains uncertain; and as countries continue to fight the spread of the disease and begin to look towards recovery, continuing to maintain trade flows as much as possible is crucial to limit the negative impacts of the pandemic on human health and the economy.

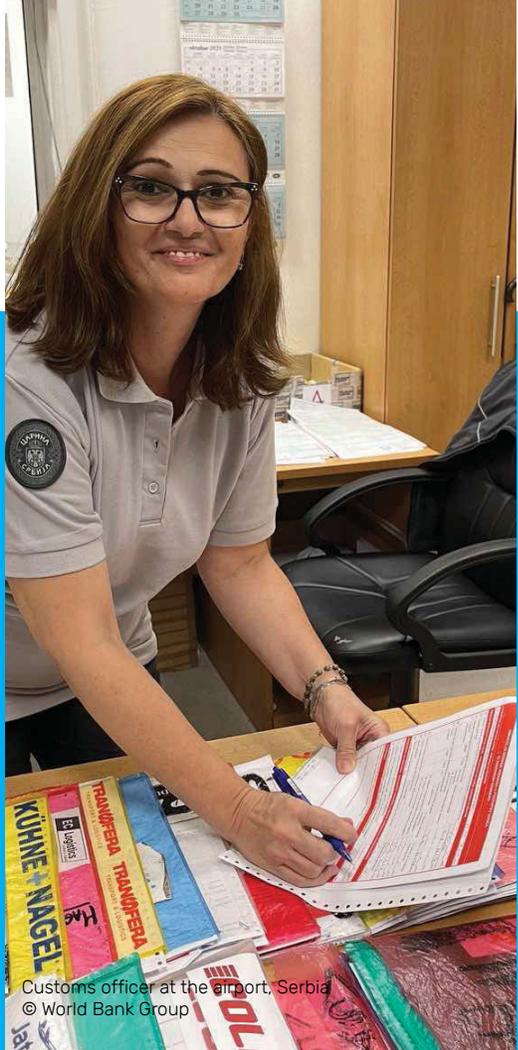
The WBG continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including by ramping up the use of virtual modalities and increasing local staffing and consultants. The TFSP secretariat and trade facilitation experts continue to share guidance on best practices for border processes and procedures, particularly focused on business continuity and managing risks during the pandemic and supporting clients with resilient recovery, including implementing expedited processes for the import, export and transit of vaccines and medical products.⁵ Going forward, the WBG will continue to implement ongoing activities and consider emerging requests for support from new countries through the TFSP, including responding to support for the acceleration of TFA implementation. Specifically, discussions on possible TFSP support in FY22 are underway with Angola, Balkans, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Within the area of knowledge management and learning, TFSP support for peer-to-peer learning will focus on innovative ways to address specific challenges related to the pandemic at the present and also on how to re-build and recover going forward. Joint workshops with the WTO around notifications will also be considered.

² Surveyed countries were Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu.

³ Country reports for Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu were finalized and published in this reporting period. The report for Fiji was finalized and published in the previous reporting period.

⁴ No new assessment or update of baselines could be undertaken in the reporting period due to the ongoing travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in overall alignment score is reflective of 21 TFSP-supported countries with both baseline and update scores, which allows for a comparison over time.

⁵ [Managing risk and facilitation trade during COVID-19 \(video\)](#); [Managing risk and facilitating trade in the COVID-19 pandemic \(guidance note\)](#); and [Trade facilitation best practices implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic \(guidance note\)](#).



Customs officer at the airport, Serbia
© World Bank Group

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Program Highlights

Since inception, the TFSP has supported TFA implementation in 48 countries.⁶ One new country was added to the program this reporting period (Tonga).⁷ The share of International Development Association countries remains high at 56 percent of the portfolio, and the share of countries with fragile situations was at 17 percent at the end of the reporting period. Sub-Saharan Africa countries make up the biggest share of the TFSP portfolio (25 percent). **Figures 1.1** and **1.2** provide details of the portfolio. The country income statuses are not static and change over the course of the TFSP. Five countries have moved to higher income categories compared to the income category of which they joined the program.⁸ Nepal joined the program as low-income but has since moved to the lower-middle income category. In addition, Georgia, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Moldova have moved from lower-middle income to upper-middle income.

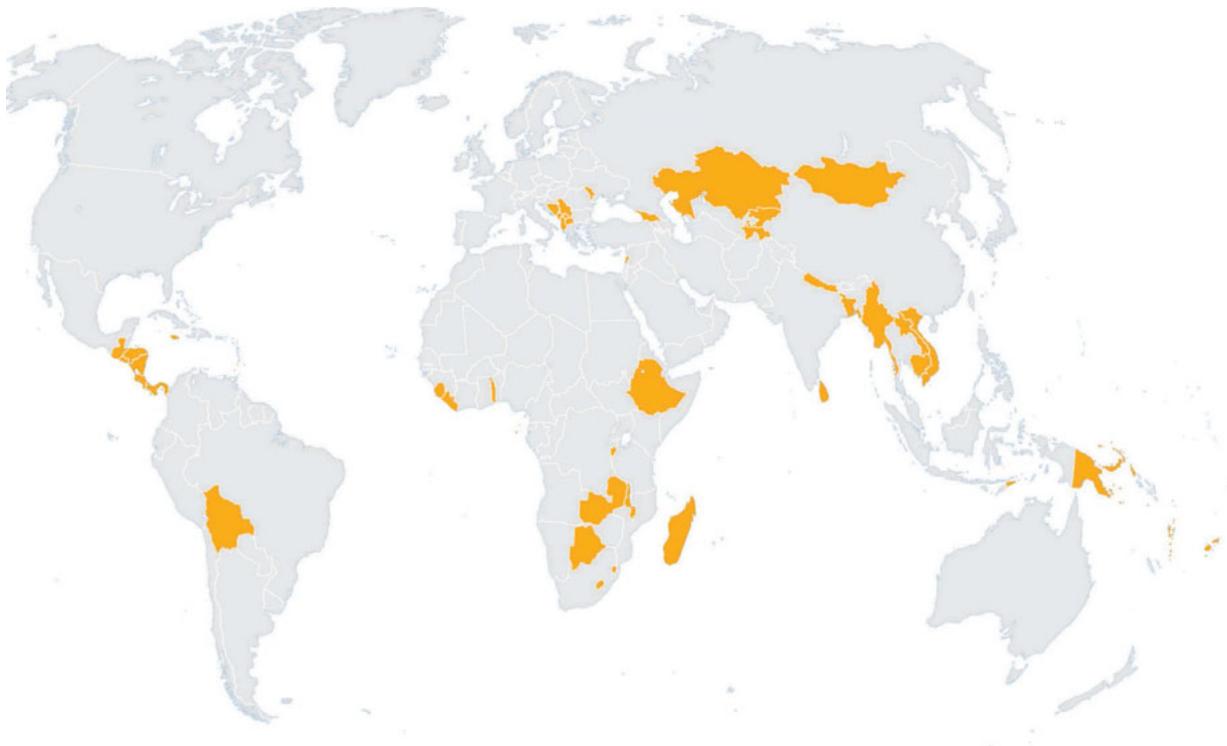
⁶ Includes both active and inactive countries to demonstrate cumulative support since the inception of the TFSP.

⁷ To receive support, countries are expected to have demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing trade facilitation reforms in the areas covered by the WTO TFA. The TFSP prioritizes assistance to countries with limited access to other donor support. Requests for technical assistance can be made directly to the TFSP secretariat or through the World Bank Group offices and donors.

⁸ The World Bank assigns economies to four income groups—low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high. The classifications are updated each year and are based on gross national income (GNI) per capita in current USD. In each country, factors such as economic growth, inflation, exchange rates, and population growth influence GNI per capita.

FIGURE 1.1

Map of 48 Countries Where the Trade Facilitation Support Program Has Provided or is Providing Multi-Year Implementation Assistance

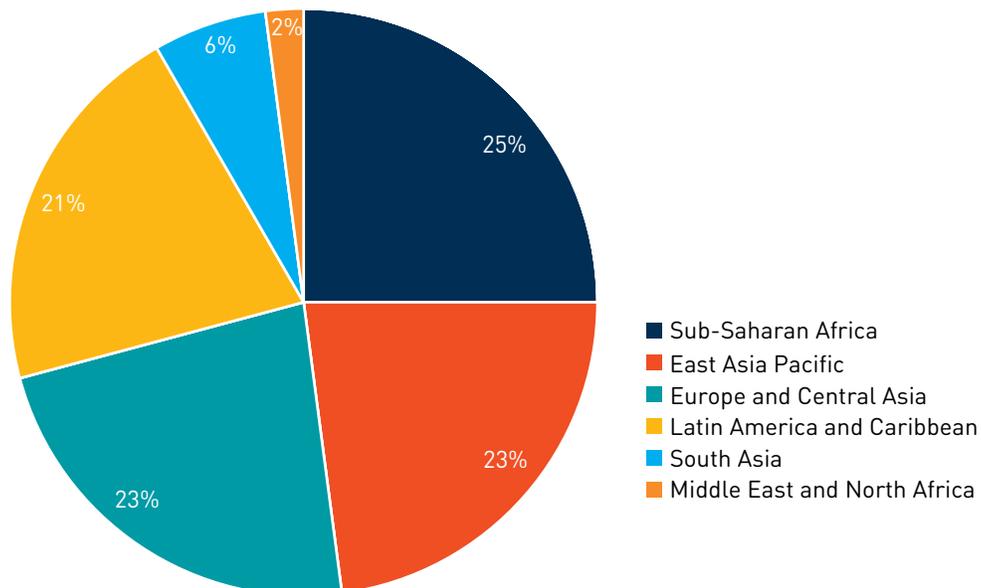


Source: World Bank Group.

Note: The countries are Albania, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burundi, Cambodia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Republic of North Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Vanuatu, Vietnam, and Zambia.

FIGURE 1.2

Regional Breakdown of the Cumulative Trade Facilitation Support Program Portfolio



Source: World Bank Group.

TFSP support is divided into two main components: (a) **technical assistance** and (b) **knowledge management and learning** activities. Program highlights for FY21 are summarized for these two areas in the next sections, including a summary of key areas of engagement and examples of country-level outcomes. **Box 1** presents highlights of the work in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. **Figure 1.4** provides an overview of TFSP support by TFA measure. **Annex A** provides a summary of key TFSP-supported activities by country.



Container ship
© Shutterstock, Lee Yiu Tung

BOX 1 Spotlight on TFSP Support to Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa countries make up 25 percent of the TFSP portfolio, and 10 of the 12 Sub-Saharan Africa countries that are receiving or have received capacity building and technical assistance from the TFSP are IDA countries, which means they are among the world's poorest countries in need of support. To help these countries along the development path, the WBG has provided trade facilitation support to help establish solid foundations and effective border processes and procedures for the countries to deepen their integration into the world economy. Select examples of how TFSP support has improved the trading environment in Sub-Saharan Africa countries include:

- Assisting **Eswatini** on coordinated border management, which has not only strengthened the country's border agency cooperation and NTFC's effectiveness but also facilitated the revival of the technical committee on sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical/non-tariff barriers to trade and have streamlined it to the NTFC for reporting, coordination, and accountability. The government of Eswatini has provided positive feedback regarding this reform because there is now a clear accountability framework.
- Engaging with the customs administration of **Liberia** to develop draft regulations to modernize the Customs Code, which were adopted at the end of the reporting period.
- Helping to operationalize the new Control of Goods Act in **Malawi**, which introduces a more predictable and transparent way of implementing trade

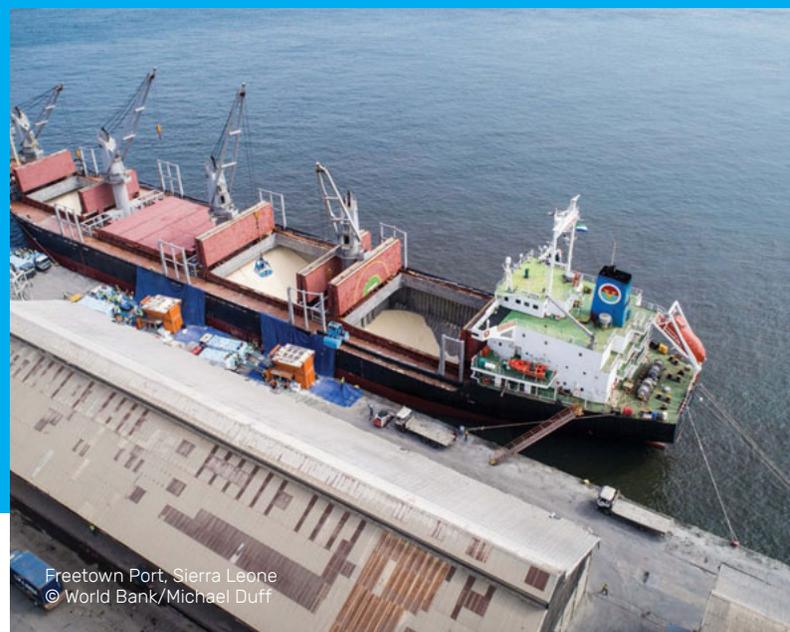
measures. The Control of Goods Act regulates imports and exports on public interest grounds.

- The WBG team supported **Sierra Leone** in meeting TFA notification obligations to the WTO. The TFSP supported WBG team helped the NTFC in determining the dates by reviewing the status of implementation of the activities in the Trade Facilitation Strategy with the responsible government agencies and business associations on the NTFC. As a result, Sierra Leone successfully submitted the definitive dates for implementation for Category B measure on February 18, 2021.
- Continuing to help **Zambia** integrate risk-based principles into border inspections and clearance processes through joint and target inspections, where an early impact is showing the percentage of cargo inspected by the Zambia Metrology Agency (ZMA) and Zambia Compulsory Standard Agency (ZCSA) has reduced from 80 percent to an average of 65 percent through risk profiling products and allowing some products to be directed to the "blue," "green," or "yellow" zone at the border where there are no inspections or only document reviews.

See **box 4** for details on the launch of the Trade Information Portals (TIPs) in Eswatini and Lesotho and **annex A** for even more details on the support provided to the region during this reporting period.

1.1 Technical Assistance

Effectively improving border processes and procedures requires that every relevant agency is involved and coordinates closely with one another. TFSP-supported activities are grounded in the “whole-of-government” approach that takes into account the varied capacities of border agencies to implement trade facilitation reforms. To this end, the WBG engages with and brings together all relevant agencies, not just customs, that exercise border control functions within a country—e.g., standards, sanitary and phytosanitary, food safety, animal health, and human health—to improve the efficiency of their respective control functions. This whole-of-government approach is encapsulated as the **“Seven Cs”**:



Freetown Port, Sierra Leone
© World Bank/Michael Duff

The “Seven Cs”

Capacity Building

Designing practical reform strategies, including the development of detailed reform sequencing plans that match with country priorities, available resources, and local implementation capacities

Connection

Designing ICT blueprints and platforms, e.g. Trade Information Portals and Single Windows, that improve transparency and efficiency

Coordination

Coordinating different national border agencies in connection with import, export, or transit processes and procedures

Consistency

Ensuring that border agencies are consistently applying laws, regulations, and procedures to build trust and promote compliance in the private sector, while enhancing transparency in trade processes

Communication

Clearly communicating to ensure a successful reform process, especially on trade reforms where there are many agencies involved in import and export processes. Communicating the benefits and possible savings from reforms minimizes resistance to change

Commitment

Obtaining strong political and financial commitment from the highest level of the government to drive the reform process in partnership with private sector stakeholders

Cooperation

Facilitating information exchange between national, regional border agencies, and private sector stakeholders

TFSP funding supports border-wide collaboration in developing solutions and improving capacity so that no key border agency is left behind, and the WBG also works with the private sector to promote the Seven Cs and maximize gains for traders. **Box 2** provides an example of how a TFSP-supported project is aligned with the “Seven Cs.”



Kips imports construction materials and household goods from Europe to Montenegro
© Kips

BOX 2 The Seven Cs in Action

The WBG seeks to promote capacity, coordination, communication, cooperation, connection, consistency, and commitment across the relevant border agencies involved in trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. Here is an example of how this whole-of-government approach was undertaken in Montenegro:



Clearance times for imports in Montenegro used to take up to eight hours. A major cause of delays in the country was the process in which every consignment entering Montenegro had to be directed from the border to the inland customs terminal for inspection. To help reduce this time to trade and ease the flow of goods, the WBG undertook a Time Release Study (TRS) to better understand the trade processes of the country. Based on the TRS findings, the TFSP-supported team worked with Montenegro customs to develop a streamlined and paperless clearance framework for trusted traders. **[capacity building]**

New standard operating procedures were developed, such as Sanitary Inspection revising its work process to allow customs clearance to take place at the importing company’s premises rather than at the customs terminal, and the customs software system was upgraded to enable 24/7 clearance of goods. Additionally, trusted traders now have the ability to submit a single document electronically instead of physically submitting six paper documents to customs. **[coordination, connection, and consistency]**

The new process was piloted with two companies that were trusted traders. So far, clearance costs related

to usage of customs terminals, driving to the terminal and back to the company premises, costs for accommodating vehicles, and customs agent fees have been reduced. Import clearance times have also reduced to about half an hour with less paperwork and fewer inspections. The new process has helped customs to build trust and better understand its customers. Customs and trade associations are now working together to promote the new simplified customs regime for trusted traders. **[cooperation and communication]**

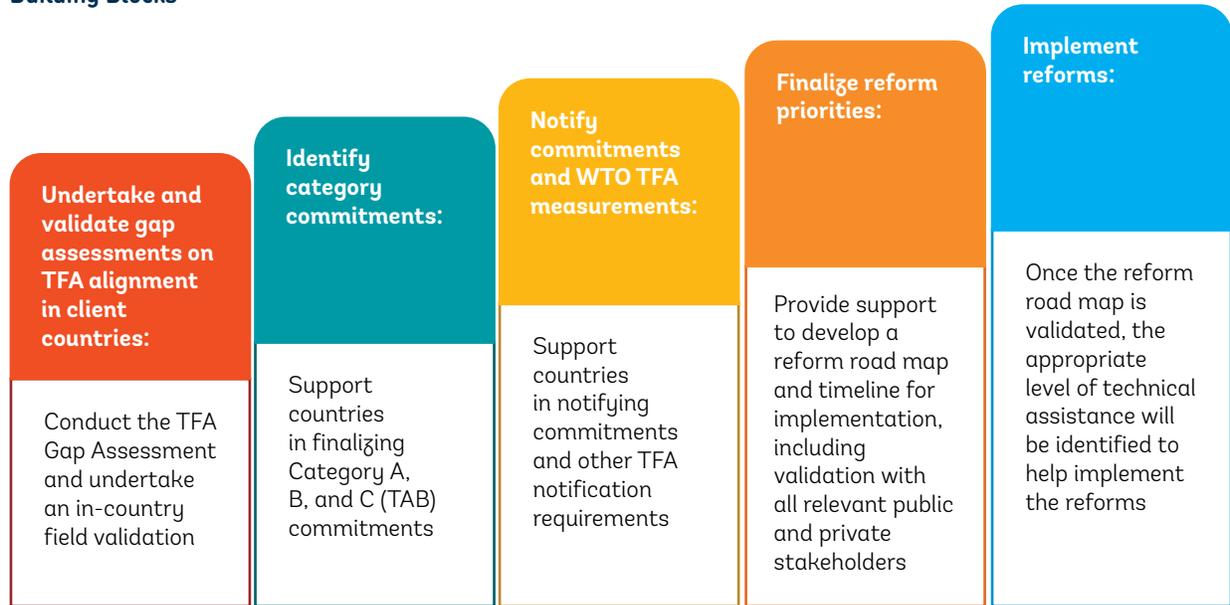
Customs has set a goal to have at least 40 percent of declarations under the simplified regime by 2022. **[commitment]**

“The new system has saved us money and time. The time savings has improved our decision-making, especially in purchase and delivery management. We can now make more precise plans, which is very important for the effectiveness of the entire supply chain.”

— NOVAK RUTOVIC, HEAD OF FREIGHT FORWARDING AND CALCULATION, KIPS

Generally, technical assistance activities funded by the TFSP might progress along the following building blocks:

FIGURE 1.3
Building Blocks



Border post in Montenegro
© Shutterstock/EQ Roy

TFSP-supported technical assistance can include help with:



Preparatory Activities

- Preparing for ratification of the WTO TFA
- Scheduling commitments and implementation timelines
- Revising and validating self-assessments and identifying reform gaps



Capacity Building

- Supporting and strengthening National Trade Facilitation Committees (see **box 3** for more information on support to NTFCs)
- Fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors to catalyze trade
- Facilitating reforms through intense engagement and lobbying
- Revising inter-agency coordination and design of institutional capacity building plans
- Assisting countries in tracking and reporting their progress in WTO TFA implementation (see **section 1.5** on the TFA Tracking Tool)



Technical Assistance

- Responding to COVID-19 to maintain business continuity and minimize disruption to trade (see **box 6** for examples on how the TFSP provided support for COVID-19 response and recovery)
- Revising or drafting trade laws and implementing regulations to ensure alignment with the Trade Facilitation Agreement
- Simplifying, streamlining, and harmonizing trade procedures and documents to reduce time and cost to trade
- Reviewing and establishing inventories of fees and charges associated with cross-border trade
- Improving transparency and accountability measures related to trade practices
- Establishing and publishing average release times
- Integrating risk-based management systems and other contemporary border management approaches into border inspections and clearance processes
- Designing and implementing automated systems and innovative technologies to facilitate trade
- Assessing gendered challenges in undertaking cross-border trade processes and procedures and making recommendations on how to address these challenges (see **box 7** for more information on the Trade and Gender Study)



Regional Activities

- Implementing policies and practices and supporting regional solutions to facilitate the recognition of agreed-upon standards for goods crossing borders
- Implementing regional and external border agency coordination, collaboration, and cooperation

FIGURE 1.4
TFSP Support by TFA Measure

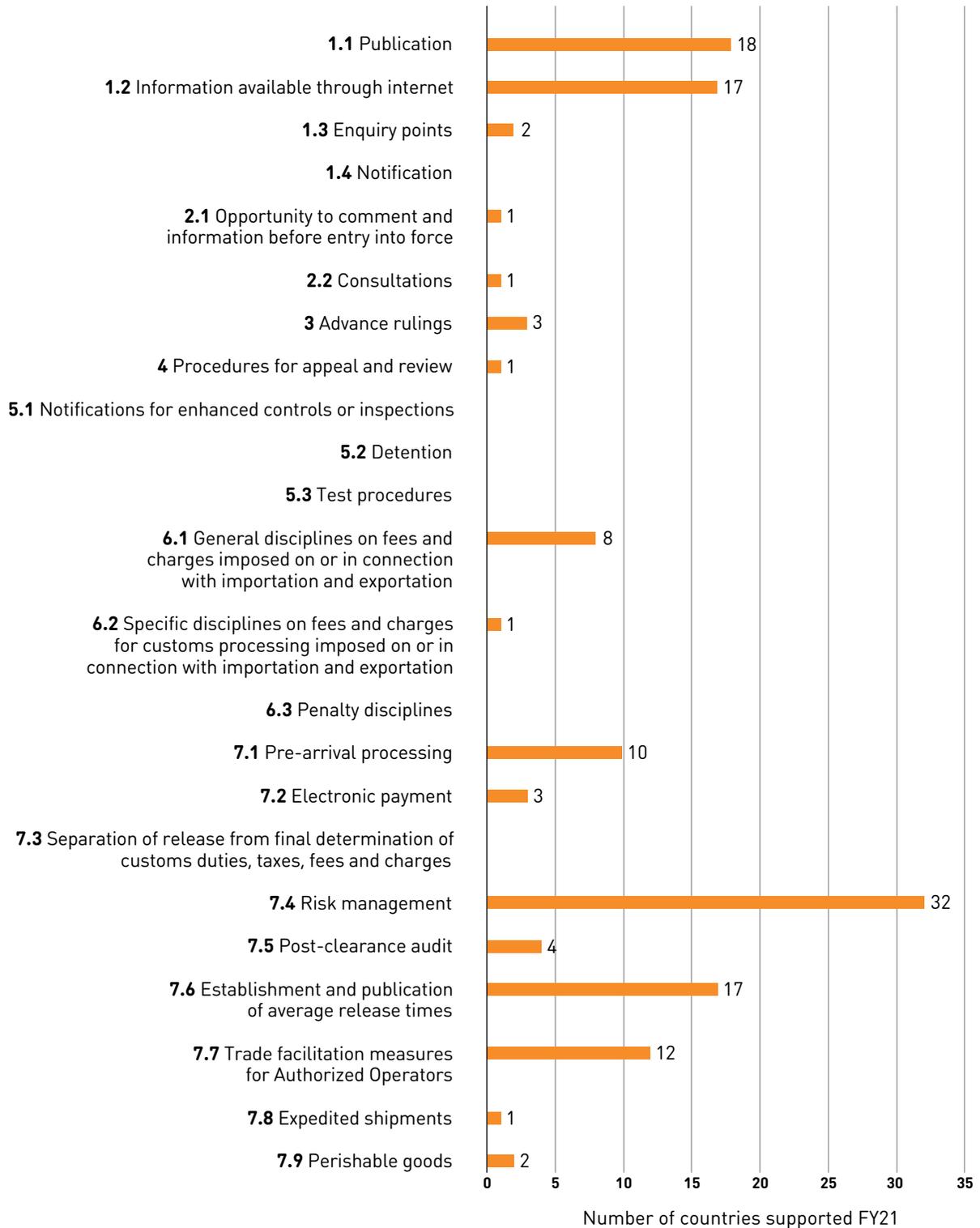
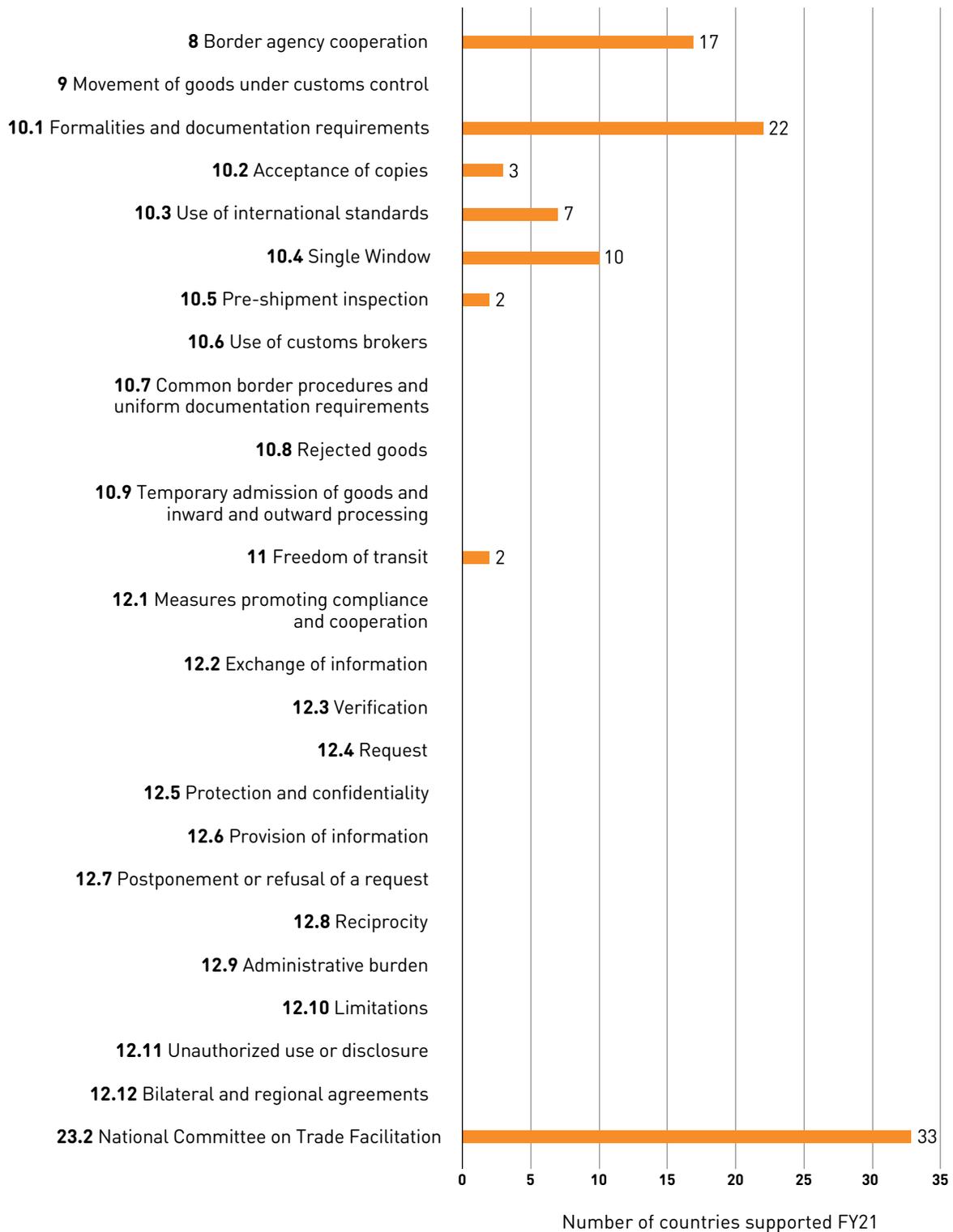


FIGURE 1.4 (CONTINUED)

TFSP Support by TFA Measure



Examples of TFSP-supported work include:

- Support to **National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFC)** is a critical element of TFSP assistance. NTFCs are important platforms for institutional coordination and consultation with stakeholders through broad and active participation from both private and public sector representatives. They enable consensus on reform priorities, planning, and ultimately foster coordinated implementation of successful trade facilitation reforms. Since inception, the TFSP has provided support to 33 countries in the establishment and/or operation of NTFCs (Albania, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Eswatini, Fiji, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Myanmar, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Togo, Vanuatu, Vietnam, and Zambia) (see **box 3**).

BOX 3 National Trade Facilitation Committee Capacity Building

The NTFC's role is to streamline procedures and implement trade facilitation measures at the national level. It is also an important mechanism for domestic coordination and stakeholder (public and private) engagement on trade facilitation. Given the importance of the NTFC for planning and implementing trade facilitation reforms, as well as for public-private consultations, TFSP financing is available for technical assistance and advocacy support to establish NTFCs where it does not exist in a client country. Where NTFCs exist in the client country, the WBG is often engaged in capacity building efforts to strengthen and enhance the function of NTFCs to ensure that it is structured and operating according to international standards, as well as to increase awareness of the body among private sector stakeholders.

A few examples of capacity building efforts in this reporting period include:

- Helping countries reinvigorate the TFA process after the COVID-19 pandemic constrained local TFA activities. For example, several online discussions were conducted in this reporting period to support the NTFCs in several Pacific Island countries (**Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu**) to review the current state of each country's TFA program and revised action plans with additional activities going forward;
- Supporting and mentoring the NTFC secretariat of **Sri Lanka** on the development of the roadmap for TFA implementation;
- Supporting the finalization of trade facilitation reform priorities in **Tonga**; and
- Raising awareness of the TFSP and the NTFC's work to internal and external stakeholders in **Zambia** via promotions on radio, TV programming, in virtual meetings, and outreach to border towns, as well as helping to prepare an NTFC communication action plan.



NTFC delegation from São Tomé and Príncipe
© UNCTAD

- **Trade Information Portals (TIPs)** are digital platforms that make all cross-border trade information, such as regulatory information, easily available. The TFSP has facilitated the establishment and design, or has assisted in the implementation, of 11 portals (Bangladesh, Botswana, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Eswatini, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Mongolia, Vietnam, and Zambia). See **box 4** for details on the TIPs launched in this reporting period.



Employees work on Nepal Trade Information Portal
© Peter Kapuscinski/World Bank

BOX 4 Successful Launch of Trade Information Portals in Eswatini, Lesotho, and Mongolia

Three Trade Information Portals (TIPs) were launched in the reporting period with support from the TFSP. Eswatini launched its TIP in September 2020, and Lesotho and Mongolia launched their TIPs in December 2020. The online portals include all cross-border trade information (laws, administrative procedures, guidance notes, forms, licenses, permits, applicable laws, and tariff information) and aim to make import and export activity easier and less costly for businesses.

In **Eswatini**, the TIP contains 430+ documents from over 22 different government agencies, including legal documents, procedures, measures, forms, trade agreements, and other key documents. The portal was launched in Mbabane with local stakeholders both in-person and via livestream due to COVID-19 limitations. TFSP provided advisory support for the preparations, development, and launch of the portal.

In **Lesotho**, the portal (originally launched in 2014) was re-launched in December 2020 by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Honorable Dr. Thabiso Paul Molapo. It now includes over 260 regulations and procedures from 22 government agencies. The TFSP-supported team worked with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Lesotho National Development Corporation to draft a work plan to revamp the TIP by redesigning the technical interface and refreshing the look of the web portal as well as assigning responsibilities to achieve the successful launch. The WBG also conducted online workshops and trainings prior to its launch.

In **Mongolia**, the portal includes almost 400 procedures and forms. The portal is a web-based database

system that holds all international trade-related information and also provides information on trade agreements and international organizations or institutions supporting overseas business expansion, as well as tools to enable exporters to perform trade analysis, desk research, and market surveys. The TFSP began providing advisory support to customs in 2019 to support the development and launch of Mongolia's Trade Information Portal.

“Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises make up 90 percent of all enterprises in Mongolia, and they often could not afford specialized trade agents. This online repository offers them an easier, cheaper, and faster way to handle their goods. We anticipate that it will help our members sustain their operations during these challenging times and that our members will be active users of the platform.”

— AMARTUVSHIN OTGONDAVAA, CHAIRMAN,
MONGOLIAN NATIONAL CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

“The new and improved Lesotho Trade Information Portal will help improve the predictability and transparency of Lesotho’s trade procedures, giving the business community quick access to the country’s trade rules. The initiative is part of the latest government effort to improve the ease of doing business and facilitate trade for the private sector.”

— HONORABLE DR. THABISO PAUL MOLAPO,
LESOTHO’S MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

- **Time Release Study (TRS)** is a unique tool for measuring the performance of customs and other border agencies related to trade facilitation at the border. The TFSP has assisted in completing TRSs in 15 countries (Albania, Bangladesh, Eswatini, Kosovo, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Mongolia, Montenegro, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vietnam, and Zambia).
- The TFSP has provided support for the **ratification** of the WTO TFA. In this reporting period, one country (Liberia) submitted the instrument of acceptance with support from the TFSP.
- Several countries made progress in their TFA notifications to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The TFSP supported two TFSP countries in preparing, finalizing, and/or **notifying the WTO of their Category B and C timelines**, as well as arrangements and progress in the provisions of technical assistance, in this reporting period (Lesotho and Sierra Leone).
- WTO Members are required to notify information on the implementation of six provisions of the WTO TFA covering publication, internet publication, enquiry points, use of customs brokers, Single Window, and customs cooperation (known as the transparency notifications). The TFSP has supported five TFSP countries in submitting these notifications to the WTO (Georgia, Eswatini, Myanmar, Samoa, and Vanuatu).
- The application of **risk management** is a critical element that underpins all modern cross-border administrations and agencies. The TFSP supports improvements in risk management practices and has supported 30 countries in the establishment of

risk management frameworks (Albania, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Georgia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kosovo, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, North Macedonia, Malawi, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, and Zambia).

- The **Authorized Operator (AO)**⁹ scheme indicates that a company is compliant with requirements specified in a country’s trade laws, regulations, or procedures and therefore may benefit from additional trade facilitation measures related to import, export, or transit formalities and procedures. The TFSP has supported 12 countries in the design of the AO schemes (Albania, Bangladesh, Burundi, Eswatini, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mongolia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Tajikistan). See **annex B** for more information on the AEO programs in Kosovo and Montenegro.
- Ten countries have also received support in **preparation for implementation of Single Windows** (Eswatini, Kosovo, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, São Tomé and Príncipe, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu, and Zambia). Early preparation for Single Window implementation was also provided to Ethiopia.

“The new eSW system has eliminated the need to physically apply and get permits for each export shipment from the Ministry of Trade. This not only has saved us time, but also reduced our transport costs to and from the Ministry office.”

— MULUKEN MIHRET, DOCUMENTATION OFFICER
AT BELAYNEH KINDE, ETHIOPIA

Importantly, WBG engages both the government and the private sector when providing support in the areas listed above and on other priority matters. **Box 5** elaborates on how TFSP-funded activities bring in the private sector.

⁹ “Authorized Operators” or “AOs” are covered in measure 7.7 of the WTO TFA on Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators. Although commonly referred to as Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) and does contain aspects of the WCO AEO program, AO does not include the security component of the WCO AEO program.

“With this AEO certification, our company is expected to save around 2,000 hrs annually, considering the average terminal waiting time is 2 hrs per truck.”

— SHAQIR PALUSHAJ, CEO OF FRUTEX, MONTENEGRO



Cargo truck driver
© World Bank

BOX 5 Soliciting and Integrating the Private Sector's Perspective

The private sector plays a crucial role in effective development and implementation of trade facilitation reforms because buy-in from the private sector helps to promote commitment and momentum to carry the reforms forward into success. With this in mind, the TFSP actively promotes engagement with private sector entities—either directly, through the NTFC, or with industry associations—to gather feedback from all relevant stakeholders in order to deliver robust support.

For example:

- The TFSP supported **Kosovo** customs in the development of its AEO program, including with legal drafting and outreach to the private sector. In this reporting period, the Kosovo customs administration awarded the third AEO certificate.
- The WBG consulted the private sector representatives in **Lesotho** to discuss the updates for the Lesotho Trade Information Portal and on trade facilitation fees and charges.
- The TFSP collaborated with the **Mongolia** Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness about the new TIP. Several briefing meetings were held with members of the chamber to introduce the portal and promote its benefits. A dedicated newsletter was sent to members announcing the launch, and ads promoting the portal were published on the Chamber's website.
- In providing technical assistance to **Papua New Guinea's** National Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection Authority (NAQIA) for the development of draft legislation that modernizes the regulatory controls for animal and plant health, the draft was presented to a wide group of stakeholders, including the private sector. Based on positive feedback

and support from the private sector, it is expected that the legislation will advance through the legislative processes in fall 2021.

- In **Serbia**, the private sector voiced a desire for the process of issuing advance rulings to be simplified and sped up. This was made known to the National Trade Facilitation Committee, and the TFSP successfully supported a new automation initiative in the customs administration with new software for advance rulings (AR) for tariff classification. Early results indicate that the average initial response time on requests for rules of origin has been reduced by 94 percent (from 32 to two days). (For more details on this work, see **annex A**).
- The TFSP supported the establishment of the coordinated border management working group under the NTFC in **Zambia** to drive the process of developing a new model of border operation and its implementation. The working group comprises 17 relevant border agencies and private sector stakeholders, including associations representing truckers, customs clearing agents and freight forwarders, commerce and industry, and farmers.

“The companies from the association that have used the electronic services for the origin of goods so far have all reported that the new system is easier and faster for the business community.”

— AMALIJA PAVIC, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, AMCHAM SERBIA

1.2 Continued COVID-19 Response

Continuing to support trade facilitation reforms is critical in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Improving border processes and procedures to enable safe and fast flow of perishable food commodities, medical and personal protection equipment, and cargoes is essential to limit the negative impacts of the pandemic and to move towards recovery. In addition to continuing to adapt work programs to virtual modalities (e.g., increasing the use of online meetings and trainings) and increasing local staffing, the WBG continued to provide rapid response and assistance to countries to address COVID-19 specific challenges, maintain business continuity, and support recovery efforts. **Box 6** provides a summary of select COVID-19 specific responses that the program provided at the country and regional levels.



COVID-19 Vaccination Center in West Africa
© World Bank/Erick Kaglan

BOX 6 Immediate and Recovery Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Simple, modernized, and harmonized trade processes and procedures are important to keep trade flows going during the pandemic. Digitalization and automation of trade processes and procedures have been especially critical to maintain business continuity in an environment where face-to-face interactions need to be limited to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus. Providing guidance on this, vaccine delivery and other areas have been part of the WBG's **immediate response**:

- In **Fiji**, the TFSP provided advice and guidance on sending and receiving sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) certificates electronically (i.e., email) between the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji and Fiji's trade partners to ensure the timely clearance of consignments at the border (prior to implementation of the Generic ePhyto National System [GeNS]) with an aim to reduce business office interactions involved in the transfer of physical, paper documents. The new process has facilitated trade and reduced the time and cost required of doing business during the COVID-19 pandemic. This process remains in place for trading partners yet to introduce the GeNS.
- In **Malawi**, the WBG and TradeMark East Africa jointly assisted with profiling products needed for the COVID-19 response—along with their associated importers—and designated these for expedited clearance and release in ASYCUDA World. The project also specifically profiled vaccines into a lane for expedited clearance.
- In **Zambia**, the TFSP supported the purchase of 30 laptops for members of the NTFC to allow for continuity of technical assistance.
- In the **Pacific Islands region**, a guidance note on trade and COVID-19 was prepared as part of a series of guidance notes on "Expedited Release Guidelines

for the Clearance of COVID-19 Vaccines and Associated Medical Equipment" and shared with regional governments. The guidance note was designed to help countries to assess their health ministries and frontline border agencies' capabilities and preparedness to deliver expedited border clearances, storage, distribution, and any necessary re-export of COVID-19 vaccines and associated medical equipment.

The pandemic has fast-tracked discussions around trade facilitations in some countries, contributing to the **recovery response**:

- In the **Central America region**, building on an IFC survey with over 2,000 firms that found that firms significantly increased their online sales during the COVID-19 pandemic but continue to face challenges in e-commerce, the TFSP-supported team worked on a high-level agenda for advancing e-commerce in Central America (2021–2025). The agenda proposes ways to improve e-commerce across areas such as logistics, trade facilitation in air cargo online payments, connectivity, and more.
- In **Fiji**, the earlier experiences gained by the joint border agencies and industry working groups from the successful development of the "single electronic manifest process" fostered a willingness to continue to find better ways to complete cargo reporting and clearance processes.

“Digitalization is fundamental for trade facilitation throughout COVID-19 and beyond. This requires planning and provision of budget lines or the creation of cost recovery that meets WTO rules.”

— WILLIAM GAIN, GLOBAL LEAD FOR TRADE FACILITATION, WORLD BANK GROUP

1.3 Knowledge Management and Learning Activities

The TFSP supports knowledge management activities that aim to create knowledge, facilitate knowledge sharing, support peer-to-peer learning, and assist WBG teams and client countries in measuring activity progress and results.

Participation in events, workshops, and conferences that focus on trade facilitation and peer-to-peer learning is key for the trade facilitation reform agenda, TFSP visibility, and for the team to stay engaged at the forefront of the TFA agenda.

Examples of major events delivered in this period are:

- First, the WBG team joined the World Trade Organization’s Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility at the Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event on March 25, 2021 to co-host a discussion on how countries have relied on trade facilitation measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep essential supplies moving across borders. Participants also discussed how greater trade facilitation can lead to resilient recovery. Speakers included the TFAF, the WBG, DHL, the government of Sierra Leone, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom in Geneva. The event was aimed at least developed countries, developing countries, and small island nations.
- The WBG team, with TFSP support, developed a step-by-step guide to assist plant health services in prioritizing their border interventions to focus on high-risk trade. The guide presents information on risk analysis, risk prioritization, and risk-based inspection. On November 10, the WBG team hosted a webinar for over 65 sanitary and phytosanitary officials from the Western Balkans to introduce the topic and share the guide. Two follow-up sessions were held on November 17 and 18 to provide a deeper dive focus on food safety and plant health.

The implementation of risk-based border measures is key to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of plant protection services. It is also important for countries seeking to meet international obligations in facilitating safe trade, such as the World Trade Organization’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement and Trade Facilitation Agreement.

- On October 28, the WBG team participated in a regional dialogue on the COVID-19 crisis and trade facilitation for private sector stakeholders in CARICOM—a group of twenty countries in the Caribbean. The joint initiative was organized by the CARICOM secretariat, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) commission, and the Caribbean Network of Chambers of Commerce.

The webinar focused on trade facilitation obstacles, concerns, priorities, and successes in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlighted best practices that have been adopted by governments, international organizations, and development partners globally to facilitate trade and ensure business continuity amidst the pandemic. The WBG was invited to share trade facilitation best practices and policies and to showcase some of its recent initiatives and programs that support and empower businesses in the wake of COVID-19.

Annex B has a list of other global, regional, and country-level events that the WBG organized or presented at during the reporting period with support from TFSP.

In addition to active participation in events, the TFSP successfully supported work on gender and trade facilitation, particularly with the roll out of the Trade and Gender Survey in five countries in the Pacific region (Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste). The final reports for each of the countries, as well as a comparative regional report, were published and disseminated in the reporting period. The reports identify specific challenges that men and women cross-border traders and freight forwarders at the firm level face, particularly as it relates to trade facilitation. See **box 7** for a summary of key findings and survey results from the regional report.

“Women-led firms experience greater trade facilitation challenges than their male counterparts in many countries. Targeted policies could help maximize the benefits of trade for women and help them participate more fully in the economy. This will be even more important in a post-COVID-19 economy.”

— MONA HADDAD, GLOBAL DIRECTOR FOR TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND COMPETITIVENESS, WORLD BANK GROUP



Maria Moi, Ben's Trading Limited, exporter of agricultural projects in Fiji
© World Bank/ Jason Chute



BOX 7 Trade and Gender Study Regional Findings

In an effort to fill the data gap on the gendered experiences of women and men traders when undertaking cross-border processes and procedures at the firm level and better inform future trade facilitation intervention design and implementation, the WBG—through TFSP—completed the Trade and Gender Study in five Pacific Island nations in FY20 (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu). The final reports for each of these countries, along with a regional report, were published during this reporting period. The following highlights the key findings and recommendations from the regional report.

A total of 1,446 traders and 92 freight forwarders working with different-sized firms and sectors were interviewed in the five target countries. The survey found that women-led firms are highly underrepresented in all the surveyed countries, highlighting an opportunity to potentially increase the participation of women in trade by understanding and addressing the challenges they face.

Although the experiences between men and women traders were not significantly different in most of the areas investigated, the survey found that women traders experience greater challenges in several aspects compared to their men counterparts.

Key **gender-specific** trade facilitation challenges faced by the surveyed women traders include:

- Fewer women traders are regularly consulted on changes to official border processes and procedures than their men counterparts, except in Samoa. Furthermore, medium and large-sized firms are more likely to be consulted than micro and small-sized firms.
- There is an information gap across all the countries wherein fewer women traders are aware that import and export declarations can be submitted electronically. Fewer women traders are also aware that customs allows pre-declaration of shipments prior to arrival at port, and fewer women (except in Papua New Guinea) take advantage of the ability to pre-declare every time.

- The majority of traders and freight forwarders surveyed that need to look for information on official borders and procedures stated that it is easy to find; though, some do have trouble. For example, more women traders in Papua New Guinea and Samoa have difficulty in finding information than their men counterparts.
- Fewer women traders are represented in trade and industry associations, except in Vanuatu and Samoa.
- Fewer women traders across the region physically visit the border regularly to undertake trade processes and procedures than men.

In addition, challenges faced by **all the surveyed traders, regardless of gender**, include:

- There is little awareness of official grievance procedures (except in Samoa) wherein many traders either believe there are no official complaint/grievance procedures for when their consignments are withheld or do not know whether any procedures exist.
- For both women and men traders, there is a lack of awareness among them of the NTFC's existence in their respective countries.
- There is a lack of a coordinated, central source of information on official regulations and procedures, and around half of the traders surveyed generally have to go to multiple sources for information on changes to border processes and procedures.
- Many traders in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Timor-Leste reported release times can take 10 days or more for their imported goods.
- Many traders appear to be unaware of the possibility to pay official fees and charges related to cross-border trade online or still prefer to pay with check, money order, cash, or bank transfer.

Containers at a depot
© Pexels/Tom Fisk



Mere Samisoni and staff at Hot Bread Kitchen in Fiji
© World Bank/Jason Chute

BOX 7 Continued.

Key recommendations based on the survey findings include:

- Establish well-functioning NTFCs to optimize their ability to serve as the leading national entity on trade facilitation reforms, as well as promote the visibility of the NTFC. The NTFC should have a fair representation of women from both public and private sectors, including in decision-making positions.
- Improve access to and understanding of official border regulations and procedures by establishing (or improving any existing) TIPs, Single Windows, and/or physical offices to more promptly and efficiently publish and disseminate information; keep TIPs up to date at all times; encourage use of online resources; offer targeted information sessions, workshops, and virtual/in-person training sessions for women traders on access to information and the use of electronic systems; target trade associations to enhance dissemination of trade-related information; and make sure official legislation is easy to understand.
- Introduce and/or strengthen formal consultations between the government and the private sector by establishing a notice and comment period to solicit private sector feedback when proposing new legislation or amendments; allow for a transition period before new or amended laws

are implemented; establish formal consultative mechanisms representing all parties involved in cross-border trade; and run pilot programs to better assess how proposed changes will impact traders and determine if amendments must be made before rolling out full reforms more broadly.

- Improve collaboration with a broader set of private sector actors through trade/industry associations, particularly by increasing membership of women traders.
- Identify and address reasons for delayed release of goods by revisiting port opening hours in consultation with the private sector; undertake a TRS regularly; remove paper import/export declarations and ensure traders know that they can submit documentation via electronic platforms; improve risk management approaches; provide information and train border officials on expediting the release of certain small and low value consignments; and ensure consistency in implementation of border procedures.
- Strengthen and promote electronic payments systems, including by removing any requirements related to in-person payments or hard copies of receipts.
- Improve publication of official grievance procedures, especially so that the right to appeal decisions made by customs in administrative decisions or judicial proceedings are provided in a non-discriminatory manner. Official grievance procedures should also be responsive in addressing concerns of the private sector.

The comprehensive regional report complements the five country reports (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu). The reports were coupled with extensive communications efforts to disseminate key findings to public and private stakeholders across the region and beyond.

Find all the reports at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/trade-facilitation-challenges-for-women-traders-in-the-pacific-region>



Staff from the WTO TFAF and the World Bank Group
© WTO

Since the launch of the enhanced TFA Tracking Tool web portal in the previous reporting period, usage of the portal by clients has continued to increase. There were 424 new visitors¹⁰ to the website in FY21 compared to 234 visitors in FY20. All countries with validated assessments are able to view their whole-of-government “alignment scores,” as well as individual scores by four proxy agencies, on the portal to assess their level of full and effective implementation for each measure of the WTO TFA.¹¹ Only designated and approved users can see the country scores, and each country’s NTFC or equivalent assigns specific representatives to access their respective country profiles on the website. **Section 1.5** provides more details on the Tracking Tool methodology along with a summary of alignment scores for the TFSP-supported countries.

1.4 Working in Partnerships

Partnerships are essential for the optimal delivery of the program and a coordinated roll-out of technical assistance in participating countries. Over the past years, with support from the TFSP, the WBG has delivered multiple workshops, undertaken missions, and worked on knowledge products and technical assistance jointly with the following organizations:

- World Trade Organization: Partnership on multiple fronts, including annex D, knowledge management activities and peer to peer events, and an advance course for NTFC chairs in multiple regions¹²

¹⁰ The number of first-time users between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

¹¹ The Tracking Tool assesses alignment across 37 technical measures. The TFA Tracking Tool is not intended to be a ranking exercise. To preserve confidentiality, country-specific alignment scores can only be viewed by designated and vetted users of each client country represented on the website. The general public is able to view overall scores as well as other nonsensitive information.

¹² The Annex D + group is comprised of the following organizations: IMF, ITC, OECD, UNCTAD, UNECE, World Bank, and World Customs Organization.

- International Trade Center (ITC): Joint activities in Sri Lanka and in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD): Joint missions to Guatemala, Jamaica, Liberia, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Suriname; joint regional NTFC event in Ethiopia and global NTFC event in Geneva
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Participation in TFA workshops in Tajikistan, Ukraine, and North Macedonia and participation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) forums
- Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC), UNCTAD, and the World Customs Organization (WCO): Joint missions to Bangladesh, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Tajikistan; Tonga on TRS
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID): Joint TFA assessments in Bangladesh, Moldova, Montenegro, and Serbia and participation in TFA workshops in Central America. Upcoming joint activities in Ghana and Zambia
- TradeMark East Africa: Burundi assessment
- Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF): Partnership with the European Commission in Cabo Verde, Myanmar, and Vanuatu
- International Air Transport Association (IATA): Partnership in Central America for air cargo, expedited shipments
- World Customs Organization (WCO): Joint activities in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Tonga, and in the Western Balkans

BOX 8 Donor Coordination and Collaboration

The WBG recognizes the importance of coordinated development assistance to increase aid effectiveness, avoid duplication of work, and minimize client fatigue. Through information sharing, the WBG teams are able to develop workplans that do not overlap with other projects ongoing in the countries. When needed and as appropriate, the WBG also collaborates with other donors to deliver projects and joint workshops and events.

This coordination effort is exemplified in the support provided to the **Western Balkans**. The local team is well-connected with other donor projects in the region, including USAID through its EDGE project, the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) trade facilitation project, and is in regular contact with the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)

secretariat. The TFSP and USAID EDGE jointly organized three online trainings on risk management in international trade for SPS agencies in the Western Balkans in November 2020. In **Lesotho**, the WBG team takes a collaborative approach to engaging other donors (such as UNCTAD) by inviting them to participate in sensitization workshops and workshops on general program updates.

There are also more formal methods to coordinate and collaborate with other donors. For example, a working group was established with other donors working on trade facilitation in the **Kyrgyz Republic**. The working group meets virtually every few months, allowing donors to learn about each other's work and to agree to coordinate and work together where appropriate.



TFSP consultative committee meeting
© World Bank Group

- International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC): Initiation of joint electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto) pilot implementation, joint TFA missions, exchange of knowledge, and joint SPS diagnostic work, supporting the development of an eCommerce guide, support the IPPC's Sea Containers Task Force (SCTF) on practical management of sea containers
- Standards Trade Development Facility (STDF): Ensuring synergies between STDF and WBG projects and that WTO TFA objectives are included in the projects, as well as participating in webinars on sanitary and phytosanitary and trade-related issues
- International Standards Organization (ISO): Presentation at events and co-writing a blog on managing organizational performance during a crisis like COVID-19
- United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT): Presentation at virtual forum
- Presentation of best practices to the EU member states regarding National Single Window implementation jointly with Taxaud

Box 8 provides select examples of how the TFSP works in partnership with other donors at the country level.

1.5 TFA Tracking Tool

The WBG utilizes the TFA Tracking Tool methodology and website to better position itself in demonstrating and monitoring progress towards the TFSP's objective of helping countries improve alignment with the WTO TFA. The tool also provides countries with a comprehensive data set of their individual alignment with the TFA, which will inform the design of an appropriate reform program and allow tracking of progress in a results-based manner. The TFA Tracking Tool helps demonstrate changes in TFA alignment over the following three dimensions:

- (1) The legal/policy dimension measures the extent to which legal or administrative measures are in place that establish policies consistent with the TFA.
- (2) The implementing procedures dimension determines whether procedures consistent with the TFA have been developed to give effect to relevant policy prescriptions.
- (3) The operational check category measures the extent to which policies and procedures consistent with the TFA are applied in practice.

The TFA Tracking Tool takes two approaches to measure alignment with the WTO TFA:

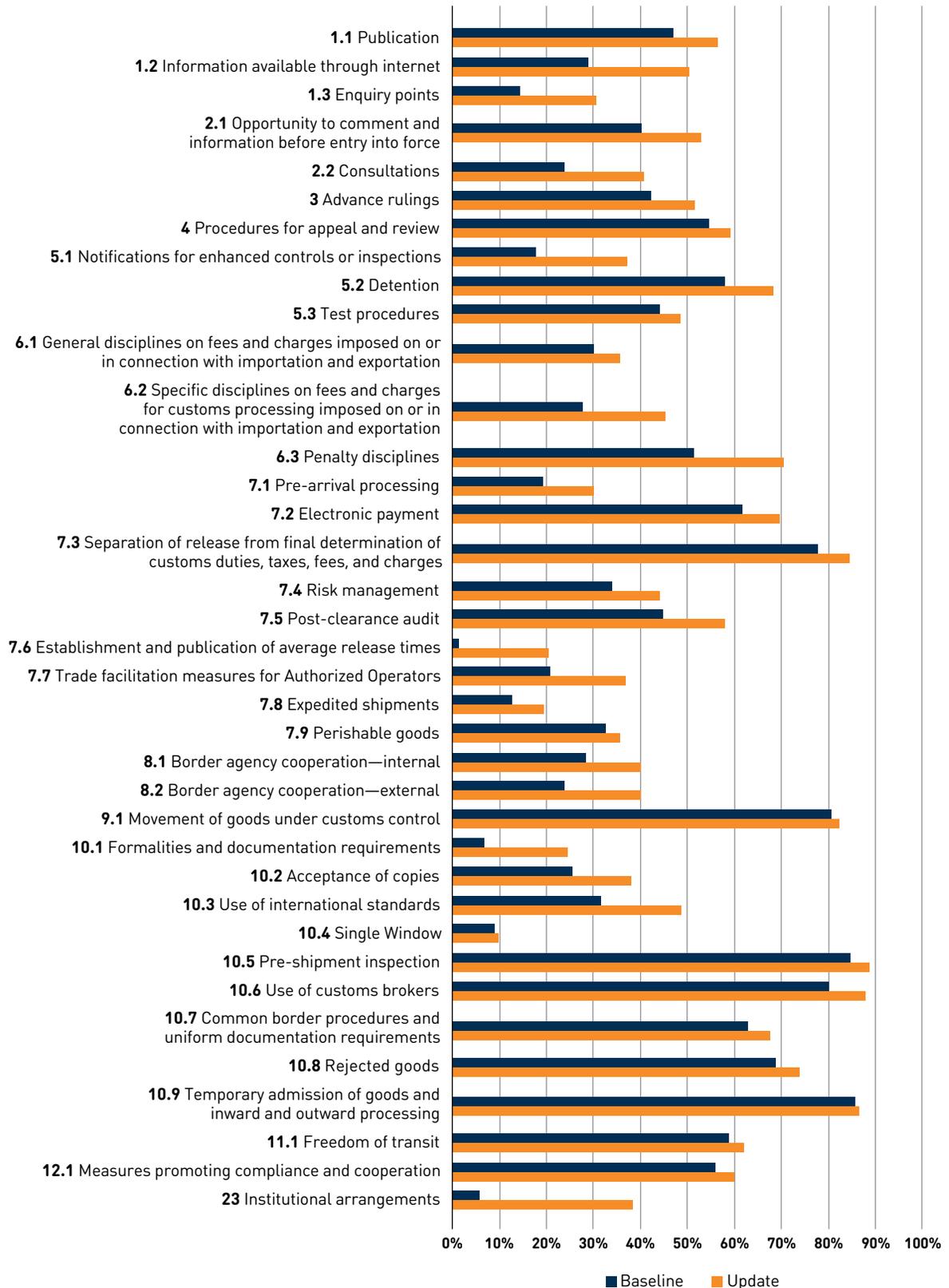
- (1) A **whole-of-government** approach, which was developed in a prior reporting period, is utilized to evaluate a country as a whole, which means that all agencies relevant to the particular trade facilitation measure should be aligned with the TFA's requirements in order for a country to receive full credit. For implementation to remain manageable, four agencies are defined per country as a proxy for the whole-of-government: (a) customs; (b) agency responsible for plant protection and quarantine; (c) agency responsible for standards; and (d) agency responsible for food safety and/or animal health.
- (2) The **granular** approach to the TFA Tracking Tool methodology that was finalized in the previous reporting period allows for a further breakdown of scores by each of the aforementioned proxy agencies, which enhances the ability to track progress by each specific agency over time. The enhanced



TFA Tracking Tool website was also launched in May 2020 to integrate the granular aspects of the methodology into the alignment score visualizations.

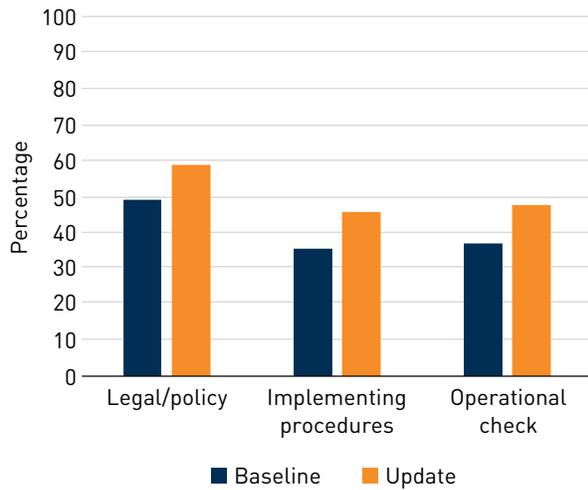
Since the launch of the TFA Tracking Tool, baselines for 31 countries in the TFSP portfolio have been validated and more are in the process of being validated. The measurements behind those baseline scores were undertaken between 2015 and 2018. Baseline scores for 21 TFSP-supported countries have also been updated by the WBG, demonstrating an improvement in their overall alignment with the WTO TFA from 41 percent alignment in the baseline scores to 51 percent in their updates. Because validation requires in-country field visits, no new countries were added to the TFA Tracking Tool in this reporting period due to travel constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Figures 1.5–1.7** show breakdowns of the changes in baseline and updated scores of TFSP countries represented on the website.

FIGURE 1.5
Overall Alignment by Measure



Note: Baselines are 2015–18; updates are 2018–20.

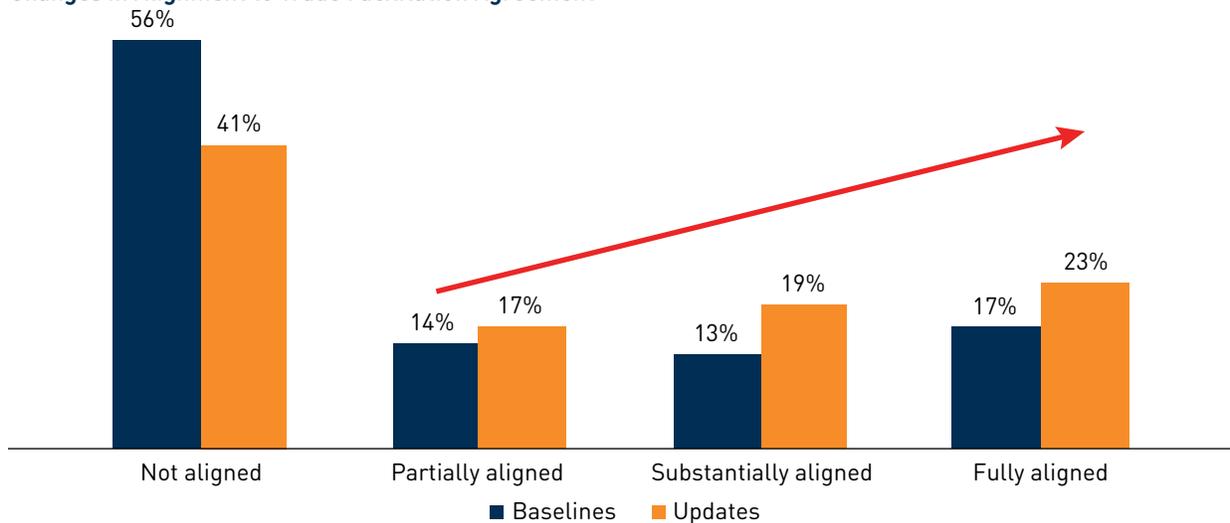
FIGURE 1.6
Changes in Overall Dimension Score



Note: Baselines are 2015–18; updates are 2018–20.



FIGURE 1.7
Changes in Alignment to Trade Facilitation Agreement



Note: The figure shows the *proportion* of the 37 TFA measures that are either not aligned, partially aligned, substantially aligned, or fully aligned among the 21 countries with baseline and update scores. The objective is for the proportion of “not aligned” measures to decrease while the proportion of “partially,” “substantially,” and ultimately “fully aligned” measures to increase as assessments are updated. A score between 0–33 percent is categorized as “not aligned.” A score between 34–66 percent is categorized as “partially aligned.” A score of 67–99 percent is categorized as “substantially aligned.” A score of 100 percent is categorized as “fully aligned.” Baselines are 2015–18; updates are 2018–20.

1.6 Sustainable Reforms

The TFSP supports interventions that will create and maintain the momentum necessary for reforms. In other words, the TFSP provides support to sustainable reforms that continue to generate results and gains for stakeholders after project closure. Sustainability can be fostered in many ways, including for example by:



Border post between Kyrgyzstan and China
© World Bank Group

<p>Providing extensive training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the successful implementation and use of the valuation manual in Georgia going forward, several meetings and trainings were organized for customs officers and with taxpayers (importers and others). Stakeholders were informed of the novelties of the manual, and a video guide was recorded to explain the necessary steps to dealing with customs valuation matters. • In order to ensure sustainability in the use of the new software application for advance rulings for tariff classification in Serbia, the TFSP supported four trainings on the use of the new software application to customs officers. Additionally, three user manuals were developed for use by both the private sector and customs officers.
<p>Fostering ownership and leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In North Macedonia, the WBG team designed project activities in a way to make sure that a core team from State Agriculture Inspectorate (SAI) of the Republic of North Macedonia is involved and responsible for the development of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for a risk-based border inspection regime for phytosanitary products. WBG experts guided the process, presented international best practices, and provided comments and suggestions on the document developed by the SAI team. In that way, the SAI team had full knowledge and ownership of the SOP. • The TFSP-supported team worked with the NTFC secretariats of Lesotho and Sierra Leone to ensure that they have the necessary skills to sustain themselves. Trainings were provided focusing on the WTO TFA, and committee meetings were organized. • In Fiji, the successful development and implementation of the “single electronic manifest process” to replace the paper manifest for Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MOH) and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) fostered a willingness to continue to find better ways to complete cargo reporting and clearance processes. There is an understanding that other agencies would benefit from having access to information provided within the customs ASYCUDA cargo clearance system (automated system for customs data), and there is a willingness to share system access.
<p>Implementing reforms that are binding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the AEO program in Kosovo, the WBG team worked with customs to develop the “administrative instruction” to implement the program, which is functional and also legally binding.



TRLU 738363 45G1
MAX GROSS 32500 KGS
TARE 47200 LBS
NET CU. CAP. 76.3 m³
7694 cu ft

CAUTION
9'6" HIGH

GESU 5642944
45G1

tex

TGHU 804774 2
45G1

Hapag-Lloyd

HLXU

CAXU 914631 9
45G1

MAX GROSS 32500 KGS
TARE 47200 LBS
NET CU. CAP. 76.3 m³
7694 cu ft

CAUTION
9'6" HIGH

MSW Tare Payload
32500kg 71650lb
3840kg 8470lb
28660kg 63180lb

CAUTION
9'6" HIGH

MAX.WT. 30480 KGS
TARE WT. 47200 LBS
PAYLOAD 26810 KGS
CU. CAP. 76.4 CUM
2390 CUFT.

MAX GROSS
MAX PAYLOAD
CUBE

FSCU 972482 9
45G1

Hapag-Lloyd

HLXU 653944 0
45G1

MAX GROSS 32500 kg
TARE 47200 lbs
MAX PAYLOAD 28660 kg
CUBE 76.3 m³
2394 cu ft

CAUTION
9'6" HIGH

GATU 849966 2
45G1

MAX. GR. 31480 KG
TARE 47200 LBS
NET 26630 KGS
CU. CAP. 76.4 CUM
2698 CUFT.

AMFICON

MAX. GROSS
TARE
NET
CU. CAP.

CAXU 958352 0
45G1

CAPITAL

CLHU 875 0744
45G1

MAX GROSS 30480 KGS
TARE 47200 LBS
NET 26810 KGS
CU. CAP. 76.4 CUM
2390 CUFT.

Hapag-Lloyd

HLXU 801634 5
45G1

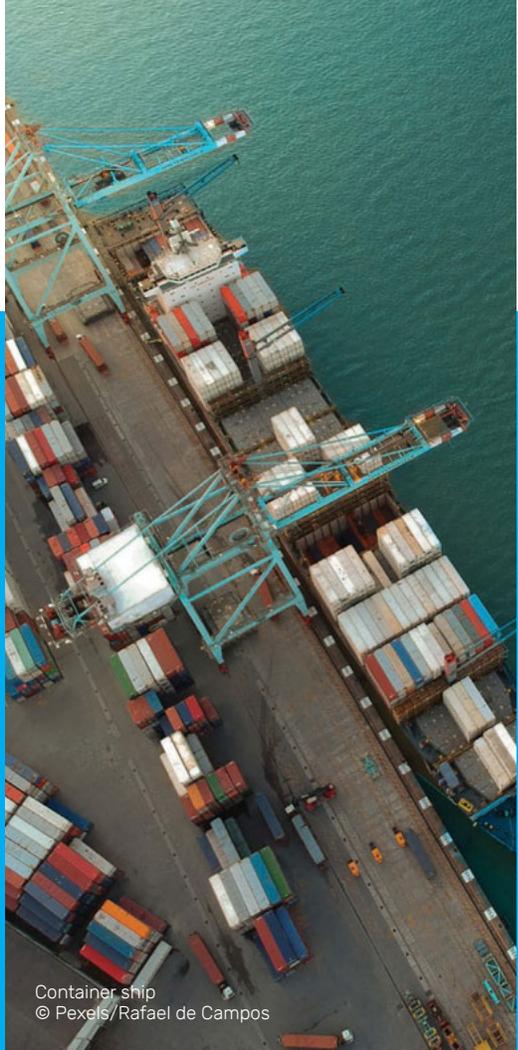
MAX GROSS 32500 kg
TARE 47200 lbs
MAX PAYLOAD 28550 kg
CUBE 76.3 m³

CAUTION
9'6" HIGH

FSCU

MAX. GROSS
TARE
MAX. CAR
CU. CAP.

Cargo containers
© Pexels/Pixabay



Container ship
© Pexels/Rafael de Campos

2 Program Management and Financial Overview

2.1 Program Administration

The administration of the TFSP sits at the intersection of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, reflecting the importance of both institutions to improving trade processes and procedures. Global experts on trade and public and private sector development from both institutions work on the TFSP-supported interventions, together with field-based staff, and they are complemented by consultants worldwide. With the institutional reorganization effective July 1, 2020, all trade facilitation work will be led by the World Bank.

2.2 Donor Engagement

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the TFSP Consultative Committee meetings that were held in the reporting period were virtual. The first meeting took place virtually in July 2020 and the second in December 2020. Both meetings had representatives from all donors, except for Australia due to the time difference. The semi-annual consultations provide development partners with updates on the progress of the program and with the opportunity to discuss the strategic direction of the TFSP.



Transporting stakeholders to our work with virtual reality
© World Bank

2.3 Communications and Outreach

Communications is an important element of the TFSP and focuses on:

- Raising awareness of program activities, results, and effects
- Increasing the visibility of the program and donor partners
- Disseminating useful trade facilitation material to stakeholders

During the reporting period, the TFSP continued to build a foundation for communications and to embed it within project activities. The communications plan was updated in FY20–21 to guide the program’s approach to strategic communications. It is supplemented with guidance for team members on how to incorporate communications into specific activities, including by meeting donor visibility requirements. Towards the end of the last reporting period, the secretariat and country teams also quickly developed communication channels with clients in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We continued to build on this approach during this reporting period, with a strong emphasis on virtual tools and meetings. The communications plan will be updated for FY21–22.

Annex C provides details of select communications efforts made in the reporting period.

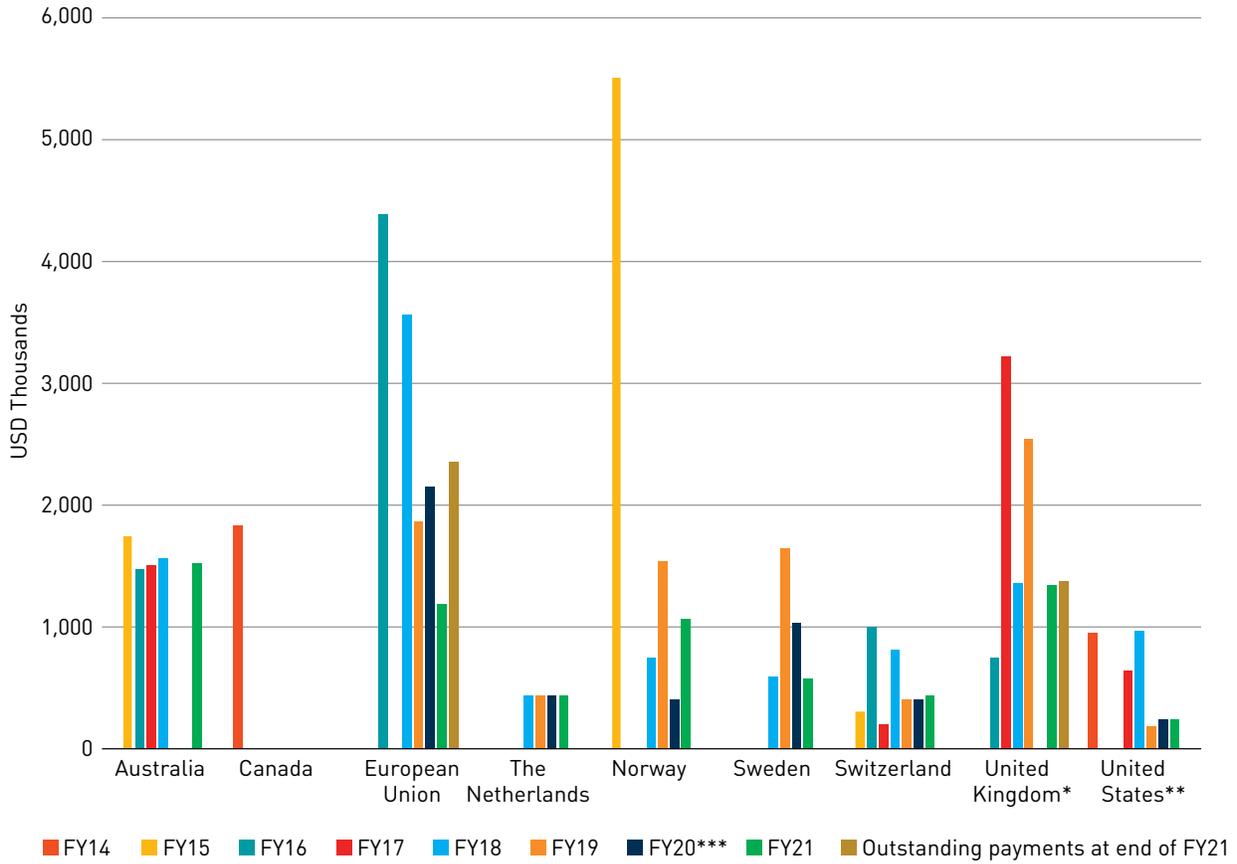
2.4 Financial Overview

At the end of the reporting period, USD 53.7 million had been received from the TFSP development partners since the program’s launch. This was 94 percent of overall partner commitments at the end of the reporting period and is in alignment with the agreed transfer schedules per individual administrative agreements. **Figure 2.1** shows receipts and outstanding payments by donor.

The program disbursement percentage reduced slightly from the previous reporting period—from 80 percent in FY20 to 78 percent in FY21 (**figure 2.2**). Cumulative disbursements since program inception plus activity commitments at the end of FY20 totaled 81 percent of cash receipts (**annex D** has further financial details). The reduction in percentage disbursements is caused by a combination of lower disbursements due to the pandemic and larger donor contributions in the reporting period (disbursement levels are calculated based on actual disbursements and accumulated receipts of contributions).

FIGURE 2.1

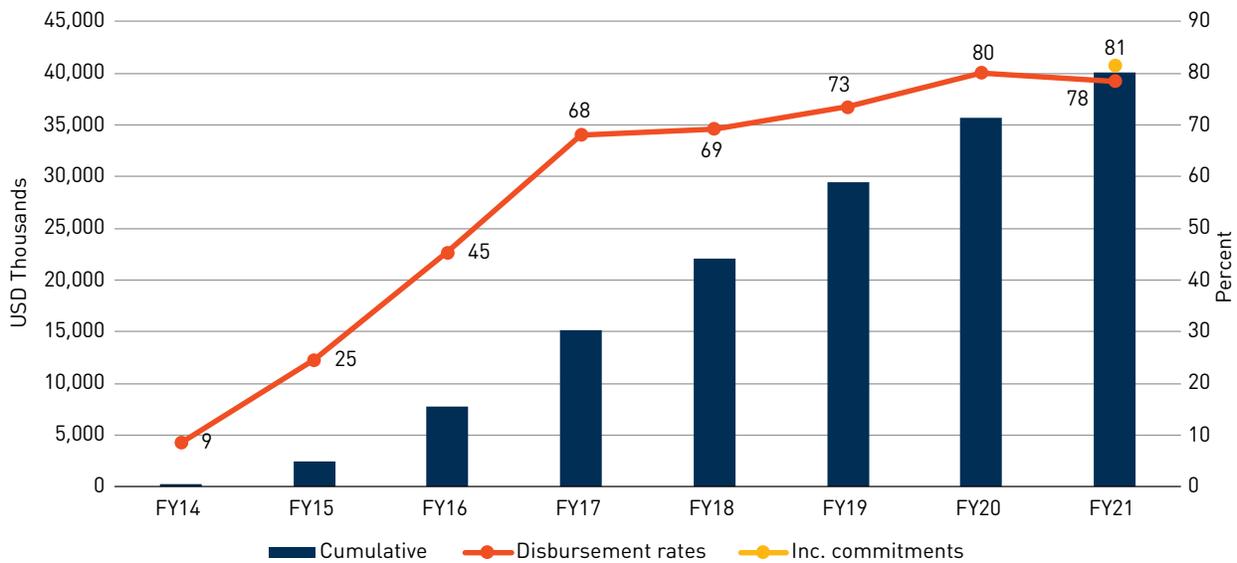
Receipts and Outstanding Payments, USD Thousands



* The UK has indicated that they will not be able to transfer the remaining commitment due to a cut in Official Development Assistance (ODA) caused by the pandemic.
 ** Includes core and Zambia specific support.
 *** FY20 amounts adjusted from previous report to reflect receipts before admin fee deduction of all contributions.

FIGURE 2.2

Cumulative Disbursements, USD Thousands





Container ship
© Shutterstock/Joe Matheus



Participants at TFSP peer-to-peer learning event
© WTO

3

Lessons Learned and Looking Forward

3.1 Lessons Learned

The WBG continues to learn lessons in relation to the design and execution of the TFSP-supported activities. While some of the challenges are unique for each country, others are common across most countries. Below are some of the key challenges and lessons learned to implementation experienced most often across projects and countries:

CHALLENGE	LESSON LEARNED
<p>Work that requires in-country presence faces delays due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>The WBG continues to leverage TFSP funding to provide guidance and technical assistance to countries to implement best practices to facilitate the flow of goods. The support remains flexible pivoting, and adapting work streams as needed, such as moving forward through WBG country offices, which are utilizing virtual modalities and relying more on local staff and consultants. Nonetheless, progress depends on government clients and the private sector's ability to connect in person and remotely.</p>
<p>The NTFC is weak or inactive.</p>	<p>A good mechanism for obtaining buy-in and consensus on reform priorities is through the NTFC with participation of the private sector. Early set-up of an NTFC supports efficient use of resources because it improves coordination among participants and reduces the risk of duplicating funds. More importantly, the NTFC can take the lead in making decisions to sequence reforms on the basis of identified priorities, ensure that there is sequential flow between technical assistance on a measure and its implementation, periodically take stock of the streams of technical assistance coming from different development partners, and take steps to achieve a balance between the requirements for technical assistance and the capacity of the beneficiary organization to receive it. Each NTFC secretariat requires a legal framework that defines the secretariat's functions and its mandate. It should have an adequate structure with dedicated professionals to support the implementation process, including program and project management and strong communications capabilities.</p>
<p>Unclear mandates or frequent changes at customs, border agencies, and the NTFC secretariat affect the speed and sustainability of reforms.</p>	<p>The implementation process requires resilience to consolidate changes and adequate communication to enable private sector awareness and adherence to a new operational framework and services. Countries with more stable administrative frameworks generally make faster progress because full and effective implementation of reforms requires clear legal mandates and legal foundations. From a legal standpoint, codifying interagency cooperation through an interagency agreement can establish the ground rules for how agencies will interact as well as how they will exchange trade data and handle import and export declarations. To mitigate issues related to reshuffling of staff or government changes, a broad distribution of contact points on the government side (across agencies) can be helpful in ensuring continuity of work.</p>
<p>Implementation capacity varies across border agencies, and customs agencies often have higher implementation capacity than other agencies.</p>	<p>Capacity building across all border agencies is vital. Building clients' capacity to enhance their overall understanding of trade reforms and ensure that benefits of interventions are maximized is critical; capacity building is often also required to ensure client buy-in and cooperation in delivering the projects.</p>
<p>Frequent delays or frustration with implementation goals hampers the trust among stakeholders and commitment to the reform agenda.</p>	<p>Implementation of trade facilitation measures often requires new or revised legislation. As these legislative changes typically take the longest time, they should be identified and acted upon as early as possible. Moreover, trade facilitation involves developing better procedures in areas considered crucial to national security, government revenue, and private sector development. It is, therefore, important that proposed changes be pilot-tested and implemented in phases to ensure no unintended adverse impact or system breakdown occurs. Critical to these efforts is obtaining commitment at all levels. High-level political commitment may fast-track the legal reforms required and source financing for heavy-cost projects. Commitment by different government agencies and private sector entities is required for achieving results that benefit a wide range of stakeholders. At the same time, prioritization of reforms with the identification of deliverables and close attention to key milestones throughout the implementation process are relevant to sustaining political support and private sector engagement.</p>

CHALLENGE	LESSON LEARNED
<p>Lack of communication, regular consultations, or coordination.</p>	<p>Enhanced transparency and communication between the border agencies and private sector are critical to progress. Bringing stakeholders together, especially at the early stages, spurs reforms. Meetings among public and private stakeholders bring to light national, regional, and international best practices that can help motivate national and regional reform efforts and help identify common obstacles, solutions, and achievements. Differing agency interests can spark resistance or lead to a push for alternate approaches, potentially derailing and delaying project implementation. Coordination can help anticipate resistance and disseminate benefits to stakeholders. Additionally, improved donor coordination and collaboration between relevant international organizations on the ground can enhance implementation.</p>
<p>Stakeholders are unaware of the benefits of reforms.</p>	<p>Using a best practice approach (i.e., designing from the bottom up rather than top down) drives the development of a better solution contextualized for the local environment because the end beneficiaries' needs are considered from the onset. Additionally, identification of an early achievable "fix" that will bring benefits to multiple work areas and industry sectors can spur commitment to reform plans. In furtherance to this, communicating the benefits of the reforms is important to secure buy-in from the private sector, and a committed private sector increases sustainability of reforms. As such, consistent efforts should be made to have open dialogues with the private sector. The WBG can serve as a mediator between the government and the private sector to build mutual trust.</p>
<p>Some government agencies are not aware of the importance of prioritizing their border activities</p>	<p>Initial general introductory "what this is all about" workshops and meetings followed by a quick transformation to action-based activities are helpful to set priorities. Failing to recognize where to set priorities may result in inefficient and ineffective allocation of resources, and thus data collection and analysis serve to help clients better identify, prioritize, and target reforms.</p>
<p>Compliance data collected by customs or other border agencies are often not shared between them. Similarly, inspection or documentary review is undertaken independently by each border agency, resulting in each agency working in its own space.</p>	<p>SPS agencies should cooperate with customs agencies and other border agencies to more effectively manage the risk of consignments. Developing more collaborative approaches for information sharing, conducting joint inspections, and transferring some activities between agencies could improve efficiency processes and procedures at the border and better allocate limited resources. It is also important to show results and improved alignment with the TFA over time by monitoring and measuring progress over time. Current tools for monitoring and measuring progress need to be strengthened, modified, and improved in many countries.</p>
<p>There is a global lack of data on how trade facilitation interventions impact traders by gender at the firm level.</p>	<p>The problem is deeply rooted. No country can easily confirm the number of women that undertake cross-border trade in their respective countries. Interventions must be designed inclusively—benefiting women as well as men—and strong data on the gender of those who participate actively in cross-border trade are needed in order to do this.</p>
<p>Lack of automation and reliance on old paper-based systems.</p>	<p>A base level of automation across trade facilitation agencies is needed given the exponential development of technology today. Ensuring an adequate level of automation will enable deployment of TFA assistance to be more effective as all border agencies will be better positioned to implement reforms.</p>

3.2 Looking Forward

The WTO TFA is critical in supporting recovery efforts and ensuring swift delivery of essential goods and a vaccine when ready for wide distribution across the globe, but the situation remains fluid in many countries. WBG offices around the world are in different operating statuses based on local conditions; access to vaccines remains a serious challenge for staff in some locations and we continue to work with the UN to address this. Travel to client countries remains very limited, and the situation in select TFSP-supported countries remains very challenging.

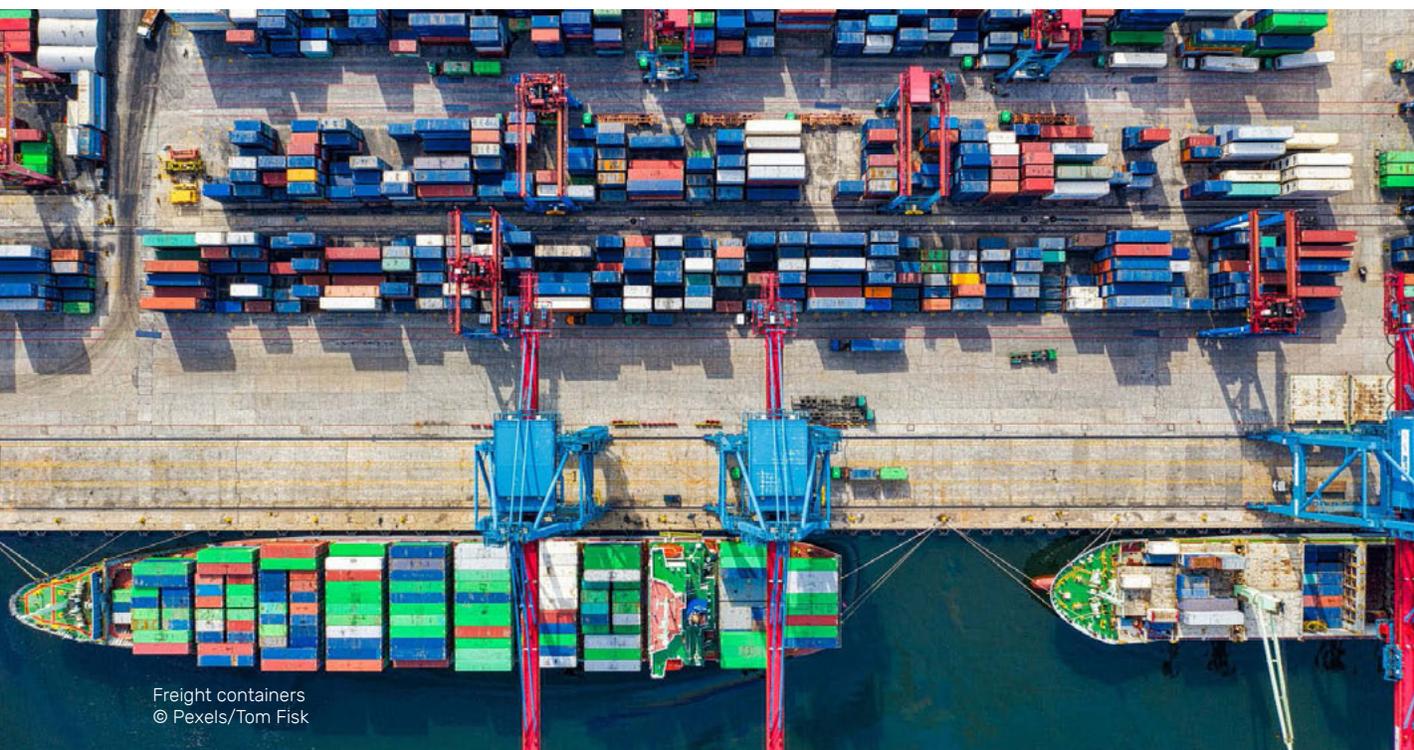
The WBG will continue to provide support to governments with their immediate needs to maintain business continuity in light of the pandemic (such as support to the NTFCs, on customs measures on advanced rulings and risk management, temporary admission of goods and inward/outward processing, and on border agency cooperation), and to effectively implement the WTO TFA to support recovery (including, for instance, on trade facilitation measures for Authorized Operators, formalities and documentation requirements, Single Window, and knowledge sharing). The economic disruptions caused by the pandemic disproportionately impact women, and the WBG will continue its efforts to ensure a fairer playing field at the borders for women traders.

Demand for WBG support to trade facilitation is expected to continue to grow. There is a great need for support to least developed countries to meet their notification commitments under the WTO TFA as 75 members have

implementation deadlines for 399 trade facilitation measures from May 2021 to December 2022. Country delegates of the Committee on Trade Facilitation have urged WTO members to accelerate implementation of the WTO TFA to reduce the time and cost of moving goods across borders.

The WBG will continue to assist countries where implementation has begun with TFSP support. Potential new countries will be considered based on availability of funds, and assistance to IDA-eligible, low-income, and fragile and conflict-affected countries will be prioritized. Additionally, middle-income countries that act as gateways to least developed countries (LDCs) or whose performance significantly affects the performance of regional LDCs and small island nations are also considered for support. Priority areas of support in addition to the aforementioned support for COVID-19 response and recovery include legal gap analysis and review, Time Release Studies, post-audit clearance, Trade Information Portals, and support to border management agencies other than customs.

Discussions on possible TFSP support in FY22 are underway with Angola, Balkans, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Within the area of knowledge management and learning, TFSP support for peer-to-peer learning will focus on innovative ways to address specific challenges related to the pandemic at the present and also on how to re-build and recover going forward. Joint workshops with the WTO around notifications will also be considered.



Freight containers
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Suva Harbor, Fiji
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The Trade Facilitation Support Program has provided support to 48 countries in aligning trade practices with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement across East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The following are summaries of activities by region.

Annex A

Summary of Country-Specific and Regional Activities



EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Country-specific Activities: East Asia

Cambodia

TFSP support to Cambodia

Early TFSP support to Cambodia complemented a World Bank project focusing primarily on implementing a national trade repository. TFSP financing—together with the Japan Trust Fund—focused on (A) supporting the government of Cambodia in the formation of a NTFC that meets TFA requirements to coordinate and implement trade facilitation reforms and commitments, (B) reviewing regulations on prohibitions, restrictions of goods, and risk management practices, and (C) advising on the removal of duplicate controls at the border.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- From January 2018 to March 2019, the TFSP-supported project team provided advisory services to the General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE) to review the list of prohibited and restricted import items (Sub-decree 209) and provided recommendations on how to reduce the prohibited and restricted list (PR list) and simplify items, as necessary, to reduce time and costs for importers. The activities undertaken with TFSP support included:
 - Recommended the government to set up an interministerial working group to review the list and facilitated the establishment of the working group by organizing workshops to engage with relevant agencies in the process
 - Provided advice on the methodology to be used by the working group for the review of the list, which followed the guillotine approach to assess items based on the three criteria of legality, necessity, and market friendliness/transparency

- Facilitated the review process, including organizing three technical workshops co-chaired by an IFC trade facilitation expert
- Reviewed the list and provided recommendations including: (1) removing commodities from the list that could be better managed through post-entry control, and (2) removing articles on the list that likely represent a very low risk and should be removed from the list
- As a result of this review and based on the WBG recommendations, new Sub-decree 17 was issued in February 2020 to replace Sub-decree 209. The new sub-decree reduced the total number of tariff lines in the PR list from 2,050 tariff lines to 1,829 tariff lines (a total of 221 tariff lines reduced), in addition:
 - The number of tariff lines that were previously controlled by two or more ministries decreased from 710 tariff lines to 334 tariff lines (a total of 376 tariff lines decreased)
 - 369 tariff lines that previously required import permits were substantially changed to only require relevant certificates from the exporting country (e.g., phytosanitary, veterinary, or health certificates)
 - 64 tariff lines that previously required both import and export permits were substantially changed to require import permits only
- The TFSP-supported WBG team provided advice on the removal of Camcontrol at the border checkpoints. Camcontrol's main activities are revenue collection and inspection at the border. The private sector had raised concerns over duplication in the role of customs and Camcontrol (under the Ministry of Commerce), which resulted in higher costs and delays. The WBG team recommended that the government remove the presence of Camcontrol at the border in a Doing Business (DB) Reform memo prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in December 2017 (the DB memo was officially requested by MEF). On January 28, 2019, the government issued Sub-decree 27 to terminate the roles of Camcontrol at all border checkpoints, and GDCE is now the only government agency working on inspection for import and export at all border checkpoints. This reform helped reduce the trade cost.

Both sub-decrees are effective. It was confirmed by GDCE that Camcontrol has been removed from border checkpoints effective from July 1, 2019, and the Sub-decree 17 is being implemented.

Lao PDR

TFSP support to Lao PDR

TFSP support to Lao PDR has focused on establishment and implementation of an AO program. Earlier support to Lao PDR focused on border agency cooperation.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities)

- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation

FY21 update on key activities

- Through TFSP support, the Lao PDR Customs Department completed an animation video demonstrating processes and steps for interested firms in applying for AEO status. The video was designed to have both English and Lao PDR languages to facilitate and encourage participation from firms. The video was followed by the approval of the AEO brochure, reported during the previous period.

- The Lao PDR Customs Department continued to disseminate the Guidelines on Management of Authorized Economic Operator, to more firms in the southern region in March 2021. There were about 50 participants in the dissemination workshop. Workshops were planned for the northern region but were cancelled due to COVID-19 situation.
- Over the past year project activities were mostly focusing on dissemination workshops to improve understanding of customs officers and firms. Under the serious COVID-19 pandemic, the project was not able to finance any oversea travels of study missions for Customs Department and stakeholders.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP financing complements a WBG lending project that supports the government's trade and integration priorities.

Mongolia

TFSP support to Mongolia

In FY21, the TFSP provided support on a second TRS and the launch of the TIP. Previously, support was provided on risk-based inspections, Authorized Operators, and the NTFC.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1** Publication
- 1.2** Information Available through Internet
- 7.6** Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7** Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The TRS report was finalized and submitted to customs and other key stakeholders, including the General Agency for Specialized Inspections (GASI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Prime Ministers office, and Ministry of Finance in mid-October 2020. The main finding is that no improvements have been made since the last TRS was undertaken by USAID in 2012. It was recommended that the government of Mongolia uses the TRS data to prioritize, set targets, and coordinate activities to implement the WTO TFA, including on mutual recognition of conformity certificates and accredited lab tests provided by different agencies; risk-based controls and sampling of goods; joint risk profiling; information sharing between border agencies; harmonization of different trade practices and procedures across border crossing posts and terminals to address inconsistency issues in control and clearance procedures of goods; taking consecutive actions to enable advanced submission of transaction information and supporting documents electronically; applying advanced registration, review, and verification processes for support documents that will also allow for information sharing between agencies to eliminate the need for applicants to submit the same information to multiple agencies; digitizing documentation submission and processing to improve data collection and management by border agencies.

The WBG team presented the main findings and recommendations to customs as well as to the private sector (including the American Chamber of Commerce, Business Council of Mongolia, National Chamber of Commerce) during online events dedicated to trade facilitation and investor protection in December 2020. Customs has published the TRS report on their website.

- Findings from the TRS on the time required for export preparation (e.g., obtaining permits) and its burdensome process involving border agencies and the General Agency for Veterinary Service informed the development of a new Mongolia meat project. This project will aim to streamline cross-border inspections by eliminating duplications and unnecessary steps through regulatory reforms. This intervention will bring more competitiveness to meat exports by reducing trade costs.
- The TIP, a central online depository of all foreign trade-related information that will greatly benefit Mongolia's SMEs, was launched on December 11, 2020. The TFSP-supported team officially handed over the TIP (www.mongoliatradeonportal.gov.mn) to customs and the lead agency on TIP on the same day. The TIP contains about 400 legal documents from seven ministries and a number of other agencies involved in foreign trade.
- The WBG team organized communication campaigns before and during the launch using local media, including 14 media appearances such as on Bloomberg TV, Montsame news, and others. Information on the TIP was disseminated during online events with the private sector, including monthly newsletters to the National Chamber of Commerce's member list. This outreach aimed to increase use of the portal by the private sector.

Myanmar *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Myanmar

TFSP support has been hampered by the political turmoil in Myanmar. When the final TFA assessment was discussed with the government in 2015, the following implementation activities were agreed upon: (A) assistance with the establishment of a NTFC, which has been completed, (B) capacity building on risk management and early discussion on the establishment of a customs intelligence unit, (C) publication of the customs valuation procedures in the national gazette, and (D) review and redrafting of the customs law to reflect new challenges and needs of modern customs operations.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.3 Use of International Standards
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- No activities were undertaken in Myanmar in the reporting period due to the current political situation.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP funding complements a World Bank trade facilitation project, and work under TFSP also helped leverage a lending operation currently in preparation (with a component focusing on modernizing customs and improving trade facilitation). The TFSP-funded TFA Gap Assessment helped inform UK Aid/DFAT bilateral funding.

Vietnam

TFSP support to Vietnam

While the TFSP-funded Vietnam Trade Information Portal (VTIP) project closed following the launch of VTIP in July 2017, the TFSP continued to provide regular support to updating the VTIP and training for the General Department of Vietnam Customs (the VTIP host agency) and support to integrate the Free Trade Agreement Portal (FTAP). Previous support also included establishment of the NTFC and advice on analyzing the results of Vietnam's Time Release Study. In FY19, the TFSP financed focus group discussions with traders in Vietnam, as part of a larger regional initiative on women and cross-border trade.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- A partially complete FTAP was launched in December 2020 at the request of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT). Ongoing support is being provided to resolve some technical issues in the portal, and the FTAP will be handed over to MOIT once those are resolved. The online portal provides the business community with information about the country's commitments in free trade agreements, including rules of origins, required procedures for imports/exports, and more. Some TFSP support was provided in collaboration with DFAT bilateral support to the provision of technical assistance on this portal as well as to ensure its complementarity with the TFSP-supported work on the National Trade Portal.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

Early TFA engagement informed preparation of the National Logistic Action Plan and contributed to the content of a larger proposed World Bank lending project.

Regional Activities: Pacific Islands

TFSP support to Pacific Islands

Following the delivery of diagnostic and in-country TFA assessments to clients in six WTO Pacific Islands countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu), requests for further support of the implementation of TFA reform roadmaps were received.

Recommendations from the assessments were used as direct inputs for the preparation of a regional WBG project to support implementation of the TFA across the Pacific Islands of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

The TFSP has also assisted with TFA needs assessments and reform roadmaps for non-WTO Pacific countries—the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Palau—complementing the ones already produced for the WTO Pacific countries listed above.

FY21 update on key activities

- A guidance note on trade and COVID-19 was prepared in July/December 2020 as part of a series of guidance notes on “Expedited Release Guidelines for the Clearance of COVID-19 Vaccines and Associated Medical Equipment” and shared with regional client governments. The guidance note assisted countries with assessing the current capability and preparedness of their health ministries and frontline border agencies to deliver expedited border clearances for the timely importation, storage, distribution, and any necessary re-export of COVID-19 vaccines and associated medical equipment.
- Following a presentation delivered to the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) in November 2020, PIFS endorsed the development of a Pacific Island countries regional trade facilitation strategy, which will be drafted in collaboration with the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) secretariat and reflected lessons learned from the successful experience of CARICOM countries. A concept note (CN) for the regional trade facilitation strategy was drafted in May–June 2021 in partnership with PIFS. The strategy specifies the agreed trade facilitation reforms to be implemented at a regional level and will provide regional cooperation mechanisms to support harmonized national implementation. The CN was discussed during a PIFS trade ministers meeting in July 2021, and the PIFS was tasked to work on its development in partnership with the WBG. Preparations for an inception workshop will take place in the next reporting period. The signing of the final document is expected the next calendar year.
- To complement the gradual implementation of GeNS by some Pacific Island biosecurity agencies, further discussions have been undertaken to seek additional benefits that may be made available to electronically send and receive phytosanitary certificates.¹³ Discussions have commenced to consider the possibilities for incorporating these electronic certificates directly into the customs clearance systems. Options to consider the benefits of the development of a pilot program to test this process in one country is underway (the TFSP is funding the connection between the GeNS and ASYCUDA in Fiji).
- Planning for workshops was undertaken to develop regional engagement on a regional approach to biosecurity risk management. The initial focus was for Vanuatu to share lessons learned from the development of its National Single Window (NSW) and for Fiji to share its lessons learned from the electronic manifest project. This engagement, however, was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A Trade and Gender Survey to identify the main challenges that cross-border traders face related to trade facilitation at the firm level was carried out in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu in the previous reporting period. The individual country report findings and recommendations, as well as a comprehensive regional report, were published in this reporting period. A total of 1,538 cross-border trading firms (including freight forwarders) were interviewed across the five countries.

The reports and a multimedia video summarizing the main findings can be found here: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/trade-facilitation-challenges-for-women-traders-in-the-pacific-region>

Country-specific Activities: Pacific Islands

Fiji

TFSP support to Fiji

The WBG, with TFSP support, quickly provided assistance to the government of Fiji in developing a response to the pandemic. Through TFSP, the WBG also assisted in simplifying fees and documentary requirements as well as improving

¹³ GeNS stands for Generic ePhyto National System which is a cloud-based system to assist developing countries without the technology infrastructure to produce, send, and receive ePhytos.

border agency collaboration. Previously, the TFSP supported the National Trade Facilitation Committee with the development of the Fiji TFA Roadmap and National TFA Action Plan. Activities and priorities identified for implementation include: (A) assistance to harmonize multi-agency border processes, to streamline processes and requirements, and to harmonize data; (B) assistance in preparation to implement a Single Window system, including collaboration and coordination; and (C) assistance in developing the trusted trader program and related risk profiling. In addition, the TFSP supported the Trade and Gender Survey in Fiji to identify the main challenges that cross-border traders face related to trade facilitation at the firm level (see **box 7** for details on this study in the Pacific region).

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 6.1** General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 7.1** Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.4** Risk Management
- 8** Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1** Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- Effective August 1, 2020, the Stamp Duty Act was repealed. Previously, exporters were required to pay a stamp duty of \$10 (per export bill of lading) and had to have the bill of lading stamped at the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS) office prior to export. The abolishment of stamp duties has reduced the cost and time to trade. This reform was supported by a review of fees and duties that was part of the TFA Gap Assessment and follow-up by various working groups under the NTFC.

Additionally, the following activities were initiated through the National Trade Facilitation Committee working groups, and TFSP support was used to provide advice and guidance on these activities during remote discussions:

- BAF liaised with Fiji's trade partners to send and receive SPS certificates electronically (i.e., email) to ensure timely clearance of consignments at the border (prior to implementation of the GeNs). This measure was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic creating the need to reduce business office interactions and transfer of hard copies of documents. This process remains in place for trading partners that have yet to introduce the GeNs.
- FRCS has provided ASYCUDA World access and training to Land Transport Authority (LTA) officers. LTA is now able to view all "customs entries for motor vehicles" to assist with domestic registration purposes. This coordination and availability of information ensures that only duty-paid vehicles are registered by individuals and companies. It is part of the ongoing process towards the future development of a Single Window as envisioned by the NTFC.
- During the NTFC working group workshops, it was identified that some importers failed to comply with the requirement to obtain permits prior to lodging their cargo declarations as required by law. The working group requested FRCS to develop a fix within ASYCUDA World to add new input fields that would ensure a declaration could not be made prior to the issue of permits, and so forth. It requires importers/exporters to obtain and upload licenses and permits for export/import goods, prior to the registration of customs entries. This measure aims to ensure goods subject to permits are not inadvertently released, enhances risk assessment, and reduces costs, as it encourages importers and exporters to obtain permits prior to shipment, thereby increasing pre-clearance activity.
- FRCS has created two new mandatory fields in the bill of lading segment of the electronic manifest uploaded into the ASYCUDA World system by shipping companies. These fields require the "country of origin" and "country of destination" of goods on the bill of lading to be inputted in the manifest. This measure enhances the National

Border Control and Targeting Centre's capability to identify individual bill of lading by the declared origin and destination and assists with pre-arrival profiling and targeting.

- In December 2020, at the request of the Risk Management Working Group, ASYCUDA system changes were implemented to enable officers to assign single administrative documents (SADs) initially selected for documentary check (yellow lane) to be sent for physical examination (red lane). This system change removes the prior practice of changes being manually assigned to inspection staff via email notifications, with no records of the re-routing being maintained in the system. The ability to re-assign SAD lanes within the system has created greater ease of communication, increased transparency, and enables officers to keep track of all SADs selected for documentary checks that are subsequently referred for inspection.
- BAF (in cooperation with FRCS) has implemented pre-clearance for all personal effects that are cleared through customs freight stations (CFS). Declarations are received electronically, and inspections are carried out prior to the owner's arrival to collect the effects. This reduces physical interaction between staff and customers and saves time for customers who do not need to attend the premises until the goods are cleared by BAF, subject to any biosecurity issues being identified.
- BAF has implemented an online clearance procedure whereby vessel arrival applications for clearance are approved or refused upon submission of relevant documents via email, reducing physical boarding at the anchorage and/or upon berthing. This measure should help reduce vessel clearance times and berthing delays.
- As a result of the "Guidelines for the Clearance of Expedited Goods" published by the WBG team, FRCS has created the code "AID" in the ASYCUDA World System specifically for goods imported into Fiji for aid purposes during a declared State of National Emergency/Disaster. The code, supported by legal instruments, allows border clearance to be processed without a manifest, bypasses all customs service fees, and relieves importers of all duties and taxes. This enables faster clearance of essential goods and supplies during a crisis.
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between FRCS and the Ministry of Fisheries in October 2020, in relation to data sharing between the two agencies. This allows the Ministry of Fisheries to access the ASYCUDA World system. Access to timely and better data enables the agencies to improve risk assessment and the clearance process of goods subject to their control. Fisheries are also able to share data on fishing vessel movements with FRCS.
- Since August 2020, as an additional result of the single manifest project highlighted in the previous reporting period, the manifest is now registered by the shipping agents at the first port of entry for all goods due for discharge in Fiji. Prior to this date, all shipping agents were sharing the voyage register and registering their own manifests. Currently, only one master manifest is registered, and multiple agents attach their bill of lading to the master. Additionally, port-to-port transfers of under-bond goods are reported on one manifest instead of individual company manifests. These changes reduce transaction costs and streamline processing for shippers while providing consolidated information for border agencies.
- As a result of discussion within the Risk Management Working Group, Fiji Ports Terminal Ltd offered to provide direct access for BAF and FRCS to the "container report" and "container query" functions within the Fiji port operator system. This enables agencies to quickly identify the location of specific containers and improves risk targeting and intervention response planning.
- The TFSP-supported WBG team held several online discussions between April and June 2021 on the current state of the Fiji TFA program and a revised Action Plan with additional activities going forward.
- Workshop preparations were undertaken and are planned to take place in the next reporting period with the NTFC working groups to take stock of implementation progress and re-engage on activities under the respective national TFA Action Plans (e.g., simplification and harmonization of trade processes, risk management framework for border cooperation, and enhancing automation for border management agencies, including an automated solution for maritime agencies to be piloted in Fiji), as well as to seek agency agreement for staff to be assigned on a "full time" work basis on TFA activities. Additionally, arrangements were made jointly with the Department of Transport and Maritime Authority of Fiji to discuss lessons learned on maritime Single Window implementation.

These activities have been postponed due the current COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in place in Fiji since May following an outbreak and will be rescheduled as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Papua New Guinea

TFSP support to Papua New Guinea

During this reporting period, TFSP-supported activities in Papua New Guinea (PNG) were limited by constraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the WBG team was able to engage with the NTFC virtually to maintain focus on the TFA program. Previously, the TFSP supported Papua New Guinea in (A) improving risk management in customs and the National Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection Authority (NAQIA); (B) enhancing border coordination between customs and quarantine functions; (C) supporting operations of the National Trade Facilitation Committee; and (D) developing integrated processes for clearance by the Customs Service and NAQIA.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.4 Risk Management

8 Border Agency Cooperation

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The TFSP continued to support Papua New Guinea in finalizing their definitive notification requirements to the WTO.
- Local TFA activities have been constrained due to various COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions. Constraints on building access for customs and government internet system issues further reduced the ability of NTFC members to communicate.
- Several online discussions were conducted between April and July to support the NTFC, which is committed to reinvigorating the TFA process. The TFSP provided technical assistance to prepare for the conference, including training on how to host a remote conference. Agencies attended the conference to assess the current state of PNG's TFA program and to develop a revised Action Plan with additional activities going forward. The NTFC and its four technical working groups took stock of implementation progress and considered options to re-engage on activities under the TFA Action Plan, including a risk management framework for border cooperation and automation.
- The WBG initially advised the NTFC that PNG can implement pre-clearance of cargo and electronic payments without assistance, but the NTFC has re-considered the advice and is now seeking assistance with these processes. The NTFC is currently considering options to engage relevant agencies and industry to develop improved manifest reporting and assessment.
- Technical assistance was provided to NAQIA to develop draft legislation and biosecurity policy aimed to modernize the regulatory controls for animal and plant health. The policy was presented to a wide group of stakeholders, including the private sector, who provided positive feedback. Given this, it is expected that the bill will advance through the legislative processes in fall 2021.
- After completing the data collection and analysis of 183 active, cross-border trading firms interviewed for the Trade and Gender Study, the final report was published in this reporting period.

The report can be accessed at this link: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/870151611777109812/Trade-Facilitation-Challenges-for-Women-Traders-in-Papua-New-Guinea-2019-INTERACTIVE.pdf>

Samoa

TFSP support to Samoa

The TFSP is taking stock of the TFA program in Samoa along with the revised Action Plan going forward. The original National TFA Action Plan was developed with the TFSP support, including provision of a WTO TFA awareness briefing and strategy and visioning workshop for the private sector and government officials.

Previously, the TFSP-funded WBG team assisted Samoa with categorization of the WTO TFA articles and has provided support for its ratification and notification process. Activities and priorities identified in the original action plan for implementation include: (A) assistance to harmonize data and multiagency border processes and requirements; (B) support to coordinate border management; (C) support to improve risk management system; and (D) assistance with the assessment of preparedness to implement a National Single Window.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- Several online discussions took place between April and June regarding the current state of the Samoa TFA program and a revised Action Plan with additional activities going forward. The TFSP-supported team also began preparations for workshops with NTFC to take stock of implementation progress and re-engage on activities under the TFA Action Plan, such as risk management framework for border cooperation and automation. The workshops are planned for FY22.
- After completing the data collection and analysis of 195 active, cross-border trading firms interviewed for the Trade and Gender Study, the final report was published in this reporting period.

The report can be accessed at this link: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/306041611777114567/Trade-Facilitation-Challenges-for-Women-Traders-in-Samoa-2019-INTERACTIVE.pdf>

Timor-Leste

TFSP support to Timor-Leste

The project under which TFSP support was channeled in Timor-Leste concluded in December 2019; however, the WBG may provide technical assistance for the National Trade Portal going forward. Priority actions that were implemented prior to project closure included: (A) simplifying procedures and enhancing the implementation of risk management; (B) conducting a targeted Time Release Study (TRS) and implementing key recommendations; and (C) aligning the sanitary and phytosanitary and customs legislation with the TFA and international best practice.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 10.3 Use of International Standards
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- After completing the data collection and analysis of 197 active, cross-border trading firms interviewed for the Trade and Gender Study, the final report was published in this reporting period. The report was presented to the Ministry of Finance in January 2021.

The report can be accessed at this link: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/147491611777101834/Timor-Leste-Trade-Facilitation-Survey-Report-Final.pdf>

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work through the years

- The TFSP-supported reforms reduced import time from 15.06 to 6.54 days and generated USD 5.5 million in savings for the private sector. This was achieved by recommending that the Tariff Classifications and Valuation Section be eliminated from the customs clearance process; enabling legal foundations for the new customs management system (ASYCUDA World) by drafting the new Customs Code that entered into force in 2017, as well as creating risk profiles, import process maps, and sharing of other intellectual property with UNCTAD to enable ASYCUDA implementation; implementing interventions to improve risk-management practices in the Risk Management Unit of customs; updating Timor-Leste's 2012 HS Tariff classification to a newer ASEAN-compliant 2017 version; and providing extensive trainings to customs brokers and government officials to increase their knowledge and minimize the number of errors in submitted documents, which respectively contributed to a smoother customs clearance process.
- The TFSP funded technical assistance toward the establishment of a TRS working group. The TRS Working Group was tasked with planning, undertaking, and reporting on the results of the TRS, particularly on the import of containerized cargo through the Port of Dili. The TRS was undertaken in June 2019. The TFSP supported training and technical assistance toward the TRS methodology, approach, and online software; about 30 percent of the participants were women.
- The TFSP also funded technical advice to align the Plant Health Decree Law and the draft Animal Health Decree Law with the draft Organic Law for the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture. All drafts were developed in consultation with the government and private sector stakeholders.
- The WBG made technical recommendations to draft import regulations for plants and plant products, biosecurity risk, and animals and animal products, as well as to draft export regulations for plants and plant products.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support to Timor-Leste complemented a USAID-funded Customs project.

Tonga

TFSP support to Tonga

The WBG, with TFSP support, quickly provided support to the government of Tonga in developing a response to the pandemic. The WBG also assisted with Tonga's categorization and notification of Categories A, B, C measures and provided support towards Tonga's efforts to submit its instrument of ratification (by the end of 2021). Additionally, the TFSP supported the National Trade Facilitation Committee with the development of the Tonga TFA Roadmap and National TFA Action Plan. Activities and priorities identified for implementation include: (A) assistance to harmonize data and multi-agency border processes and requirements; (B) assistance in preparation to implement a Single Window; and (C) assistance in developing the trusted trader program and related risk profiling.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided

7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times

8 Border Agency Cooperation

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- TFSP supported delivery of the TRS in accordance with the WCO methodology on import sea cargo through the port of Nuku'alofa (Queen Salote Wharf). This established a time baseline for all the imports through the port in Nuku'alofa.
- Support was provided to finalize the trade facilitation reform priorities, which are included in the TFA Action Plan, and produce a TFA Roadmap for joint implementation between the NTFC and the lead team composed of key border management agencies as recommended by the WBG.
- Discussed and agreed upon a detailed schedule of reform actions going forward, as well as adoption of recommendations from the recent Time Release Study. An updated TRS is planned to be undertaken after the implementation of ASYCUDA World (planned to take place in 2024).
- The following support was provided to implement Article 7.8 on expedited shipments and 7.9 on perishable goods, which are reform actions in the TFA Roadmap:
 - Development of a formal procedure for the expedited release of medicines and medical supplies, including ensuring a simplified process was in place for the implementation and expedited clearance of the COVID-19 vaccine
 - Recommendation for customs to consider implementation of the WCO Immediate Release Guidelines
 - Review of the tax impact of expedited release, including "*de minimus*" (to be completed by 2022)
- The WBG team supported work under Article 8 on border agency cooperation, including in development of a framework and strategy for border agency cooperation

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The TFSP support complemented a planned WBG Development Policy Operation on the adoption and implementation of special regimes for expedited clearance of essential medical goods. This work was supported and coordinated by the NTFC.

Vanuatu

TFSP support to Vanuatu

The WBG is taking stock of the TFA program in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu TFA Roadmap and National TFA Action Plan, developed with TFSP assistance, identified these activities and priorities for implementation: (A) assistance to harmonize data and multiagency border processes and requirements; (B) support to the biosecurity agency to improve its biosecurity risk management system and compliance for imports and exports; (C) assistance to amend biosecurity regulations to align with customs pre-arrival processing; (D) coordinated advice to traders for biosecurity holds; and (E) assistance with the assessment of preparedness to implement a National Single Window (NSW), including drafting of a blueprint for implementation.

In the past, TFSP also supported Vanuatu with categorization of the WTO TFA articles and the ratification and notification process.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.4 Risk Management

10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

10.4 Single Window

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- Several online discussions took place between April and June on the current state of Vanuatu's TFA program and a revised Action Plan with additional activities going forward. The WBG also began preparations for workshops with the NTFC to take stock of implementation progress and re-engage on activities under the TFA Action Plan, such as a risk management framework for border cooperation and automation. The workshops are planned for FY22.
- Biosecurity Vanuatu identified the need to develop a border risk management program, to advance the development of risk-based procedures for imports and exports, and to obtain assistance with the implementation of automation systems for trade in plant products, such as Single Window and/or ePhyto (electronic phytosanitary certification) systems. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the WBG team and Vanuatu officials held several WEBEX discussions and structured a program. Activities are expected to restart in fall 2021.
- After completing the data collection and analysis of 392 active, cross-border trading firms interviewed for the Trade and Gender Study, the final report was published in this reporting period.

The report can be accessed at this link: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/704211611777119510/Trade-Facilitation-Challenges-for-Women-Traders-in-Vanuatu-INTERACTIVE.pdf>

Leverage or complementarity of funds

Through the close partnership between the WBG and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the EIF Tier 2 project provided USD 1.5 million funding for the establishment of an electronic Single Window system in Vanuatu, leveraging the work undertaken by the WBG that was financed under the TFSP.



EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Regional Activities: Europe and Central Asia

TFSP-supported activities in the Western Balkans are aligned with the trade facilitation objectives of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), a group consisting of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The main objectives of this comprehensive agreement are, inter alia, to expand trade in goods and services and foster investment by means of fair, stable, and predictable rules, as well as eliminating barriers to trade in the CEFTA region.¹⁴ The trade facilitation objectives were enshrined in Additional Protocol 5 on Trade Facilitation in 2018, of which measures are similar to those of the WTO TFA; however, they also go beyond them in their regional harmonization aspirations. Another steppingstone towards regional trade integration and harmonization was taken through the development of the “Common Regional Market” action plan for the Western Balkans launched in 2020 as part of the Berlin Process to support stronger integration of the region with the EU Single Market before EU accession (of which all countries in the region aspire). This action plan includes important specific trade facilitation goals, including establishment of joint border controls, mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators, review of fees and charges, a joint risk management approach, and fully electronic trade. The TFSP has supported several of these objectives over the past years.

FY21 update on key activities

- The WBG (with TFSP funds) and USAID EDGE jointly organized three online trainings on risk management in international trade for SPS agencies in the Western Balkans on November 10, 17, and 18, 2020. The goal of these trainings was to provide information about the concept and principles of risk-based inspection controls, to share example practices in designing risk-based control plans for products of plant and animal origin, and to advise SPS officers where to find data and valuable international guidelines. The trainings also focused on customs risk analysis practices and encouraged data sharing and coordination related to risk analysis and management between customs and SPS agencies. Over 70 participants from SPS agencies of all six Western Balkan countries participated in these events. For some agencies, the webinars served as a refresher because they previously received hands-on training supported by the TFSP.
- The TFSP-supported WBG team is advising on the Western Balkans National Single Window (NSW) blueprint project in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. This project is led by IFC and funded by DFID/FCO. The team’s deep technical knowledge and contacts in the trade facilitation community, both private and public, proved instrumental for the project startup, information gathering and validation, and for quality assurance processes. The contractor, selected on a competitive basis, is the Swedish firm KGH. A second phase is planned to cover the other three Western Balkans countries—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. The

¹⁴ www.cefta.int

National Single Window for trade is a fully electronic single point of entry for all foreign trade–related regulatory requirements. The NSW blueprint is aligned with international standards including the WCO Data Model, UNECE/UNCEFACT recommendations on Single Window, and EU requirements, such as the UCC and the CERTEX architecture and operational framework. The blueprint for Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia is close to completion (expected in the next reporting period). The documents will help the national governments decide on who should be the operator of the National Single Window system, what legal changes are needed in order to enable it to become fully operational, and what costs will be incurred as a result of operating and maintaining the system. They will also cover business processes needed, the technical and functional architecture required, and how the risk management approaches of the different agencies should be integrated into the system or should be developed if not yet existing, as well as capacity building and change management measures that should be undertaken. These reports will form the basis of procurement and implementation measures needed to establish and operate the National Single Window for trade in these countries over the coming years.

Country-specific Activities: Europe

Albania

TFSP support to Albania

During this reporting period, the WBG provided online trainings on risk management, support on the development of a Western Balkans National Single Window blueprint—a roadmap to develop a National Single Window system for trade in Albania, conducted a preliminary assessment of the customs’ electronic documents submission reform, prepared for a second TRS, and continued to support the efforts to establish joint border crossing between Albania and North Macedonia.

Previously, support was also provided to the Ministry of Finance and Economy on the implementation of recommendations provided in the study of fees and charges conducted with TFSP support.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 6.2 Specific Disciplines on Fees and Charges for Customs Processing Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 11 Freedom of Transit
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The TFSP-supported team—together with USAID EDGE—organized three online trainings on risk management in international trade for SPS agencies in the Western Balkans on November 10, 17, and 18, 2020. Albania was

represented by the National Food Authority with the participation of four agents on November 10, three agents on November 17, and four agents on November 18, 2020.

- The TFSP-supported team is advising on the Western Balkans National Single Window blueprint project in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, which serves as the roadmap for the development of a National Single Window system for trade in Albania.
- During previous reporting periods, the TFSP supported the development and implementation of an Authorized Economic Operator program in Albania by assisting with outreach and organizing peer-to-peer information exchange with Kosovo. To date, four AEO certificates have been issued in Albania. During this reporting period, Instruction No. 06 dated October 19, 2020, “On practical implementation of application procedures, approval, function and supervision of Customs simplifications and Authorized Economic Operators” was issued by the General Directorate of Customs (GDC). The instruction is a facilitating instrument for the correct implementation and harmonization of legal provisions for Authorized Economic Operators. The instruction covers all the instruments and procedures for the application process to acquire Authorized Economic Operator status as well as for management of the Authorized Economic Operator program.
- The TFSP provided support to the GDC in raising awareness about Authorized Economic Operator certification—along with the benefits it brings to the trading companies operating in Albania—through a series of outreach events and meetings. The campaign led to the issuance of four AEO certificates during this reporting period. Additional companies are applying and are in the review process by the GDC.
- The WBG interviewed a number of customs brokers about the impact of a GDC reform—i.e., “paperless customs”—enabling the electronic submission of supporting documents for import and export declarations. The TFSP-supported team was able to confirm that the brokers did indeed experience time and cost savings as a result of this reform.
- As agreed with the GDC, the TFSP will support the implementation of a second TRS in the fall of 2021 and preparatory work began in this reporting period. The first TRS was carried out in 2018 at several road border crossings, inland terminals, and the seaport of Durres. The findings and recommendations of the 2018 study triggered a constructive discussion among the border agencies and other trade facilitation stakeholders, and GDC followed up on a number of recommendations. The results of the new study will allow GDC and other trade facilitation stakeholders to compare performance and verify what efficiency gains have been achieved.
- The TFSP as well as the USAID EDGE program have been supporting advice to the Albania and Macedonian customs administrations on options for setting up joint border controls at the Border Crossing Point Qafe Thane/Kjafasan. This border crossing point is also in the focus of European Union assistance and the World Bank’s Trade and Transport Facilitation Lending Operation for the Western Balkans in terms of infrastructural upgrading. The regional Central European Free Trade Agreement’s (CEFTA) Common Regional Market action plan, agreed with the EU, foresees the creation of several such joint border crossing points in the region. In June, an agreement was signed between the two countries to establish joint border crossing operations.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support complements the Albania Investment Climate Competitiveness Project and the Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation World Bank lending operation (a regional loan that Albania has signed on to, which is now operational including with regard to the NSW). It also aligns with a regional USAID EDGE project and a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) trade facilitation project, both supporting trade facilitation initiatives.

Bosnia and Herzegovina *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Bosnia and Herzegovina

The TFSP did not provide support to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the reporting period due to limited funding. In the previous reporting period, the TFSP-supported WBG team engaged with the SPS authorities on a risk management capacity building program. Additionally, in collaboration with USAID, the TFSP supported BiH with the establishment and operation of an NTFC, which was created in FY18. The NTFC has adopted a work program for the period of 2020–2025 along with an action plan. In the next reporting period, TFSP will provide support for the development of a single window blueprint for Montenegro, Kosovo, and BiH.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

8 Border Agency Cooperation

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support is complementary to the IFC's Bosnia Investment Climate Project. TFSP support complements the work of two regional trade facilitation projects funded by USAID and GIZ.

Kosovo

TFSP support to Kosovo

The agreed areas of TFSP assistance in Kosovo include helping to operate the NTFC working groups, implementing the Authorized Economic Operator program, supporting the Kosovo Food and Veterinary Agency (KFVA) with the development and implementation of a risk management framework and an annual sampling plan, and repeat of the Time Release Study. TFSP will also support the development of a single window blueprint for Montenegro, Kosovo, and BiH.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation

7.4 Risk Management

7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times

7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators

10.4 Single Window

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- On September 18, 2020, the Kosovo Customs Administration awarded the third AEO certificate to a company that produces soft and energy drinks. This AEO certificate (AEO-Security), allows the eligible company to participate in the AEO Mutual Recognition Program envisaged in CEFTA. The TFSP supported Kosovo customs in the development of the AEO program, including with legal drafting and outreach to the private sector.

- In 2016, with TFSP support, Kosovo customs carried out the first Time Release Study (TRS) in Kosovo. A repeat of the study was planned for 2020; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was postponed until conditions would again allow fieldwork. The team is now planning for the TRS in the fall of 2021.
- The TFSP and the USAID EDGE project supported a series of regional online training sessions in November 2020 on risk management in international trade for SPS agencies in the Western Balkans. Representatives of KFVA participated in these trainings.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support aligns with a regional USAID EDGE project and a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) trade facilitation project, both supporting trade facilitation initiatives.

Republic of North Macedonia

TFSP support to the Republic of North Macedonia

During FY21, TFSP support to North Macedonia focused on continuing capacity building with the State Agriculture Inspectorate as it related to risk-based border inspections and implementation of the National Single Window blueprint. Past support included preparations for a Time Release Study and on coordinated border management through joint border controls with Serbia.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation

FY21 update on key activities

- Over the course of almost two years, TFSP supported the State Agriculture Inspectorate of the Republic of North Macedonia (SAI) in the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for a risk-based border inspection regime for phytosanitary products. Once approved by SAI and implemented throughout the country, inspection and sampling rates (currently close to 100 percent) are expected to decrease significantly. SAI will be able to focus their efforts more effectively on high-risk goods through targeted inspections and sampling, spending less time on low-risk commodities. For the trading community, this will mean faster passage across the border overall and faster release of their goods into the market, thereby lowering their costs and increasing their competitive position in the market. The SOPs were developed over the course of several training workshops and retreats. During this period, the original English language document was translated into Macedonian. This local language version is being reviewed by SAI officers.
- The TFSP-supported team is advising on the Western Balkans National Single Window blueprint project in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, which would serve as the roadmap for the development and foundation for implementation of a National Single Window systems for trade in North Macedonia. In North Macedonia, thanks to the pro-active role of the customs administration, a dedicated steering committee and working group were put in place. The steering committee is responsible for reviewing and accepting the reports prepared by KGH and IFC and is led by the deputy prime minister for economic affairs.
- The TFSP as well as the USAID EDGE program have been providing support to the Macedonian and Albanian customs administrations on options for setting up joint border controls at the Border Crossing Point Kjafasan/Qafe Thane. This border crossing point is also in the focus of European Union assistance and the World Bank's Trade and

Transport Facilitation Lending Operation for the Western Balkans in terms of infrastructural upgrading. The regional CEFTA's Common Regional Market action plan agreed with the EU, foresees the creation of several such joint border crossing points in the region. In June, an agreement was signed between the two countries to establish joint border crossing operations.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support complements the Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation World Bank lending operation (a regional loan that North Macedonia has signed on to, which is now operational including with regard to the NSW), and it also aligns with a regional USAID EDGE project and a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) trade facilitation project, both supporting trade facilitation initiatives.

Moldova (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Moldova

The TFSP did not provide any support to Moldova in the reporting period. In prior reporting periods, the TFSP supported the government of Moldova with amending its regulations on customs valuation of goods. The TFSP also provided support to Moldova to update its Category B and C notifications (the addendums were submitted to the WTO in 2019), to draft the National Trade Facilitation Committee Action Plan for implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement, as well as assisted the National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) on risk assessment.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.4 Risk Management

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Montenegro

TFSP support to Montenegro

The TFSP provides support to Montenegro for the development of a service-oriented approach towards trade. With a focus on transparent, streamlined, and consistent procedures and regulations and control methods, the TFSP supports the development of new customs regulations that are compliant with relevant national and international obligations and standards. In this reporting period, the TFSP provided support to establishing enquiry points, implementing a risk management system and AEO program, drafting of a decree for Customs Law, and supported the NTFC. In the past, the TFSP also supported an inventory of all fees and charges imposed on the import and export of goods that are prescribed by regulation or applied in practice. TFSP will also support the development of a single window blueprint for Montenegro, Kosovo, and BIH.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.3 Enquiry Points
- 6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.5 Post-Clearance Audit
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- In response to a request from the NTFC, the WBG prepared a report on establishing an enquiry point with TFSP support. The report analyzes the current capabilities and practices of competent authorities with regard to operating a trade enquiry point(s), and it includes a standard operating procedure that defines the work processes and operation of trade-related information enquiry points within each competent authority and makes further recommendations for full implementation of the enquiry point(s). The draft paper has been shared with the NTFC Secretariat. After receiving relevant comments and suggestions, the report will be updated and submitted to the committee, whose new composition should be confirmed by the new government.
- TFSP supported implementation of an effective and fully functional risk management system by upgrading the existing business intelligence system that optimizes the risk management process, enabling customs analysts to work with much larger amounts of source data than they could before when the data were organized in a traditional database. Based on information received from customs, the time required to extract and analyze risk assessment data was reduced by 20 percent, the quality of data available to analysts increased by 10 percent, and five percent of risk profiles were changed.
- In fall 2020, Montenegro awarded its first two AEO certificates, one to Neregelia, the country's largest distribution company of consumer products and pharmaceuticals goods, and another one to Famegra, a wholesaler of medicines and medical equipment. TFSP funds have supported customs in developing and implementing an AEO program since October 2018. The program is based on the European Union program example, which enhances supply-chain security and facilitates trade by simplifying customs.
- The TFSP-supported WBG team advocated a whole-of-government approach in implementing simplified customs procedures. As a result, the sanitary inspection has revised its work process to allow customs clearance of AEOs to take place at the importer's premises, not at the customs terminal where its inspectors are deployed. This ultimately allowed customs clearance for AEOs to be reduced from eight hours to half an hour on average.
- Following a request from Montenegrin customs, the TFSP provided support to draft a new decree on implementation of the Customs Law in line with the EU legislation. This decree will combine provisions from three EU secondary regulations. Experts from the Serbian customs administration—funded through TFSP—are guiding officials from the Montenegrin customs administration in the drafting of the decree. Thirteen virtual workshops have been held to date, and the majority of planned work has been accomplished. Provisions drafted and agreed upon cover, among others, common border procedures, authorized economic operators, preferential and non-preferential origin of goods, customs valuation, simplified customs procedures, warehousing, and inward and outward processing. Remaining provisions will be drafted in the next reporting period. The government envisages adoption of the new Customs Law at the end of calendar year 2021 and passage of the decree in 2022.

- Although the new government has not yet formally appointed new members of the NTFC, the Ministry of Finance, which chairs this body, has taken steps to familiarize itself with the roles and responsibilities of the NTFC and to elaborate on the activities prescribed by the Trade Facilitation Strategy 2018–2020. The WBG held several meetings with the State Secretary and the Assistant Minister of Finance and briefed them on the project activities, the support provided and planned under the project, and the obligations arising from the TFA. They expressed interest in continuing the activities related to the preparation of reports on fees and charges, as well as the enquiry point.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support aligns with a regional USAID EDGE project and a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) trade facilitation project, both supporting trade facilitation initiatives.

Serbia

TFSP support to Serbia

To ensure that trade continues to flow during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a response to private sector demands, the TFSP is supporting Serbian customs to further automate customs processes related to advance rulings on tariff classification and to prepare the National Single Window blueprint.

In the past, the WBG (with TFSP funds) supported the customs administration of Serbia with the development of tools to electronically issue and sign EUR.1 movement certificates on origin of goods and to enable the online verification and authentication of these certificates. The TFSP also supported a series of risk management trainings for border agencies and continued supporting the National Trade Facilitation Committee. TFSP also supported the development and maintenance of software for advance rulings on origin and post-clearance verification of origin, promoted the concept of joint controls at the main road border crossing point (BCP) between Serbia and North Macedonia, and compiled a comprehensive list of foreign trade-related fees and charges to help improve transparency and fulfill mandatory notification requirements to the CEFTA secretariat.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 3** Advance Rulings
- 6.1** General Disciplines on Fees and Charges
- 7.4** Risk Management
- 7.5** Post-Clearance Audit
- 7.6** Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7** Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 8** Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1** Formalities and Document Requirements
- 10.4** Single Window
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- TFSP supported a new automation initiative in the customs administration with new software for advance rulings (AR) for tariff classification. The software enables electronic submission of AR requests for tariff classification through the customs website, online request status tracking, and information sharing on deficiencies in requests and supporting documentation, as well as electronic issuing of ARs. The software also integrates appropriate modules for reporting, advanced search, and automatic generation of documents, and it automatically populates the national electronic database of ARs once the new AR for tariff classification is issued (this is currently done manually until the software is rolled out widely to the private sector in the next reporting period). This initiative is a response to private sector demands presented to the National Trade Facilitation Committee to simplify and speed up the process of issuing of ARs. In order to ensure sustainability in the use of the software, the TFSP supported four trainings on the use of the software to customs officers in the spring of 2021 (out of 18 trainees, 17 were women). Additionally, three different user manuals were developed for private sector users of the software and customs officers engaged in issuing of ARs and opinions on tariff classification.
- The TFSP-supported team is advising on the Western Balkans National Single Window (NSW) blueprint project in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia. It provides a pathway to the development of a fully electronic single point of entry for all foreign trade related regulatory requirements. The NSW blueprint is aligned with international standards and comprises eight different task cluster technical reports and the summary blueprint report. A series of stakeholder meetings—including the private sector—were undertaken over the period of 10 months to present the blueprint work and gain an understanding of local practices related to issuance of foreign trade related documents and status of automatization initiatives. The blueprint work in Serbia is coordinated by the steering committee, interministerial NSW working group, project implementation unit (PIU), and customs as the lead agency and future NSW operator established under the WBG lending operation to Serbia covering, inter alia, NSW development and implementation. In total, 12 NSW Working Group meetings were held to agree upon future NSW legal, governance, operational, technical, and functional framework; fee; and risk management models. All blueprint technical reports have been reviewed and approved by Serbia's NSW Working Group. Work on the NSW development and implementation according to the prepared blueprint is expected to start in 2022 and will last for three years.
- The TFSP-supported WBG team—with USAID EDGE—organized three online trainings on risk management in international trade for SPS agencies in the Western Balkans on November 10, 17, and 18, 2020. Representatives from border veterinary, phytosanitary and sanitary inspection, and from the Customs Risk Management Department from Serbia attended these regional trainings.
- In 2017, the TFSP provided support to the customs administration to conduct its first comprehensive TRS. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions, it wasn't possible to repeat the TRS in 2020 as originally planned. For this reason, the TFSP gathered and processed proxy data on the start and end time of the import customs procedure from customs electronic systems covering the same periods and locations as in the original TRS. The proxy data serve as an interim tool for monitoring processing and clearance times of cargo and assessing the impact of COVID-19 on average customs clearance time in 2020. The WBG team—supported by TFSP—recently agreed with the customs administration to repeat the full TRS in the fall of 2021, assuming that the COVID-19 situation allows it.
- The TFSP worked with the Serbian NTFC to develop the 2020 NTFC Annual Report to the government of Serbia, outlining key trade facilitation achievements and activities. The Annual Report references the WBG Tracking Tool data to monitor the progress made in implementation of trade facilitation reforms in Serbia. In accordance with the transparency principle and publication requirements of the TFA, the Annual Report of the NTFC is publicized at the NTFC website: <https://nktot.mtt.gov.rs/en/documents/reporting/>. TFSP-supported experts took part in the 6th meeting of the NTFC held on May 13, 2021, to inform the members and private sector of ongoing TFSP work. This was the first official meeting of the NTFC since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The TFSP also supported the NTFC in completing the annual UNECE Needs Assessment on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia aimed to help countries achieve greater regional and global economic integration, to inform donors as to where assistance might be required, and to support policy discussions.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support complements the Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation World Bank lending operation (a regional loan that Serbia has signed on to, which is now operational including with regard to the NSW). It also aligns with a regional USAID EDGE project and a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) trade facilitation project, both supporting trade facilitation initiatives.

Country-specific Activities: Caucuses

Georgia

TFSP support to Georgia

TFSP support to Georgia has been centered on assistance in developing a standard operating procedures manual for customs valuation and on creation of a National Trade Facilitation Committee. AEO related support might be provided also.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.4 Risk Management

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- With the help of the WBG, on July 28, 2020, the customs department of the Georgia Revenue Service (GRS) adopted a procedures manual for customs valuation control—of which the TFSP provided support to review and finalize in draft. The manual was supposed to be enforced since January 1, 2021; however, training, outreach, and other preparatory activities were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Application of the manual will start in the next reporting period and will be used by customs officers at clearance offices to guide their verification of declared value of imported goods in a manner consistent with the requirements of the WTO Valuation Agreement and the Customs Code of Georgia.

The manual contains step-by-step instructions for customs officers on how to verify the declared transaction value, the supporting documents and information to be checked, the procedures to be followed when the officer finds errors or discrepancies, and the processes to be followed in application of the alternative valuation methods when the declared transaction value cannot be used. The manual includes technical guidelines for customs officers on specific customs valuation issues and standard forms to be used by customs officers to request information or notify the declarant of decisions.

- GRS's adoption of this manual brings greater uniformity and consistency in customs valuation control decisions, as well as greater transparency and predictability for traders in customs valuation decisions. Most importantly, the manual introduced (a) advance notification of importers regarding the start of the customs control of the declaration and (b) advance request to submit specific additional information or documents before the customs control, while previously additional information or documents were requested after the customs control. This enables importers to submit missing information and documents before the start of the customs control and, therefore, to speed up the customs clearance process.

Country-specific Activities: Central Asia

Kazakhstan (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Kazakhstan

With TFSP support, Kazakhstan's NTFC is fully operational and has not requested further support. As a result, the TFSP did not provide active support to Kazakhstan in this reporting period. Previously, the TFSP assisted the government in creating the National Trade Facilitation Committee, the development of the NTFC action plan, and provided guidance on the notification process for Categories A, B, and C of the WTO TFA.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Kyrgyz Republic

TFSP support to Kyrgyz Republic

Ongoing trade facilitation assistance by the WBG to the Kyrgyz Republic builds on earlier work supported by the TFSP. The information provided below is about results from this period that stem from earlier TFSP support.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The Kyrgyz Customs Committee updated its IT Processing System ("UAIS") to include the categorization of traders by risk levels (low, medium, and high), as suggested earlier by the WBG in connection with the TFSP-supported work in the country. Kyrgyz customs will thereby categorize traders on a rolling basis, in accordance with their risk level. The objective of this change is to speed up controls of goods transported by low-risk traders and focus on goods moved by high-risk traders.
- Preparations were initiated (e.g., consultations with other donors and with customs and the NTFC) for a second Time Release Study to be conducted in the fall of 2021 or spring of 2022, depending on the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to assess what improvements have been made since the first TFSP-supported TRS was conducted in 2018. The Kyrgyz Customs Committee would like to include additional locations for the second TRS, e.g., rail cargo border points and the Bishkek airport. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will support the initiative with workshops.

A WBG expert funded by TFSP was recognized for her contributions to customs work during the 29th anniversary ceremony of the Kyrgyz customs administration on December 31, 2020.

Tajikistan (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Tajikistan

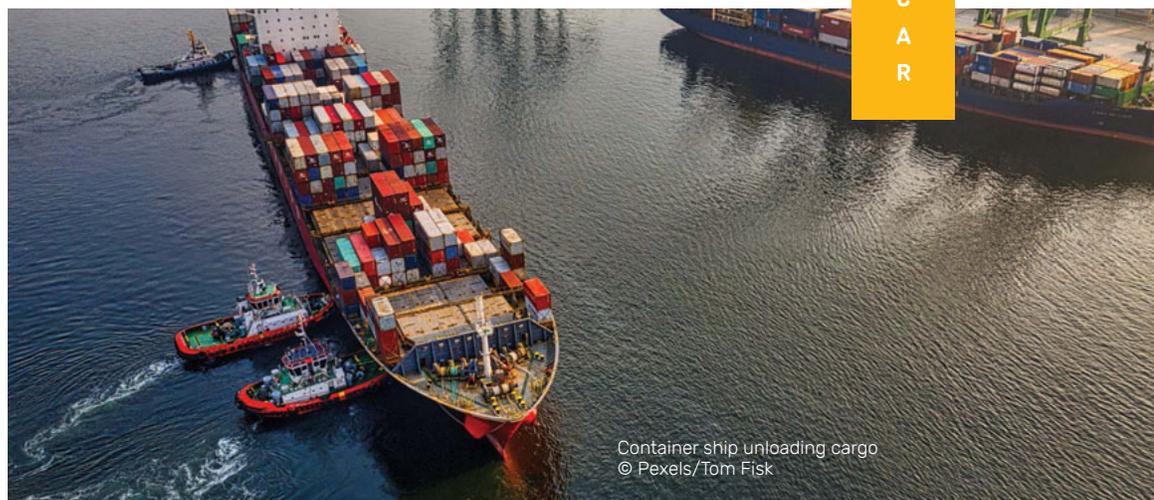
The TFSP did not provide support to Tajikistan during this reporting period. Previously, TFSP provided support to customs in simplifying procedures for clearing goods, as well as both the customs administration and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT)/National Trade Facilitation Committee on the development of an Authorized Operator scheme and expedited procedures for agricultural exports. With TFSP support, the WBG also reviewed the situation in Tajikistan related to risk-based border controls carried out by the SPS agencies. The WBG also collaborated with the customs administration and the NTFC on the implementation of a Time Release Study. It also assisted the customs administration with the development of its national nomenclature for goods in line with the WCO standards.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 7.9 Perishable Goods
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support complements a transport loan for ASYCUDA World and a Development Policy Operation by the WBG. TFSP support also complements projects funded by USAID and GIZ.



Container ship unloading cargo
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LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Regional Highlights of Achievements of TFSP Funded Work: Caribbean

Highlights of Achievements of TFSP Funded Work

In the Caribbean, TFSP support provided to Jamaica, Grenada, and St. Lucia generated a total of USD 5.7 million in savings for the private sector. USD 5.6 million of these savings is attributable to time reductions in all three countries from reforms in other border regulatory agencies (OBRAs). In Grenada and St. Lucia, support was provided to Bureaus of Standards, and in Jamaica, support was provided to the National Compliance and Regulatory Authority. The TFSP-supported WBG team assisted in the preparation of risk profiles and connection of these agencies to the ASYCUDA customs data management system. In addition, in St. Lucia and Grenada, a Trade Logistics Tool was rolled out in the Bureaus of Standards, facilitating electronic connection and data exchange with customs. Time to trade in St. Lucia and Grenada was reduced from three days to one day, and in Jamaica, time to trade fell from 7.4 to 1.6 days. An additional USD 96,000 in savings were generated in Jamaica and Grenada from the elimination of import/export licenses and fees for certain goods.

Country-specific Activities: Caribbean

Grenada *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Grenada

The TFSP did not provide active support to Grenada in this reporting period, and the regional project under which the team delivered advisory services concluded in December 2019. Previously, the TFSP supported assessments to determine the level of alignment of Grenada's national policies with the WTO TFA in three areas prioritized by the government: (A) advanced rulings, (B) appeal procedures, and (C) Single Window. UNCTAD supported the government's implementation of the Single Window, and the TFSP supported Grenada regarding rights of appeal and risk management.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 4 Procedures for Appeal or Review
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.3 Use of International Standards

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- The TFSP shared best practices on appeals administration through peer-to-peer learning.
- TFSP resources were used to support the roll-out of the tool to automate import approval processes at the Bureau of Standards. The automation tool allows the bureau to fully leverage data from ASYCUDA to apply risk management to its border clearance processes.

Jamaica (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Jamaica

TFSP did not provide active support to Jamaica in FY21. Earlier, TFSP supported implementation of the Jamaica Trade Information Portal (JTIP), implementation of risk management and coordinated border management, and removal of duplicate and burdensome export and import licensing requirements. The TFSP has also supported a regulatory gap analysis related to the Customs Code.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.3 Use of International Standards

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- The JTIP, which was implemented and launched in 2019 with TFSP support, had a total of 10,010 visitors in this reporting period, of which 78.5 percent were new users. There was a total of 57,988 pages viewed. This brings the total number of visitors to the portal since its launch to 21,106, with 136,262 pages visited. The Trade Board Limited (TBL) operates the JTIP and has signed MOUs with thirty ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) to contribute content to the portal (an increase from MOUs signed with eight agencies in the last reporting period).
- At the end of the last reporting period, and following recommendation by the WBG, the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA)¹⁵ migrated TBL's services to the Jamaica Single Window for Trade (JSWIFT), mandating the use of these services for the export regime: online applications for licenses as an approved exporter of scrap metal, e-payment, and approval by the TBL. Applications for export permits are now submitted electronically and reviewed and approved by both the Customs Site Inspection Officer and the Trade Board Assessor in a sequential workflow. With effect from August 23, 2021, Certificates of Origin—which are issued by the TBL—are also now being processed through JSWIFT. Effective March 1, 2021, JCA migrated services for the issuance of import permits for the Ministry of Agriculture's Plant Quarantine Branch.
- With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the abbreviated parliamentary sitting, the joint select committee (JSC) of parliament was unable to complete its deliberations of the draft Customs Bill 2019. Following

¹⁵ Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) NOTICE: Mandatory use of JSWIFT for Trade Board Import/Export Licensing and Permit Services commencing Monday July 20, 2020.

national elections in August 2020, the Customs Bill 2020 was opened for discussion again in September 2020. The JSC reconvened in February 2021. The JSC is currently deliberating on the Customs Bill 2020. The government has repeatedly stated its commitment to passing the new Customs Bill, which is expected to significantly modernize customs operations in Jamaica. The WBG will continue to work with the JCA to support the timely completion of this trigger.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

Trade facilitation continues to be an important theme in government of Jamaica's competitiveness agenda. Initiatives to improve border clearance were included in the Jamaica COVID-19 Response and Recovery Development Policy Financing of USD 150 million. A prior action to that operation was the launch of Trade Board Limited on the Jamaica Electronic Single Window for Trade platform for imports and exports.

St. Lucia (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to St. Lucia

The TFSP did not provide active support to St. Lucia in this reporting period, and the regional project under which the team delivered advisory services concluded in December 2019. Previously, the TFSP supported TFA assessments to determine St. Lucia's level of alignment with WTO TFA measures on Single Window, electronic payment systems, and risk management.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- With TFSP support, the WBG facilitated a technical workshop on the design of an electronic Single Window and facilitated discussions between public and private sector stakeholders on a shared vision for the Single Window in St. Lucia.
- TFSP funding supported the deployment of the automation tool for import approval by the Bureau of Standards in St. Lucia. This initiative helps support the integration of border clearance processes through the ASYCUDA World platform.

Regional Activities: Central America

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, progress slowed down in various activities that the team was conducting. At the same time, trade facilitation remained a highly important topic for the WBG and our clients in Central America. In FY21, the TFSP-supported team worked with the presidency pro-tempore and future presidency pro-tempore of the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration (COMIECO) and Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) to organize a high-level event centered on trade facilitation. The team is also supporting facilitation of cargo clearance between Costa Rica and El Salvador via ferry, e-commerce, and domestic treatment of regional flights to reduce cost of air transport.

The WBG in prior reporting periods, through TFSP support, assisted the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration with the review of the regional Customs Code for Central America and its regulations to align them with the WTO TFA to reduce clearance times and required formalities and documentation to trade.

Previously, SIECA requested support to develop a data cube and calculation methodology to collect data to monitor time trade performance across the region. The data cube and the calculation methodology were both developed and are currently in use by SIECA.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 3 Advance Rulings
- 4 Procedures for Appeal or Review
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 11 Freedom of Transit

FY21 update on key activities

■ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, trade facilitation has become a highly important topic. WBG President Malpass and high-level authorities from the countries of Central America want to push the trade facilitation agenda at the highest political level. The TFSP-supported WBG team has been working with the presidency pro-tempore of COMIECO–Costa Rica and the future presidency pro-tempore of COMIECO–Guatemala, as well as with SIECA, on the organization of a high-level event to be held in the fall. This event is called “La facilitación de Comercio como Acelerador de la Recuperación en Centroamérica” (Trade Facilitation as an Accelerator for Recovery in Central America), and the topics that have been defined as priorities for discussion include:

- E-commerce and air cargo process simplification
- Domestic treatment of regional flights to reduce cost of air transport
- Pilot plan to ease crossing borders
- Risk management of phytosanitary products
- Facilitation of cargo clearance between Costa Rica and El Salvador carried via the ferry

The team also has made progress in preparing these activities:

■ The TFSP-supported team has worked on a high-level agenda for advancing e-commerce in Central America. An IFC survey in 2020–21 with over 2,000 Central American firms revealed that even the smallest firms in the region have dramatically increased their online sales amid the COVID-19 pandemic, but firms still face a number of challenges to e-commerce, especially across borders both within the region and with extra-regional partners. The high-level agenda makes proposals for 2021–25 for the region to improve the enabling environment for cross-border e-commerce across key thematic areas, such as logistics and trade facilitation in air cargo online payments, connectivity and digital infrastructure, SME capacity building, digital regulations, and access to finance, such as trade finance and working capital.

- The WBG, with technical support of the global trade team and a transport consultant, conducted a study to understand the issues around the high cost of travel (for cargo and passenger travel) within the region (Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic). Under the assumption that the cost of travel within the region is higher than in other regions within the Americas, the analysis focused on the diverse factors that could explain the difference. The study included review of the market access for airlines in the routes within Central American main cities, the cost of infrastructure, taxation, and other exogenous costs, such as the price of aviation fuel. The analysis found that, on average, traveling within Central America could be over 80 percent more expensive than traveling within South America. After identifying that the access to markets is not restricting the supply of capacity by airlines, the analysis focused on the cost of the infrastructure, other regulatory and fiscal costs, and exogenous costs. The exogenous costs, such as airport fees and charges as well as duties and taxes, are one of the major discouraging factors for airlines to offer more capacity at lower airfares. In addition, the cost of fuel was found to be another contributing factor for the higher cost of operation for the airlines because of logistics and taxation issues.
- A proposed pilot plan to facilitate crossing borders was presented and discussed with the Ministry of Foreign Trade (COMEX) of Costa Rica. The idea is to simplify procedures for the most frequent traders. It is expected that the government of Guatemala will include this initiative in the COMIECO agenda for the next pro-tempore presidency (July–December 2021).
- The first phase of the project supported by TFSP includes carrying out a pilot plan in Costa Rica on risk management, which can be scaled to the rest of the Central American countries in the second phase. In this reporting period, the team hired a specialist consultant on sanitary risk management to support the State Sanitary Service in Costa Rica on risk management. However, the final stage of the first phase could not be concluded in the reporting period because a physical visit by the consultant to Costa Rica has been restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to a request from the governments of Costa Rica and Panama, a WBG specialist on maritime transport drafted a document containing essential elements to determine the potential demand for ferry services between importers and exporters of the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) and those in the south of Central America (Costa Rica and Panama).

Country-specific Activities: Central America

Costa Rica

TFSP support to Costa Rica

The TFSP is supporting the development of risk management procedures for phytosanitary products, the design and operationalization of a Trade Portal, and an integrated procedure for the operation of a multi-modal service between El Salvador and Costa Rica. The TFSP has also continued to support the government of Costa Rica in coordinated border management and identifying measures to reduce excessive requirements and time to trade at land border posts. Assessments of formalities and documentary requirements have been undertaken, and recommendations have been made. The recommended reforms are expected to expedite movement, release, and clearance of goods by reducing documentary requirements and eliminating the need for printed copies. The results will include faster, more transparent, and easier trade processes, as well as savings for the private sector.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

FY21 update on key activities

- Central American countries currently inspect and sample all shipments containing goods with phytosanitary requirements, which puts a strain on available human resources and does not prioritize products that may present a higher risk of pests entering the country. Regional phytosanitary and zoo-sanitary control institutions do not have a risk management system to carry out the sampling of products or by-products. To improve this situation, the TFSP-supported WBG team aims to develop a proposal to advance a risk-based sampling system in Costa Rica, which could also be applicable in other countries in the region. In the first stage of the project, work was done on the preparation of a regional training workshop to discuss the rationale for risk-based sampling in accordance with international regulatory frameworks (WTO-SPS, WTO-TFA, IPPC standards), the operational justification (better risk and resource management), the implications for fair and safe trade, different types of sampling for inspection, as well as to develop criteria for deciding on an appropriate level and design for sampling, along with different options for responses to risk and changes in risk.
- The WBG has assisted Costa Rica and El Salvador bilaterally and local groups (customs, immigration, seaports) in developing an integrated procedure for the operation of a multi-modal (land/transport/ferry) service between Puerto de la Unión Centroamericana (El Salvador) and Puerto Caldera (Costa Rica). The multi-modal transport service will save time (from a three-day journey to one day by using the ferry) and simplify logistics procedures by avoiding land transit through two countries (Honduras and Nicaragua). Both countries expect to initiate ferry operations in the upcoming months.
- The TFSP-supported team worked on a conceptual proposal for the design of the Trade Portal, including a governance model based on the study of approximately 20 successful experiences from developing and developed countries. The portal was implemented in February 2021. The National Council for Trade Facilitation (CONAFAC) issued an agreement to enforce information updates by the different agencies involved by mandating that any regulatory instruments created, rescinded, or reformed that are linked to foreign trade activities must be informed to the technical secretariat of CONAFAC. In compliance with this agreement, the presidency of CONAFAC sent an official letter with a form to update the regulations and requesting the appointment of a point of contact to coordinate the operationalization of said form to the vice ministers of finance, agriculture, government, economy, health, and public works.
- The government requested support to prioritize the Integral and Unique Service Model of Information on Foreign Trade (SIIC) as part of the Trade Portal. The WBG team developed a proposal to integrate—in a single Trade Portal—all the information related to legislation, procedures, and processes, which facilitates user interaction and is in accordance with Article 1 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- Support was provided for preparation of a protocol to carry out joint inspections at the Peñas Blancas border.
- Support was provided to review and make recommendations on the Coordinated Border Management Agreement.

El Salvador

TFSP support to El Salvador

The TFSP provides support to the government of El Salvador in its efforts to improve trade facilitation processes for air cargo trade, including support to undertake a comprehensive process mapping of all agencies that are responsible for air cargo. The program is also providing assistance for the implementation of multi-modal transport operations between El Salvador and Costa Rica (i.e., ferry service). In addition, support has been provided to El Salvador in its effort to implement an e-signature program for the Ministry of Economy. Previously, support was provided for El Salvador to join the Honduras-Guatemala Customs Union; however, a change in government in El Salvador has made the Customs Union less of a priority, and no new support has been provided in this specific area.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.8 Expedited Shipments
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.2 Acceptance of Copies

FY21 update on key activities

- With TFSP support, the WBG provided technical assistance to facilitate cargo clearance between Costa Rica and El Salvador carried via the ferry, including assisting Costa Rica and El Salvador bilaterally and with local groups (customs, immigration, seaports) in developing an integrated procedure for the operation of a multi-modal (land transport/ferry) service between Puerto de la Unión Centroamericana (El Salvador) and Puerto Caldera (Costa Rica). The multi-modal transport service will save time (from a three-day journey to one day using the ferry) and simplify logistics procedures by avoiding land transit through two countries (Honduras and Nicaragua). Both countries expect to initiate ferry operations in the upcoming months.
- In addition, the project provided technical assistance and support to inter-institutional coordination for El Salvador and Costa Rica in the development of the Binational User Guide for ferry services. The guide includes procedures and technical and regulatory requirements for customs agencies, sanitary and phytosanitary control agencies, immigration, and ports authorities. Technical assistance was also provided for the development of a ferry service promotional brochure.
- During this reporting period, the WBG team held periodic virtual meetings with authorities and technical counterparts from the Ministry of Economy, customs, and ports authorities of Costa Rica and El Salvador to follow up on the ferry service project between the two countries, define next steps, action plans, and other related areas needed for the successful implementation of the project.

Guatemala

TFSP support to Guatemala

The TFSP-supported WBG team has been assisting Guatemala with preparations for the country's upcoming role as the presidency pro-tempore of the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration. The team also provided cross-support for the USD500 million DPF "Crisis Response and Recovery in Guatemala Development Policy Loan" in which trade facilitation priority measures are included.

In the past, TFSP provided support to the Customs Union between Guatemala and Honduras with recommendations to implement risk management tools, post-clearance audits, and an Authorized Operator program.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

FY21 update on key activities

- To assist Guatemala in its preparation to lead the presidency pro-tempore of the Council of Ministers of Economic Integration, the WBG has been holding meetings with the government to establish an agenda for the high-level event on trade facilitation called “La facilitación de Comercio como Acelerador de la Recuperación en Centroamérica” (Trade Facilitation as an Accelerator for Recovery in Central America). As agreed with the governments of Guatemala and Costa Rica, the topics that will be presented in a high-level event are:
 - E-commerce and air cargo process simplification
 - Domestic treatment of regional flights to reduce cost of air transport
 - Pilot plan to facilitate crossing borders
 - Risk management of phytosanitary products
 - Facilitation of cargo clearance between Costa Rica and El Salvador carried via the ferry

Guatemala is likely to attend and participate in the first four topics.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The team provided trade facilitation prior actions and triggers for the USD500 million DPF “Crisis Response and Recovery in Guatemala Development Policy Loan,” which was approved by the Board in December 2020.

Honduras

TFSP support to Honduras

During this reporting period, the team conducted virtual meetings with government authorities and counterparts to continue to work on defined priority areas for a high-level event called “La facilitación de Comercio como Acelerador de la Recuperación en Centroamérica” (Trade Facilitation as an Accelerator for Recovery in Central America).

In the past, the TFSP provided support to the Customs Union between Honduras and Guatemala with recommendations to implement risk management tools, post-clearance audits, and an Authorized Operator program to facilitate the movement of goods.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

FY21 update on key activities

- The topics that will be presented in the high-level event are the following:
 - E-commerce and air cargo process simplification
 - Domestic treatment of regional flights to reduce cost of air transport
 - Pilot plan to facilitate border crossing
 - Risk management of phytosanitary products
 - Facilitation of cargo clearance between Costa Rica and El Salvador carried via the ferry

Honduras is likely to attend and participate in the first four topics.

Nicaragua

TFSP support to Nicaragua

In this reporting period, the TFSP provided support to Nicaragua on publication of trade procedures and use of the Trámites Nicaragua website (<http://www.tramitesnicaragua.gob.ni/?l=es>). This entailed continued support for the mapping of trade processes to ensure that the private sector has access to complete information on steps and documents required to trade through the website. The TFSP has also supported technical assistance at the Puerto of Corinto to enhance transparency as well as reduce clearance times.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation
- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements

FY21 update on key activities

- In continuation of support to Nicaragua on the publication of trade procedures on its [website](#), the team held several online meetings with experts from Nicaragua during this reporting period to explain how to use the new features of the updated [tramitesnicaragua.gob.ni](http://www.tramitesnicaragua.gob.ni) platform. The team held three online meetings with authorities and the private sector until the procedures were fully validated by the authorities in agreement with the private sector. The team prepared procedures documented and a proposal of facilitation for each of them. It also prepared

a document that explains how to use the new tramitesnicaragua.gob.ni platform to ensure that anyone on the Nicaraguan team is able to use it and update the procedures on time.

- The TFSP-supported WBG team may also support the consolidation of pre-arrival processes and implementation of recommendations to improve Puerto Corinto's operations during FY22.

Panama

TFSP support to Panama

During the previous reporting period, a change in government administration led to staff changes in most of the technical teams with which the WBG team has been working. The new administration has not provided an official request for support from the TFSP. Previously, the TFSP provided support for the establishment and strengthening of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, integrated risk management for transshipments, and an e-payment module.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.2 Electronic Payment

7.4 Risk Management

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- In response to a request from the governments of Costa Rica and Panama, a WBG specialist on maritime transport drafted a document containing essential elements to determine potential demand for ferry services between importers and exporters of the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) and those in the south of Central America (Costa Rica and Panama). The implementation of multi-modal transport will make intra-regional trade faster and cheaper.

Country-specific Activities: South America

Bolivia

TFSP support to Bolivia

TFSP support in Bolivia was initiated in FY19 but was recently paused. The work supported by the TFSP thus far focused on the creation of the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The team successfully continued to provide advice to the government on creation of the NTFC and ensured that it has a solid foundation for the NTFC. To this end, the WBG helped the government develop and elaborate Terms of References (TORs) to set up the NTFC. A critical element to the success of this support was the ability of the WBG to bring all key border stakeholders together around a joint agenda and ensure that the voices of the private sector, and SMEs in particular, were also heard.
- Efforts to create the NTFC through various legal frameworks were proposed and considered; however, the creation stalled several times. Since initiating support in Bolivia, the WBG team faced a series of complex and repeating challenges, including numerous staff and leadership changes in the Bolivian government; difficulties in securing commitment from all the key border agencies and initial challenges in bringing these parties together around a common agenda; and the outbreak of COVID-19 hampered progress at a time when a decree to establish the NTFC was closer than ever to pass.
- An Interministerial Resolution on the establishment of the NTFC was signed by all key government stakeholders on October 28, 2020, signifying a breakthrough in having all key parties agree on the establishment and structure of the NTFC. The new government, however, decided to halt this and revert to creating the NTFC through a Supreme Decree in an effort to make its creation more formal. The WBG commented on the draft Decree in April 2021, but it had not yet passed by the end of the reporting period.
- Support in other areas was halted in this reporting period to focus on creation of the NTFC because this would increase sustainability of other trade reforms.
- The WBG remains committed to supporting Bolivia in moving the trade facilitation agenda forward; however, after careful consideration, further technical assistance is on hold as of the end of 2020 until the NTFC is created.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support to Bolivia was complemented by the WCO's support to customs in aligning border management processes and procedures with the WTO TFA.



Cargo activity at the port
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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Country-specific Activities: Middle East

Lebanon

TFSP support to Lebanon

TFSP support to Lebanon ended in October 2020 due to political challenges. Prior to that, TFSP funds enabled the WBG to identify priority areas for support, including (A) the development of a customs strategy, (B) the development of a risk management strategy, (C) the development of a national electronic Single Window vision agreement leading to a holistic National Single Window framework, and (D) the undertaking of a Time Release Study. Lebanese customs has expressed an interest in receiving technical assistance in the abovementioned areas once the situation stabilizes.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

7.4 Risk Management

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- A customs strategy, the first Annual Work Plan for 2019–2020, and a risk management strategy were developed and submitted to customs for consideration in the previous reporting period. The World Bank team also reviewed and provided comments on the draft Customs Law.
- Due to recent political challenges, which led to a governance vacuum, the planned TRS was postponed, preventing the development of a measurement tool for the effectiveness of border management processes in Lebanon.
- The development of an enabling environment to assist with a future electronic Single Window (eSW) was also postponed due to insufficient political support and long-term commitment, as well as the lack of a reliable platform for inter-agency collaboration.
- Building on earlier TFSP support, the WBG team, in coordination with the EU, is currently drafting a trade facilitation position paper to capture policy gaps and needs in the aftermath of the Port of Beirut explosion.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP funds are complementary to financing received under the Umbrella Facility for Trade. Discussions are also ongoing about a larger lending project and on involvement in the Port of Beirut disaster reconstruction.



SOUTH ASIA

Regional Highlights of Achievements of TFSP Funded Work

In South Asia, TFSP provided support to Bangladesh and Nepal to comprehensively train government officials on a variety of trade-related subjects, to improve risk-management at the border crossing posts of Biratnagar and Birgunj in Nepal, as well as to implement an Online Licensing Module (OLM) in Bangladesh. In 2018, time to import at Biratnagar and Birgunj both fell by 0.4 days each, and time to export was both reduced by 1 and 0.8 days each, leading to a total of USD 985,000 in savings for the private sector in Nepal. The OLM reform in Bangladesh is estimated to generate at least USD 71,000 in savings annually from the reduction of fees associated with documents that have been eliminated with the introduction of OLM. Total savings from TFSP-supported reforms is around USD 1 million for the private sector.

Country-specific Activities

Bangladesh (inactive in FY21)

TFSP support to Bangladesh

TFSP support in Bangladesh complemented a larger WBG project, which ended in spring 2020. TFSP support was centered around strengthening Bangladesh's border agency coordination, risk management, legal framework, and other trade processes.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1** Publication
- 1.2** Information Available through Internet
- 7.4** Risk Management
- 7.6** Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7** Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 10.1** Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- An OLM was piloted in December 2018 and became fully operational in October 2019. It was launched in July 2019 with formal inauguration by the Commerce Minister. The full-fledged OLM includes new features per requirements of the Chief Controller of Imports & Exports. The OLM simplified the registration application process by providing online facilities to submit applications for import/export registration. This helped automate 55 services related to export and import, reduce the number of in-person visits and time associated with them, reduce documents, and deliver approximately USD 71,000 in savings in associated fees for the private sector.
- With TFSP support, the Ministry of Commerce launched a National Trade Portal to provide access to information in both English and Bangla for traders regarding the import and export processes. In FY21 alone, the portal had 34,078 users and 137,287 page views.
- Time Release Studies were completed at the port of Chittagong, air cargo, inland container depot, Dhaka, and Benapole. Through technical assistance and simplification of procedures, import clearance time was reduced from 12.2 days to 9.6 days at the port of Chittagong.
- The reform initiatives helped the country prepare for the implementation of a Single Window program, which was financed by a WBG loan.
- With TFSP support, Bangladesh was also successful in establishing an NTFC, adopting a risk management framework, and undertaking a comprehensive revision of its customs code.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

World Bank investment project financing of USD 74 million was leveraged for the Single Window program, trade portal sustainability, and risk systems (as complementary activities).

Nepal (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Nepal

TFSP support to Nepal complemented a regional WBG project that was completed in spring 2020. TFSP supported work on risk management, post-clearance audit, and transit.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.5 Post-Clearance Audit
- 11 Freedom of Transit

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- One component of TFSP support under the South Asia Regional Integration in Trade and Investment (SARTI) project was the preparation for the establishment of the Nepal-India Regional Trade & Transport Project (NIRTTP). While TFSP support to SARTI concluded in the last reporting period, the WBG is continuing to provide assistance to the National Single Window in order to further the efforts made under SARTI to streamline and harmonize trade-related processes and documentary requirements.

In particular, the WBG is providing support to Nepal on electronic country of origin certificates (COOs). There are three organizations responsible for issuing COOs—the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), and Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC). In this reporting period, the three organizations came together to standardize the format for an electronically issued COO under the National Single Window System’s (NNSW) License Permit Certificates and Other Module system (LPCO). In doing so, the organizations are moving away from using their own respective automation programs to issue COOs and agree to use only the NNSW going forward.

While the COOs will continue to be handled on paper for now, this is an important reform to prepare Nepal for when there is international agreement to use only electronic COOs.

- A stakeholder validation undertaken in 2019 suggested that the following improvements had taken place since the initial assessment was carried out in 2015: (A) increase in Category A measures from two to nine, (B) decrease in Category B measures from 15 to 13, and (C) decrease in Category C measures from 19 to 14.
- The TFSP provided support to risk management to the Department of Customs in Nepal since 2013. The analysis of ASYCUDA World (AW) transaction data revealed that green channel clearance steadily rose from less than one percent at both Birgunj and Biratnagar (2013/14) to more than 45 percent and 27 percent respectively by 2018/19. In addition, cumulative import and export clearance times have reduced by approximately 47 percent at both border posts, bringing a total of TFSP-supported savings of USD 985,000 for the private sector. These results were validated by private sector surveys as well as stakeholder consultations. Another factor contributing to reduction in clearance time, in Birgunj in particular, was the operationalization of an integrated check post (ICP).
- Inland container depot (ICD) operators at the borders in Birgunj and Biratnagar were tailored to enable interface with AW. As a result, when trucks enter Nepal from these land customs stations, all information (i.e., time, data, truck number, driver name, and commodity) is captured electronically to generate an entry gate/exit pass. From a control perspective, this entry and exit pass generation is a considerable improvement, because through AW, customs can now electronically account for all trucks and commodities that enter and exit the ICD. Also, clearance times can now be assessed using the entry and exit date and time in AW. This improved automated control will facilitate greater control of the border posts because of the reduced need to manually record data and to account for transactions, ultimately speeding up processing and enabling automated risk management.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The TFSP financed advisory activities informed a USD 99 million World Bank Nepal–India Regional Trade and Transport Project, including supporting the creation of a National Single Window and the Nepal Trade Portal.

Sri Lanka

TFSP support to Sri Lanka

There was only minor TFSP support to Sri Lanka in the reporting due to the prevailing political atmosphere and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The TFSP previously financed a TFA Gap Assessment, which helped secure additional funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The additional funding was for an implementation project as well as an action on the TFA in a USD 100 million development policy loan and a component on trade facilitation (including National Single Window implementation) in a planned investment project (potentially also USD 100 million) in FY19–20. The planned investments did not take place, however, principally due to the political situation in the country. In this fiscal year, the government of Sri Lanka has accepted technical support for the following articles through the DFAT project: Article 1.3 on enquiry points; Article 5.1 on notification of enhanced controls or inspections; and Articles 6.1 and 6.2 on general and specific disciplines on fees and charges imposed on or

in connection with importation and exportation. Discussions have been reinitiated on support relating to Article 10.4 on Single Window.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1** Publication
- 1.2** Information Available through Internet
- 7.4** Risk Management
- 10.4** Single Window
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- Client engagement was re-established on the National Single Window blueprint after a two-year hiatus. Following re-engagement with the new director general of customs and secretary to the treasury, a high-level steering committee has been established per WBG recommendations to take on the task.
- Support was initiated to the government of Sri Lanka on the implementation of enquiry points. A workshop was delivered with officials from 16 agencies as part of the initiative to orient stakeholders as well as gather information on the current status of enquiry points in Sri Lanka. Additional survey and dialogue are ongoing with 12 government agencies for the purposes of preparing a needs assessment report.
- In response to request from the NTFC secretariat, the World Bank has appointed two consultants to support and mentor the NTFC secretariat on the development of the roadmap for TFA implementation.



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Country-specific Activities

Botswana *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Botswana

The TFSP did not provide any support to Botswana in the reporting period. The WBG, with TFSP funding, supported Botswana in the launch of the TIP in March 2016. The TIP provides access to all relevant information from 16 agencies involved in the trade supply chain. The portal is hosted by the Botswana Investment Trade Center on behalf of all the government agencies involved in the import-export process. Through the portal, traders can get information on all the regulatory requirements for carrying out trade transactions. The portal also contains downloadable copies of all the documentation the traders will need.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet

Burundi *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Burundi

The TFSP did not provide any support to Burundi in the reporting period. Previous support complemented a larger investment climate project in the country and focused on risk management capacity building (training and implementation action plan jointly with the WCO around the customs intelligence function). The WBG and the WCO jointly helped Burundi roll out its AO program.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.5 Post-Clearance Audit
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators (with the WCO)

Eswatini

TFSP support to Eswatini

In this reporting period, the TFSP continued to provide support on risk management and coordinated border management. In the past, the TFSP supported the development and launch of the Eswatini Trade Information Portal, implementation of the national electronic trade Single Window, and strengthening the National Trade Facilitation Committee—all of which are part of the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap. The Roadmap guides implementation of trade facilitation reforms and identifies a number of other strategic initiatives). The implementation of the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap initiatives is targeted to benefit the trading community, including small and medium enterprises and women who play significant roles in trade in the country.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.3 Use of International Standards
- 10.4 Single Window
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The Trade Information Portal (TIP), developed with support from the TFSP, was launched in September 2020 with 430+ documents from over 22 different government agencies, including legal documents, procedures, measures, forms, trade agreements, and other key documents. The implementation of TIP helps Eswatini to move towards full compliance with the WTO TFA to make trade-related information accessible to the private sector. To enable sustainability of the TIP, the TFSP also supported signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between various agencies to share information on the Portal. Since its inception, the TIP has gained 3,477 users and had 20, 414 page views.
- The TFSP provided support to improve customs risk management, including the development of SOPs for new customs selectivity rules and implementation of risk selectivity to improve hit rates (the success rates from the interventions performed) and incremental revenue. Since implementation, the risk profile hit rate increased from 9.7 to 13.2 percent.
- The WBG team helped to develop risk reporting processes, integrating all customs controls through the creation and operationalization of a customs risk committee and risk agenda.
- With TFSP support, Eswatini automated the release of green lane declarations in the system, which helped to reduce the queue time for approximately 70 percent of the transactions channeled to the green lane.
- The project has been working on supporting the preparation for the National Single Window (NSW) and in this reporting period simplified “to be” business procedures to align with the requirements for the future National Single Window were implemented by three border agencies (Ministry of Agriculture, Dairy Board, and National Marketing and Agricultural Board).

- The TFSP-supported WBG team assisted with the mapping of Ngwenya border processes to inform the development of the coordinated border management (CBM) concept paper, which was adopted by the NTFC in November 2020. Furthermore, the CBM Action Plan was developed to complement the concept paper and focuses on specific activities and a timeline for delivery of a CBM blueprint. The WBG team supported the development of a CBM blueprint by drafting a new CBM model, including the legal, IT, HR, and capacity building requirements. The proposed model was presented to the NTFC in June 2021. The CBM task team adopted the Action Plan in May 2021.
- Support on CBM to the country strengthened Eswatini's border agency cooperation and effective functioning of the National Trade Facilitation Committee and facilitated the revival of committees on sanitary and phytosanitary issues and technical/non-tariff barriers to trade and streamlined them to the NTFC for reporting and coordination.
- The NTFC reconstituted itself as the National Monitoring Committee and approved the formation of the Technical Committee on NTBs under its structure. The technical committees now report to the National Monitoring Committee on a quarterly basis.
- In 2018, the TFSP-supported WBG team provided training on tariff classification. With the knowledge gained from the training and in collaboration with the WCO, Southern African Development Community, and Global Trade Solutions, the Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA) launched the e-Tariff book as part of the trade facilitation agenda, which will minimize incidences of misclassification. A link to the e-Tariff book was embedded on the Eswatini Trade Portal (vice versa) to enable easy access by all users within the trading community.

Ethiopia (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Ethiopia

The TFSP did not provide support to Ethiopia in the reporting period but will consider further support due to an increased need for assistance. Prior to the reporting period, TFSP-supported activities were implemented alongside the Ethiopia Investment Climate Program, which aimed to streamline and simplify high priority regulations, processes, and practices that are burdensome for trade. The first phase of the program addressed investment climate issues that are preventing investments and productivity growth. The trade component of this program aimed to decrease the time to export and import by addressing legal and regulatory constraints and introducing risk management, process simplification, and increased transparency of trade processes. TFSP-supported work contributed to the early preparations of the Single Window. TFSP support provided to Ethiopia has resulted in USD 61.4 million in savings for the private sector. Recommendations to create separate windows for clearance of goods helped to reduce lines and waiting time; roll-out of a new customs data management system made documents submission faster; support for the launch of a new railway between the most commonly used seaport in Djibouti and Addis Ababa helped to decongest road traffic and reduce inland transportation time for imports; improved risk-based inspections; electronic issuance of Certificates of Origin for certain destinations; and extension of hours of operations of Ethiopian and Djibouti Customs at the main land border-crossing at Galafi contributed to these savings.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 3 Advance Rulings
- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.2 Acceptance of Copies

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- A key result of TFSP-supported work in Ethiopia was the assistance provided in reducing physical inspections of imports, which led to a reduction from 60 percent to 30 percent.
- Support was provided on revising and drafting new legislation on customs, e-commerce, and special economic zones affecting trade facilitation. This new legislation led to streamlined procedures, including a one-stop shop that was set up for customs clearance in industrial parks.
- The roll-out of an electronic certificate of origin has eliminated the need to physically interact with customs for approval because registered exporters can now get a certificate instantly from their own offices. Eight documents were eliminated for imports and three for export. ASYCUDA++, an older customs management system, was replaced with a new, more advanced customs management system that offers more convenient user features and allows Internet-based access from any location. Altogether, these initiatives have led to an import-time reduction of six days and an export-time reduction of five days since 2016.
- A consolidated, detailed customs guide was published and is the first of its kind in Ethiopia.
- Eight commodity-based clearance windows were opened to facilitate import and export trade, enabling faster and prioritized clearance.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The TFSP contribution complemented the Ethiopia Trade Logistics Advisory Project, for which total bilateral financing (with UK Aid) was around USD 2 million, with a World Bank trade logistics investment loan of USD 150 million, expected to be re-activated in FY22.

Lesotho

TFSP support to Lesotho

The TFSP provides support to Lesotho to enhance coordinated border management and improve the Lesotho Trade Information Portal. The TFSP has also provided support for revising legislation, developing blueprints and frameworks, enhancing the implementation of ASYCUDA World, and strengthening the National Trade Facilitation Committee Secretariat.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.7 Trade Facilitation Measures for Authorized Operators
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.4 Single Window
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The WBG provided technical assistance to the NTFC's secretariat and the technical working group to notify to the WTO addendums to their Category Cs, as well as arrangements and progress in the provisions of technical assistance in February and April 2021.
- The Lesotho Trade Information Portal (LTIP) re-launched in December 2020 with TFSP support. The LTIP is a single integrated website that provides complete, timely, and up-to-date information about the Kingdom of Lesotho's import, export, and transit procedures. The portal is an important platform initiated by the government of Lesotho, with the support of World Bank Group, aimed at improving the access, predictability, and transparency of the country's trading laws and processes. The initiative is also in line with the government's WTO TFA commitments related to Article 1.
- The TFSP-supported team undertook a review of the Lesotho Revenue Authority's (LRA) risk management processes and assessed its readiness to support a holistic CBM risk management approach. A number of key areas for improvement were identified, and recommendations were developed for the LRA on CBM to improve risk management in 2021-2022. Nine border agencies are involved in the CBM project, including LRA (customs), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Police, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of National Security.
- The TFSP supported LRA with technical assistance to develop its preferred trader program by providing input to ensure alignment with international standards (e.g., the World Custom Organization on Authorized Economic Operator, World Trade Organization on Authorized Operator, and other standards). Specifically, the TFSP-supported team provided technical assistance to support new releases of the LRA's preferred trader program and their related policies during the period. The TFSP also provided support to identify proactive ways to increase levels of involvement in the preferred trader program and to improve compliance management within the LRA and across all borders.
- Building on the 2016 World Bank Validation and Reform Map Report and the 2018 Time Release Study findings, the TFSP supported reforms on CBM. Implementing a CBM in Lesotho is key to improve collaboration between border agencies and the private sector with the objective of moving and clearing goods faster and more cheaply. The CBM has been implemented at the main border at Maseru Bridge, which was led by the government. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has delayed the rollout of CBM to other borders in Lesotho.
- Support was provided for the implementation of a Lesotho National Single Window (LNSW) and on interconnectivity. The LNSW is a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single-entry point to fulfill all import, export, and transit related regulatory requirements. Specifically, the team supported:
 - The procurement process for the supply and installation of Single Window connectivity. Implementation of the LNSW is expected soon with the connectivity of three agencies—namely the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Lesotho Revenue Authority, and Ministry of Agriculture (Crops, Livestock, Research, and Marketing).
 - The development of the LNSW blueprint, which comprises a number of elements, including the business model, legal and regulatory framework, information technology infrastructure, and business process analysis. The LRA serves as the lead agency, and it has already established a project management office to manage all CBM related activities. The LNSW blueprint has been adopted by the NTFC.
 - The formation of a transitional steering committee within the National Trade Facilitation Committee, which will work with the suppliers from the moment that they come onboard. The committee comprises members with various expertise, including IT and legal expertise. Members also comprise of a private sector representative and a staff member from the Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) due to the close relationship between the LNSW and the LTIP, the latter being managed by the LNDC.

Liberia

TFSP support to Liberia

In this reporting period, Liberia officially submitted its ratification of the WTO TFA to the World Trade Organization with TFSP support. The WBG team continued to provide support to the NTFC and on the modernized Customs Code. TFSP support to Liberia in the previous reporting period included support to a National Single Window vision, a risk management program, process simplification, and pre-shipment inspection that contributed to more transparent and predictable cross-border trade for the private sector.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.3 Use of International Standards
- 10.4 Single Window
- 10.5 Pre-shipment Inspection
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The WTO TFA instrument of ratification was prepared and successfully deposited at the WTO. The TFSP-supported WBG team assisted the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry in completing the process of drafting the notification to the WTO and delivering the notification to the Liberian Ambassador in Switzerland. Liberia formally ratified the WTO TFA Agreement on April 29, 2021.
- Since the NTFC's establishment in August 2019, the WBG team, funded by TFSP, continued engagement with the NTFC's secretariat at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry. The team is working actively with the relevant ministries to implement changes to clearance processes.
- The WBG team worked with the customs administration on the development of draft regulations to the modernized Customs Code. The team supported customs' legal department to complete the drafting of ten prioritized regulations. The regulations were adopted in June 2021 by the Ministry of Finance.
- The WBG supported with the drafting of the Act to Ratify the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (known as the Revised Kyoto Convention-RKC). Following the deposit on December 14, 2020, of the country's Act of Ratification of the Revised RKC, Liberia became the 125th Contracting Party to this Convention, which entered into force for the country on March 14, 2021. This will enable Liberia to strengthen its customs procedures around the transit of goods.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support to Liberia is complementary to support from SIDA and USAID, among others, and regional activities under the West Africa Trade Facilitation Program.

Madagascar *(inactive in FY21)*

TFSP support to Madagascar

The TFSP did not provide any support to Madagascar in the reporting period. The TFSP-supported work in the previous reporting periods was part of the larger Investment Climate Reform Program (ICRP) in Madagascar, which closed in June 2020. After focusing primarily on the creation of an NTFC and on the review of fees and charges, the work consisted of technical assistance on the coordination of the execution of the NTFC's roadmap.

TFSP-supported work in Madagascar has generated USD 11.5 million in savings for the private sector by reversing the implementation of advanced cargo declarations. This recommendation prevented a duplicated process and averted additional unnecessary fees ranging from 50–80 euro per container.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

6.1 General Disciplines on Fees and Charges Imposed on or in Connection with Importation and Exportation

23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The TFSP-supported roadmap allowed the committee to map, coordinate, and engage with other donors in Madagascar on priority activities. This is especially critical as other donors in the country mostly engage in targeted activities. For instance, proper delineation of trade portal and border risk management activities provided a proper scope of intervention for the African Development Bank to then provide support as the NTFC's technical and financial partner on those priority activities.

Malawi

TFSP support to Malawi

The TFSP provides support to Malawi in improving its cross-border trading environment and aligning the country's facilitation systems and procedures with the WTO TFA, including support to the NTFC, implementation of a National Single Window (NSW), risk management at key border institutions, and legal reforms that enhance transparency and predictability in implementation of trade measures. The WBG regularly engages with private sector stakeholders in Malawi to build understanding of and confidence in trade facilitation reforms.

In this reporting period, the WBG supported the expedited clearance and release of COVID-19 imports, including vaccines, to assist the country's response to the pandemic. Support was also provided to the Control of Goods Act, risk management, border agency cooperation, National Single Window, and a Time Release Study Plus (TRS+). An impact evaluation survey is also being conducted to set baselines for measuring the benefits that are expected to accrue from the various initiatives that are being implemented.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1 Publication
- 1.2 Information Available through Internet
- 2.1 Opportunity to Comment and Information before Entry into Force
- 2.2 Consultations
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.4 Single Window
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- In conjunction with TradeMark East Africa, the TFSP-supported WBG team assisted the government of Malawi in profiling products needed for COVID-19 response—along with their associated importers—and designated these for expedited clearance and release in Malawi Revenue Authority’s (MRA) ASYCUDA World customs declaration processing system. The project also specifically profiled vaccines into a lane for expedited clearance, which enables release times of less than 30 minutes upon lodging of declarations.
- The TFSP supported the development and operationalization of the Control of Goods Act, which was published in the government gazette and became effective on July 10, 2020. As part of this effort, the TFSP supported dialogue with and between government agencies, which led to a review of an export ban on maize that has been in place since 2011. The ban was lifted in March 2021, although the decision was reversed in April, reflecting the complexity of the matter and requirements for further enhancement of capacity in the key ministries administering the Act. The TFSP-supported team is re-engaging with the government on this matter. The team also continued providing policy dialogue support for a rules-based implementation of the Act, which will enhance transparency and predictability in the implementation of trade measures, and hence prospects for financing, investment, and job creation.
- Preparatory work for implementation risk management by MRA in an Inland Examination Center pilot commenced and will be implemented in FY22. Expert services for ICT development and functional configuration were secured, and various system changes were made to enable implementation of the pilot. The intervention is expected to improve the MRA’s risk-based control of imports, reduce smuggling of goods, and improve revenue collection.
- The TFSP also provided support to procurement of equipment to set up a Central Processing Unit at the Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) as well as at Chiteka Airport where a pilot of MBS’ usage of ASYCUDA World will be implemented in FY22. Expert services for ICT development and functional configuration of MBS to start utilizing MRA’s system were also secured. The exercise is expected to improve MBS’ facilitation of trade—in close cooperation with MRA—pursuant to its objectives of safeguarding health and quality standards while improving revenue collection.
- A One Stop Border Post Bill was drafted by a consultant hired under the project and submitted to the government for its consideration, while work on the broader Trade Facilitation Bill continues. Once adopted, the Bill will enable creation of the Mchinji-Mwami One Stop Border Post, which is expected to reduce the time it takes for clearance and release procedures at the border, due to the current two stops when going across the two countries.
- The WBG supported the finalization of technical specifications for the National Single Window and provided on-the-ground support to an international adviser hired by the government to provide direction to the exercise. This enabled the procurement process for the firm to supply the system to commence.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges, whereby the WBG has not been able to host in-person meetings for many months. The MiFi routers provided to the NTFC in the last reporting period enabled virtual meetings to be hosted in this reporting period where follow-ups were needed on various activities. The routers also enabled the TRS+ working group to host regular meetings with the TFSP-funded contractor that is carrying out the TRS+.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

The TFSP-supported work complements a larger World Bank Southern Africa Trade and Transport Facilitation Program. TFSP funded work also fed into the preparation of an USD150 million Southern Africa Trade and Connectivity Project.

São Tomé and Príncipe (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to São Tomé and Príncipe

TFSP did not provide support to São Tomé and Príncipe in the reporting period, but the WBG recently received a new request for support to the government that is under consideration. Earlier support complemented a larger IFC advisory project to remove obstacles to sustainable tourism and to develop and facilitate trade internally and overseas.

The private sector savings from TFSP-supported work in São Tomé and Príncipe is an estimated USD 1.3 million. These savings were achieved primarily from the introduction of electronic documents and a single payment for fees, as well as the elimination of the requirement for the port exit note and tax certificate.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.2 Electronic Payment
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.2 Acceptance of Copies
- 10.4 Single Window
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Highlights of achievements of TFSP funded work

- The TFSP supported interagency risk management and helped consolidate multiple border inspections, in addition to implementing a phased Single Window for trade approach.
- The TFSP supported TFA implementation, including adopting risk management procedures, preparations for creating a National Trade Facilitation Committee jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and automating technical control agency systems in ASYCUDA World.

Sierra Leone

TFSP support to Sierra Leone

The WBG continued to support the NTFC, which was approved in FY19 with TFSP support. The TFSP-supported team also continued to assist with preparations for Sierra Leone's first Time Release Study; evaluation of ASYCUDA World reforms; and submission of Sierra Leone's Category B notifications to the WTO. Previously, TFSP support was provided to undertake a WTO Gap Assessment jointly with the WCO and UNCTAD.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 7.1 Pre-arrival Processing
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 7.9 Perishable Goods
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- The WBG and WCO provided support to Sierra Leone to conduct its first TRS to measure the average release time of imports processed through the QEII Quay port, which accounts for approximately 80 percent of Sierra Leone's trade volume. The in-country process was led by the National Revenue Authority (NRA) Customs Department, while the WBG and WCO provided remote support throughout the planning and execution of the TRS. Commercial and personal consignments was tracked over a seven-day period from arrival at the port, through the procedures, steps, and controls of government agencies and private entities, up to release of the consignment into the market. Consultations were held with customs and the other border agencies confirming their support for a virtual TRS. The NTFC also supported the revised approach at its meeting held in December 2020, which would provide a baseline to measure the impact from the reforms of the Trade Facilitation Strategy actions.
- The National Revenue Authority took onboard initial recommendations from the AW evaluation report presented by the WBG to the management of the NRA and developed a valuation control module in AW covering 15 essential products based on historical data. This action will reduce the differences in valuation of similar goods and the corresponding duties paid, supporting fairer trade. Staff was trained on use of the module, and customs held sensitization sessions for customs brokers. The TFSP-supported team revised the recommendations from the AW evaluation and briefed the NTFC at its meeting held in December 2020. The module will go live early next reporting period.
- The chair and co-chair of the NTFC agreed on a roadmap in July 2020 to fully operationalize the NTFC by setting up the NTFC secretariat at the NRA and assigning two government staff to the secretariat. The project team developed terms of reference for a NTFC secretariat officer and an assistant NTFC secretariat officer to support the chair and co-chair to coordinate the operations of the NTFC, provide secretariat support to the NTFC and its sub-committees, and support with tasks related to implementation of the TFA reforms. This action is aimed at strengthening the operational capacity and sustainability of the NTFC. The draft TORs were reviewed and approved by the NTFC.
- Sierra Leone was required to notify to the WTO the definitive implementation dates for its TFA Category B measures by February 21, 2021. The WBG team supported the NTFC in determining the dates by reviewing the status of implementation of the activities in the Trade Facilitation Strategy with the responsible government agencies and business associations in the NTFC. As a result, Sierra Leone successfully submitted the definitive dates for implementation for Category B measures on February 18, 2021.

- The project liaised with representatives of select industries in order to confirm the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the efficiency of their supply chains. Virtual meetings were held with the Sierra Leone Association of Manufacturers and the Sierra Leone Pharmaceutical Business Association, who confirmed that their trade facilitation priorities were still in alignment with the actions in the Trade Facilitation Strategy.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

TFSP support complements a WBG lending project to implement ASYCUDA World in Sierra Leone.

Togo (*inactive in FY21*)

TFSP support to Togo

TFSP support to Togo has completed and informed a WBG lending project to strengthen customs processes and improve trucking areas. The TFSP previously supported two main initiatives: (A) the Trade Information Portal, and (B) efforts to further advance the capacity and effectiveness of the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.1** Publication
- 1.2** Information Available through Internet
- 23.2** National Committee on Trade Facilitation

Zambia

TFSP support to Zambia

The TFSP supports Zambia in improving trade facilitation and border management procedures, which will expedite the movement, release, and clearance of goods by aligning trade procedures with selected measures of the WTO TFA. This includes support to the NTFC and support on risk management, coordinated border management, and COVID-19 response among other trade facilitation activities. Zambia was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period, and the government shifted its focus to COVID-19 response. While engagement was challenging due to the pandemic, the TFSP-supported WBG team continued to engage with the government through virtual meetings and capacity building provided through reports and assessments.

Support to Zambia has already seen significant results. Private sector savings of USD 1.7 million were achieved through reductions in time to import and export (by four and two days, respectively). Specifically, TFSP-supported reforms on the introduction of the more advanced customs data management system (ASYCUDA World) and connection of border regulatory agencies to it; risk management, including joined inspections at the border; reduction of mandatory processing time limit at the border; and extension of hours of operation in main Zimbabwe-Zambia land border post (Chirundu) generated these time and cost savings.

Main areas of technical assistance (TFA work priorities) that have been provided over the years

- 1.3 Enquiry Points
- 7.2 Electronic Payment
- 7.4 Risk Management
- 7.6 Establishment and Publication of Average Release Times
- 8 Border Agency Cooperation
- 10.1 Formalities and Documentation Requirements
- 10.3 Use of International Standards
- 10.4 Single Window
- 10.5 Pre-shipment Inspection
- 23.2 National Committee on Trade Facilitation

FY21 update on key activities

- As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread, project implementation was impacted in Zambia due to a lack of ICT equipment and software issues. TFSP supported the purchase of 30 laptops for members of the NTFC to allow for continuity of support in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The TFSP-supported team rose awareness of the program and the NTFC's work to internal and external stakeholders by promoting the Zambia Trade Information Portal and the articles of the WTO TFA that are being implemented in the country. Channels used to reach stakeholders included radio, TV programming, virtual meetings, and outreach to border towns (Nakonde, Chirundu, Kasumbalesa, and Mwami).
- Support was provided to draft the NTFC Communication Action Plan as well as help inform public relations officers about this plan.
- An NTFC Steering Committee meeting was held to discuss the increase in roadblocks and checkpoints in comparison to the neighboring countries, which negatively impact the transit time spent by truckers in Zambia. The NTFC Steering Committee is supported by the WBG, and the WBG is an active participant in the steering committee meetings.
- The WBG team conducted a second Time Release Study in February 2021 at the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport, Victoria Falls, Livingstone, and Kazungula border posts to measure the actual time required for the release and/or clearance of goods. The findings/recommendations of the report were presented to the NTFC and Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.
- A coordinated border management concept note was produced to improve collaboration between border agencies and the private sector. The concept note was presented to the NTFC and was ratified in December 2020 for the recommendations to be implemented. A CMB Action Plan was also developed, finalized, and presented to the NTFC.
- The TFSP also supported the establishment of the CBM Working Group under the NTFC to drive the process of developing a new model of border operation and its implementation, as well as facilitated five CBM Working Group meetings to reach consensus on a new model of border operation following an exercise on business process mapping and analysis. The working group comprises 17 relevant border agencies and private sector stakeholders. The WBG also hosted a stakeholder workshop to review the Border Management and Trade Facilitation Act No. 12 of 2018 in relation to developing CBM in Zambia. As a result of these activities, a draft "As-Is" Business Process Mapping and Analysis Report and the CBM: A Future Border Model Report were delivered.

- Assistance was also provided to establish a National Risk Management Working Group—which has been ratified by the NTFC—to facilitate the implementation of risk management systems across the 16 border agencies in Zambia and to meet the requirements of the WTO TFA. The working group met virtually in October 2020 to identify and confirm its three strategic priorities: implementation of an integrated national risk management framework; implementation of a national risk information system; and development of a regional center for excellence. The working group is expected to reduce the inspection burden on businesses importing and exporting products into Zambia, as well as increase their competitiveness and growth potential.
- The TFSP-supported team also developed a draft Integrated Risk Management Guideline for Border Agencies and continued to support the development of an integrated risk management guideline for all border agencies, which will be made available for stakeholder review. The guideline is intended to standardize risk management frameworks across all border agencies and assist in consistent applications of risk management principles at the border. The guideline will be piloted across three agencies in the next reporting period.
- The WBG—with TFSP support—reviewed the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program, Zambia Compulsory Standard Agency (ZCSA) Annual Import Certification, and Zambia Metrology Agency (ZMA) Blue Lane Program Criteria, as well as reviewed MOUs between ZRA/ZMA and ZRA/ZCSA; and made recommendations to enhance the AEO program beyond ZRA to include ZCSA and ZMA. The AEO program is being expanded to reflect the national integrated risk management framework and to ensure that customers at the border can benefit from its features consistently across all border agencies. The AEO program will also allow more coordinated/joint inspections at the borders involving the participating agencies. A pilot study strategy will be developed to test and evaluate the enhanced AEO program in the next reporting period.
- The WBG has confirmed a reduction in the percentage of cargo inspected by the project clients Zambia Metrology Agency (ZMA) and Zambia Compulsory Standard Agency (ZCSA) from 80 to 65 percent. This was achieved due to both agencies' risk profiling products and allowing some products to be directed to the "blue," "green," or "yellow" zone at the border, with no inspections or only document reviews.
- Despite limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, local staff continued to engage with stakeholders and attended key meetings, including traveling the country (after receiving government approval to travel) to observe COVID-19 related challenges at the borders.

Leverage or complementarity of funds

Early TFSP-supported work in Zambia led to an additional USD 1.6 million USAID grant for the TFSP to support the Zambian government.



Container ship
© Pexels/Martin Dambult



Peer-to-peer learning event
© WTO

Annex B

Knowledge and Management Activities

I. Knowledge Management Products

A. ONLINE TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT TRACKING TOOL

The TFA Tracking Tool [website](#) serves as a mechanism for countries to track their full and effective implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and report on their progress over time. The website underwent a re-design during the previous reporting period to support visualization of the enhanced, granular methodology. Data for 35 countries is available on the website, of which **31** Trade Facilitation Support Program–supported countries are currently available for viewing by approved users on the website. The overall average alignment score for these 31 TFSP-supported countries is **46.6 percent**. Data for four other countries are also available on the website, demonstrating the tool’s usefulness beyond the TFSP.

The innovative online tool was promoted by the WBG team and country clients (including NTFCs) in a number of webinars and virtual meetings as a valuable tool for tracking TFA implementation, particularly during the pandemic and various lockdown periods when online collaboration and tools were welcomed more than ever. There were 424 new visitors¹⁶ to the website in FY21, compared to 234 visitors in FY20 and 104 visitors in FY19.

¹⁶ The number of first-time users between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.



B. ONLINE COLLABORATION PORTAL: TRADE INFORMATION PORTALS

The [online collaboration website](#) was launched in previous reporting periods for client countries to share experiences about Trade Information Portals (TIP). Over **45 members** from client countries, WBG staff, and Trade Information Portal experts use the platform, which leverages the WBG Collaboration for Development (C4D) online software. During the reporting period, the team shared experiences to inform the launch of new portals, including the following **blog**:

“Lesotho launches a ‘newly designed, with a new look and feel’ Trade Portal. Another step towards full compliance to WTO TFA.”

TFSP also funded an expert to lead the development of the UNECE standards on trade portals that will be published in the next reporting period.

C. ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES LIBRARY: TRADE INFORMATION PORTALS

Communication plays an important role in the launch of Trade Information Portals, as it helps raise awareness among exporters and importers about the existence of the online information source, its benefits, and ways to use it. During the reporting period, the WBG team, with TFSP support, consolidated lessons learned on publicity from the launch of Trade Information Portals in various countries. The TIP communications library was created



to house resources and materials for communications planning (implementation plan, project schedule, financial tracker, monthly report), examples of communications products (print, multimedia, press, launch event, images, mock-ups), guidance on branding, terms of reference and briefs for vendors, and search engine optimization for internal users. Cheat sheets were also developed to guide internal and external teams on the implementation of TIP communication campaigns. The resources were shared with teams to support the launches of Trade Information Portals in Lesotho, Eswatini, and Mongolia. The library has also been leveraged by the WBG team supporting the launch of the upcoming Trade Information Portal in Somalia (late 2021/early 2022).

The WBG team also explored ways to achieve economies of scale with the instructional videos that support the launch of the portals and built a template for an animated video, which has since been leveraged by several client countries, including [Eswatini](#) and [Mongolia](#).

II. Select Events Supported by the Trade Facilitation Support Program (Peer-to-Peer Learning, Policy Dialogue)

A. AUTHORIZED ECONOMIC OPERATORS CERTIFIED IN MONTENEGRO—PODGORICA, MONTENEGRO, SEPTEMBER 2020

On September 16th, Montenegro’s Customs Administration awarded its first AEO to [Neregla](#)—the country’s largest distribution company of consumer products and pharmaceuticals goods. Since October 2018, the WBG has supported customs to implement an AEO program, based on the European Union example, which enhances supply-chain security and facilitates trade by simplifying customs processes and procedures.

To become certified, traders are assessed and accredited based on their trade compliance, operating systems, communication and information quality, and international supply chain security. Companies are also required to have clean financial records and a good track record with customs.

In the region, the WBG, with TFSP support, is also supporting the establishment of AEO programs in Albania and Kosovo, as well as the implementation of a Trusted Traders program in the Kyrgyz Republic. The initiative aims to pave the way for mutual recognition—and ultimately harmonization—of nationally accredited AEO firms.

News article:

<http://www.upravacarina.gov.me/vijesti/232984/Direktor-Uprave-carina-Vladan-Jokovic-dodijelio-je-prvo-odobrenje-za-status-ovlascenog-privrednog-subjekta-AEO.html>



Press conference to announce the third certified AEO in Kosovo
© Kosovo Customs

B. KOSOVO CERTIFIES THIRD AUTHORIZED ECONOMIC OPERATOR—PRISTINA, KOSOVO, SEPTEMBER 2020

On September 18th, Kosovo’s Customs Administration awarded its third AEO certification to “FRUTEX” Golden Eagle—a producer and exporter of soft drinks. Frutex is the first company to be awarded the AEO-S (Security) status—an advanced qualification that requires additional security standards and guarantees mutual recognition in the region.

With WBG support, the AEO program was launched in Kosovo in October 2019 with two companies certified. The scheme is based on the European Union example, which enhances supply chain security and facilitates trade by simplifying customs processes and procedures.

News article:

<https://dogana.rks-gov.net/certifikohet-edhe-nje-kompani-kosovare-si-operator-i-autorizuar-ekonomik/>

C. LAUNCH OF THE ESWATINI TRADE INFORMATION PORTAL—MBABANE, ESWATINI, SEPTEMBER 2020

On September 30th, the government of Eswatini launched a [Trade Information Portal](#) to make it simpler, faster, and less costly for the private sector to move goods across borders. The portal was launched in Mbabane with local stakeholders. Since COVID-19 restrictions made it difficult for some stakeholders to attend in person, the event was also livestreamed on YouTube. The TIP contains 430+ documents from over 22 different government agencies, including legal documents, procedures, measures, forms, trade agreements, and other key documents. The portal was developed with support from the WBG via the TFSP. It helps Eswatini to move toward full compliance with the WTO TFA to make trade-related information accessible to the private sector.

Portal:

<https://www.eswatinitradeportal.com>

Launch event livestream (YouTube):

<http://wrlt.bg/s3kv50By3HN>

<https://kig.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Eswatini-Trade-Information-Portal-Launch-Invitation.pdf>

Media articles:

<http://www.times.co.sz/business/130155-430-documents-in-trade-portal.html>

<http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=13895>

<http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=11783>

<https://independentnews.co.sz/local-news/4553/eswatini-trade-information-portal-will-provide-a-simpler-faster-and-lower-cost-trade-facilitation-environment-for-businesses/>

Social media:

<https://twitter.com/EswatiniGovern1/status/1311246181343924226?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/EswatiniGovern1/status/1311246189824823299?s=20>

D. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), SEPTEMBER 2020

On September 30th, the WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to share experiences and information. The WBG presented on the trade facilitation response to the COVID-19 crisis and shared experiences from TFSP-supported countries.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

Presentation:

World Bank — WB response to COVID-19 Crisis



Stakeholders at the launch of the Eswatini Trade Information Portal
© Government of Eswatini

E. STDF WEBINAR: EPHYTO: SOLUTIONS ON SAFE TRADE AND PLANT PRODUCTS—VIRTUAL, SEPTEMBER 2020

The WBG was invited to participate in a webinar hosted by the STDF on “ePhyto: Solutions on Safe Trade in Plants and Plant Products” on September 23rd. The ePhyto solution—driving the exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificates—is being led by the IPPC under an STDF project, backed by international organizations, including the WBG, donors, and industry associations. The event was attended by over 260 participants.

As a result of ePhyto, many governments from around the world, including those of Ghana, Samoa, and Sri Lanka together with their private sector—including small businesses—are benefitting from improved transparency, reduced trade costs, and quicker trade flows. Over 80 countries are currently using the ePhyto system, and 11,000 certificates are now being exchanged every month. It is envisaged that the system could handle up to 100,000 certificates each day. The WBG made a presentation on lessons from implementation of the ePhyto system in client countries, including those supported by TFSP.

Panelists agreed on the need for further harmonization, particularly for food safety and veterinary certificates; integration with other electronic systems, such as Single Windows, customs, blockchains, etc.; and further collaboration between international standard settings bodies and with other international agencies active in the area of trade-related electronic certification.

Event page:

<https://standardsfacility.org/ephyto-webinar>

Webinar recording:

https://worldtradeorganization.zoom.us/rec/play/Pv_ZxUjfM0tzhp7J1byNWHr7qBI1tqqX3-PffrxQjYU37R3BAKaz1U7pDVe7rIXxUkLvGV0Q5FhCy0.2IXbMU3xcexlFjRi?startTime=1600865471000&_x_zm_rtaid=DyTUw_kdTC-n7zWCargmdA.1626799443563.f81d2b92688ce8f4ac6b776ca3f06db&_x_zm_rhtaid=530

F. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), OCTOBER 2020

From October 20–21st, the WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to present the status of ratification and the notification process. Presentations were also made from various members on different thematic areas. The government of Eswatini presented recent trade facilitation reforms, including the launch of the new Trade Information Portal, which was supported by the WBG.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

Meeting report (WBG page 20):

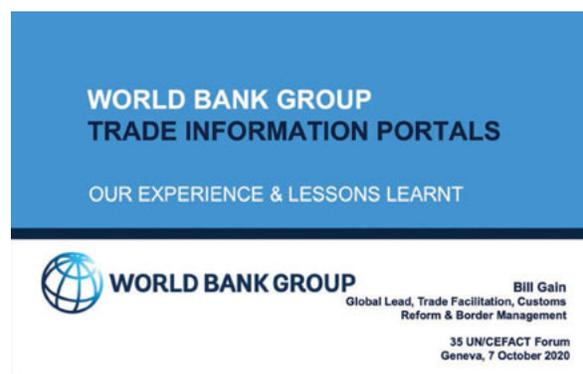
<https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/G/TFA/W29.pdf&Open=True>

Presentation:

Eswatini, Kingdom of — Trade Facilitation Programme and Trade Facilitation Information Portal (ETIP)

G. UN/CEFACT FORUM WEBINAR ON TRADE INFORMATION PORTALS—VIRTUAL, OCTOBER 2020

On October 7th, the WBG participated in the 35th UN/CEFACT—the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business—Virtual Forum. The focus of the webinar was on “Trade Information Portals: Sharing Implementation Experiences and Best Practices.” The WBG presented its work on Trade Information Portals as an instrument for trade facilitation and highlighted practical experiences from various countries worldwide, including TFSP-supported countries.



Event page:

https://www.unece.org/trade/cefact/35thuncefactforum_webinar-tip

Brochure and agenda:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_forums/2020_October_Geneva/TIP-Conf-Brochure.pdf

World Bank Group presentation:

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_forums/2020_October_Geneva/PPTs/7Oct_1-4-Gain-TIP.pdf



H. WEBINAR: ENSURING RESILIENCE OF PERISHABLE TRADE IN TIMES OF COVID-19—VIRTUAL, OCTOBER 2020

On October 20th, [Freshfel Europe](#)—a forum for the European fresh fruit and vegetable chain—together with the WBG, organized a webinar on “Ensuring resilience of perishable trade in times of Covid-19—which trade facilitation steps are needed now?” The webinar was attended by 19 Freshfel members.

The WBG team presented the World Trade Organization’s [Trade Facilitation Agreement](#) and the articles relevant to the sector, [technical assistance](#) available for countries implementing the TFA via the TFSP, and how TFA measures can facilitate the trade of perishable products and reduce shocks caused by unexpected events, such as the pandemic. The presentation was followed by roundtable discussions where participants shared insights on the key barriers and solutions to address trade challenges during and post-COVID-19.

The preliminary results of a joint survey on perishable goods conducted in collaboration with the WBG, Freshfel, and [Union Fleurs](#) were also presented. The survey aims to better understand the border bottlenecks that contribute to the damage, waste, or loss of perishable goods.

Survey:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/5971855/Survey-on-Trade-of-Perishable-Goods-v1>

Freshfel event social media:

<https://twitter.com/Freshfel/status/1318461365946908674?s=20>

<https://www.facebook.com/Freshfel/photos/a.689495071230569/1637789423067791/?type=3>

I. CARICOM REGIONAL PRIVATE SECTOR DIALOGUE: COVID-19 CHALLENGES AND TRADE FACILITATION—VIRTUAL, OCTOBER 2020

On October 28th, the WBG team participated in a regional dialogue on the COVID-19 crisis and trade facilitation for private sector stakeholders in [CARICOM](#)—a group of twenty countries in the Caribbean. The joint initiative was organized by the CARICOM Secretariat, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECES) Commission, and the Caribbean Network of Chambers of Commerce.

The webinar focused on trade facilitation obstacles, concerns, priorities, and successes in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlighted best practices that have been adopted by governments, international organizations, and development partners globally to facilitate trade and ensure business continuity amidst the pandemic. The WBG was invited to share trade facilitation best practices and policies and showcase some of its recent initiatives and programs that support and empower businesses in the wake of COVID-19.

Event page:

<https://www.caribbeanchambers.net/upcoming-events/regional-private-sector-dialogue-on-trade-facilitation>

J. CUSTOMS TARGETING CENTER OPENS IN KYRGYZ REPUBLIC—BISHKEK, KYRGYZ REUBLIC, OCTOBER 2020

On October 24th, the Kyrgyz Customs Administration formally opened a new Targeting Center aimed at digitalizing the business processes carried out by the Customs Service. The inaugural event was attended by the acting Prime Minister, representatives of government agencies, and international donors. The initiative was supported by a number of international partners including the WBG, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

K. STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), OCTOBER 2020

The WBG participated in the STDF working group meeting, which brings together partners and donors to share experiences and take stock of the facility’s reach and results. The WBG team informed members of funding made available to respond to COVID-19 and facilitate recovery in developing countries, including via the TFSP. It highlighted the critical role of trade facilitation and electronic certification for free movement of medical

and food products across borders. The WBG also highlighted the collaboration with the IPPC Secretariat to transform the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool into a virtual device through a pilot project in Nepal.

Meeting notes:

https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_WG_Summary_Report_Oct20_FINAL.pdf

L. WORKSHOPS TO ENDORSE ROADMAP FOR NATIONAL SINGLE WINDOW FOR TRADE IN ALBANIA, NORTH MACEDONIA, AND SERBIA—WESTERN BALKANS (VIRTUAL), NOVEMBER 2020

The WBG held a series of virtual meetings with the governments of Serbia (November 4th), North Macedonia (November 11th), and Albania (November 18th) to discuss their readiness for implementation of the National Single Window in their respective countries. The Single Window will automate all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements and enable traders to fulfil all trade procedures online. It is expected to significantly enhance the efficiency, speed, and transparency of trade-related procedures and documentation, thereby fostering the competitiveness of private sector firms. The Single Window initiative aligns with the vision of a common regional market across the Western Balkans.

News articles:

<https://www.monitor.al/nje-dritare-e-vetme-lehtesiper-biznesin/>
<http://www.customs.gov.mk/index.php/mk/informacii-mk/vesti-mk/2712-carinskata-uprava-nositel-i-koordinador-za-vospostavuvanje-na-noviot-nacionalen-ednoshalterski-sitem-na-republika-severna-makedonija>
<https://vlada.mk/node/23157>

Social media coverage:

<https://www.facebook.com/IFCeca/posts/3532949060123340>
https://twitter.com/IFC_ECA/status/1333758106988326917

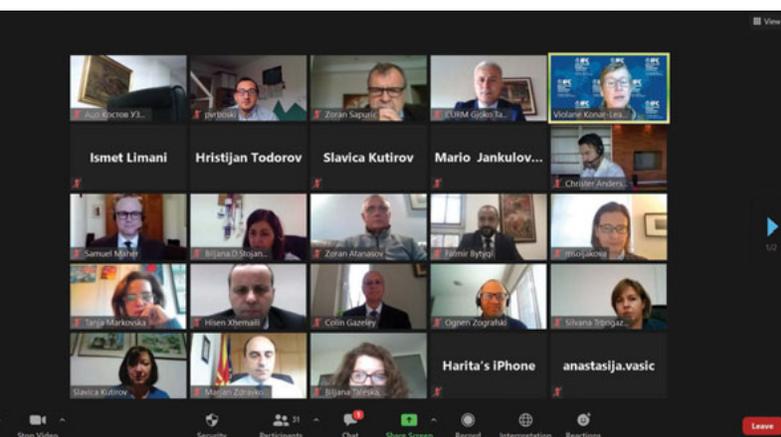
M. WEBINAR SERIES: RISK PRIORITIZATION IN PHYTOSANITARY MANAGEMENT—WESTERN BALKANS, NOVEMBER 2020

The WBG team, with TFSP support, developed a step-by-step [guide](#) to assist plant health services in prioritizing their border interventions to focus on high-risk trade. The guide presents information on risk analysis, risk prioritization, and risk-based inspection. On November 10th, the WBG team hosted a webinar for over 65 sanitary and phytosanitary officials from the Western Balkans to introduce the topic and share the guide. Two follow-up sessions were held on November 17th and 18th to provide a deeper dive focus on food safety and plant health.

The implementation of risk-based border measures is key to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of plant protection services. It is also important for countries seeking to meet international obligations in facilitating safe trade, such as the World Trade Organization’s [Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement](#) and [Trade Facilitation Agreement](#).

Publication:

<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/186841605045083824/WBG-Risk-Prioritization-in-Phytosanitary-Management-FINAL-web.pdf>





N. LAUNCH EVENT: LESOTHO TRADE INFORMATION PORTAL—MASERU, LESOTHO, NOVEMBER 2020

On November 9th, the government of Lesotho launched a new and improved Trade Information Portal with WBG support. The portal is a web-based platform, which makes all cross-border trade information available at the stroke of a key, including laws, administrative procedures, guidance notes, forms, licenses, permits, applicable laws, and tariff information. It contains over 260 regulations and procedures from 22 government agencies. The portal aims to make import and export activity easier and less costly for businesses in Lesotho.

Lesotho Trade Information Portal:
www.lesothotradeportal.com

News articles:

<http://lestimes.com/govt-revamps-trade-portal/>
<https://www.thereporter.co.ls/2020/08/25/lesotho-intensifies-online-efforts-to-boost-trade/>
<https://www.thepost.co.ls/news/lesotho-re-launches-trade-portal/>
<https://news4u.co.ls/lesotho-online-trade-gets-a-boost/>

Social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Government-Organization/Lesotho-Trade-Information-Portal-104992577997376/>
<https://twitter.com/IFCAfrica/status/1336696037038301186>
<https://www.facebook.com/IFCAfrica/posts/3778422855513404>

Social media re-tweeted by [AfricaUpdates](#), an independent news account with over 123K followers.

O. LAUNCH EVENT: MONGOLIA TRADE INFORMATION PORTAL—VIRTUAL, DECEMBER 2020

Mongolia’s trade environment and procedures are set to become more predictable and transparent with the launch of a [Trade Information Portal](#). The new portal, launched with support from the WBG, aims to make import and export activity easier and reduce costs for Mongolian businesses, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Led by the Mongolian Customs General Administration, the portal is a web-based database system (in English and Mongolian) that makes all international trade-related information available at the stroke of a key, including laws, administrative procedures, guidance notes, forms, licenses, permits, applicable laws, and tariff information. The portal also provides information on trade agreements and international organizations or institutions supporting overseas business expansion, as well as tools enabling exporters to perform trade analysis, desk research, and market surveys.

Mongolia Trade Information Portal:
<http://www.mongoliatradingportal.gov.mn>

Press release:

<https://pressroom.ifc.org/all/pages/PressDetail.aspx?ID=26103>

Social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/101705734573064/posts/423223465754621/?d=n>
<https://www.facebook.com/101705734573064/posts/418597739550527/?d=n>



A SINGLE SOURCE
 FOR ALL
 CROSS-BORDER
 TRADE INFORMATION
 GOING LIVE ON DEC 11



IFC News Hub:

<https://worldbankgroup.sharepoint.com/mcas.ms/sites/IFCNewsHub/SitePages/Greener-Pastures-for-Mongolia.aspx?deliveryName=DM87783>

AmCham Mongolia (American Chamber of Commerce):

<http://www.amcham.mn/dnw/daily-news-wire-for-december-14-2020/>

Mongolia Chamber of Commerce:

<https://www.mongolchamber.mn/a/502>

Mongolia Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?p=53388>

UK Embassy in Mongolia:

<http://embassyofmongolia.co.uk/?p=3509&lang=en>

Local media:

<https://news.mn/r/2382849/>

<https://mongolia.gogo.mn/r/wmj9m>

<https://montsame.mn/en/read/247898>

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/11/c_139582190.htm

<https://ikon.mn/n/22go>

P. LAUNCH EVENT: VIETNAM FREE TRADE AGREEMENT PORTAL—HANOI, VIETNAM, DECEMBER 2020

On December 23rd, Vietnam’s Ministry of Trade and Industry launched a [Free Trade Agreement Portal](#). The online portal provides the business community with information about the country’s commitments in free trade agreements (FTA). It enables online access to detailed, clear, and simple guidance and eliminates the need for businesses to search themselves or contact different agencies for the required information.

The main features include: tax commitments, rules of origin, services, and investment under FTAs with partners for preferential treatment; data and characteristics of markets engaging in a FTA with Vietnam, required procedures for imports/exports and licensing; updated action plans of Vietnamese authorities to implement FTAs; updated legal documents issued by regulators to implement FTAs; and updated communication activities, such as conferences, seminars, training courses, and publications to support businesses. The data and information are available in both Vietnamese and English. Initial funding and TFA technical assistance were provided by the WBG, followed by a grant from DFAT for the portal.

Link:

<https://fta.moit.gov.vn>



Video from launch event:

<https://www.facebook.com/worldbankvietnam/videos/680978252582472>

(News article/launch event/remarks by CD)

News articles:

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-launches-first-ever-free-trade-agreement-portal/193660.vnp>

<http://hanoitimes.vn/vietnam-launches-free-trade-agreement-portal-315524.html>

<https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/NjQ4MjU4Mjlx>

<https://hkmb.hktdc.com/en/NjQ4MjU4Mjlx/hktdc-research/VIETNAM-Free-Trade-Information-Portal-Officially-Launched>

<http://ven.vn/vietnam-launches-portal-on-free-trade-agreements-44176.html>

<https://en.nhandan.vn/business/item/9428502-vietnam-launches-portal-on-free-trade-agreements.html>

<https://www.vietnamchamber.nl/vietnam-launches-first-ever-free-trade-agreement-portal/>

<https://vovworld.vn/en-US/spotlight/vietnam-launches-first-web-portal-on-free-trade-agreements-934742.vov>

Q. CEFTA WEEK: PANDEMICS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES—VIRTUAL, DECEMBER 2020

The annual **Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Week** was held from December 14–17th under the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This year’s conference was themed: “CEFTA in pandemics: Achievements and Challenges.” The event was held virtually, with a small circle of speakers and participants present in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 100 representatives from Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo participated in this year’s conference. It brought together representatives of the CEFTA parties, the business community, and international organizations to discuss trade implications due to

the pandemic situation for the CEFTA parties, as well as challenges and opportunities for economic recovery. Panel discussions focused on: regional economic cooperation—milestones of the region’s response to COVID-19 and path for a lasting economic recovery; CEFTA mutual recognition programs: potential for boosting trade in CEFTA; e-commerce: pathway to economic recovery of the CEFTA region; and key achievements and the way forward.

The meeting partly focused on trade facilitation. The WBG TFSP team was invited to participate and highlight some of the work underway, including the blueprint for the Single Window in the Western Balkans.

Event page:

<https://cefta.int/conference/>

Agenda:

<https://cefta.int/conference/#1606729684916-522e2370-3efa>

Social media:

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1336984590716723202?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1338066691172016128?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1338576600334471175?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1339590052158980097?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1339606666879389696?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1339611405138456581?s=20

https://twitter.com/CEFTA_/status/1339863542762250241?s=20

<https://www.facebook.com/ceftatreaty/videos/cefta-week-2020-jahorina-bih-december-2020/738353143488912/>

Articles:

<https://www.wb6cif.eu/2020/12/09/cefta-week-2020-conference-invitation/>

R. WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION WEBINAR SERIES: MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES THROUGH A CRISIS AND BEYOND—VIRTUAL, JANUARY 2021

The WBG was invited by the WCO to participate in a global webinar series: “Managing HR through a crisis and beyond.” The purpose was to create a platform for sharing and collecting international best practices

relating to the role of customs HR professionals in managing the COVID-19 crisis and potentially future similar crises. The webinars focused on crisis management and explored the critical role of customs HR professionals in leading their organization’s response, while keeping staff safe, committed, and productive in supporting organizational performance.

The event drew on the experience and lessons learned from the international customs community as well as international private and public organizations around the world (including Customs Administrations DGs and Customs HRM Directors, international organizations, academia, private sector, and consultants).

The webinars were delivered on January 19th, 20th, and 21st using the Kudo platform with simultaneous translation (English and French), live presentations, and Q & A sessions. The sessions were recorded and made available to the global customs community and WCO partners. The WBG made a presentation at the event and co-wrote a blog with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on managing organizational performance during a crisis, like COVID-19.

Event page:

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/events/event-history/2021/wco-global-webinar-series.aspx>

Event website:

<https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=593216&>

Agenda:

<https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/wcoglobalwebinar/1100596/>

Presentations:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ulcf9f_JPWBDXmt5_xFuExSFKNHr6kM

Blog (co-authored by WBG):

<https://mag.wcoomd.org/magazine/wco-news-95-june-2021/managing-organizational-performance-in-a-crisis-period/>

S. RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS AND SURVEY ON TRADE FACILITATION CHALLENGES—UZBEKISTAN, JANUARY 2021

The WBG is providing trade facilitation advisory support to the Uzbekistan State Customs Committee and Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade. Outputs include

an update of the TFA gap assessment carried out in 2018–2019, which was supported by TFSP; a gap analysis of the National Single Window; the preliminary declaration procedure; an analysis and capacity building in risk management and post clearance audit; and a time release study.

A series of workshops were held in January, including three workshops on best practices in risk management and an introductory workshop on the time release study—jointly implemented with Switzerland’s State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)-WCO.

T. LAUNCH EVENT: NEPAL SINGLE WINDOW AND TRADE INFORMATION PORTAL—KATHMANDU, NEPAL, JANUARY 2021

In previous reporting periods, the TFSP provided project preparation support to the South Asia Regional Integration in Trade and Investment (SARTI) project that has now closed. The SARTI project provided a foundation for the Nepal-India Regional Trade & Transport facilitation lending project through which the WBG is continuing to provide assistance on trade-related processes and procedures. On January 26th, the WBG supported the government of Nepal in launching a National Single Window and Trade Information Portal.

The [National Single Window](#) is a digital platform for all import and export procedures and connects traders with over 40 trade-related agencies. It enables traders to complete all procedures online and eliminates the need to visit each agency to submit physical copies of applications and support documents to obtain licenses,

certificates, permits, etc. The [Trade Information Portal](#) is a web-based system, which makes all cross-border trade information available online.

Nepal National Single Window:
<https://www.nns.w.gov.np>

Video:
<https://youtu.be/EDXbvG7-sDs>

News articles:
<https://www.sgs.com/en/news/2021/02/nepal-launches-national-single-window-and-nepal-trade-information-portal-with-help-from-sgs>
<https://webfontaine.com/2021/02/09/webb-fontaine-announces-official-launch-of-far-reaching-nepal-national-single-window-trade-and-customs-project/>
<https://www.maritimegateway.com/nepal-national-single-window-system-goes-online/>
https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/535079403/nepal-national-single-window-launched
<https://customstrade.asia/nepal-national-single-window-launched/>
<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepal-national-single-window-system-goes-online-from-today/>
<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/customs-offices-turn-cashless/>

Nepal Trade Information Portal:
<https://nepaltradeportal.gov.np>



Launch of the Nepal Single Window
© Government of Nepal



U. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), JANUARY 2021

From January 26–27th, the WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to present the status of ratification and the notification process. Members shared experiences on key thematic issues, and the WTO TFAF presented recent and upcoming events.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

V. VARIOUS MEETINGS: PACIFIC GENDER SURVEY: UNLOCKING TRADE FOR WOMEN IN THE PACIFIC REGION—VIRTUAL, FEBRUARY 2021

On February 25th, the WBG completed research to identify the specific challenges men and women traders face in the Pacific region. Over 1,500 cross-border trading firms were surveyed in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu. The analysis aimed to help governments understand trade barriers and design trade facilitation policies that maximize the benefits of trade for both men and women. A series of virtual meetings were held across the Pacific between February–May to disseminate the reports to stakeholders.

Reports and animation:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/trade-facilitation-challenges-for-women-traders-in-the-pacific-region>

W. WEBINAR: FACILITATING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE TRADE HORIZONS IN A CHARGED CONTEXT—VIRTUAL, FEBRUARY 2021

On February 8th, the WBG was invited to participate in a webinar hosted by the STDF. The virtual discussion focused on the pandemic-driven changes of 2020 and how these have affected the STDF's delivery of its strategy and activities. Members of STDF's global partnership—comprised of public and private sector actors from across agriculture, health, trade, and development—participated in the webinar. The partners, including the WBG, shared views on how work programs have adapted to the pandemic and how the STDF and its partnership can capitalize on both the benefits and challenges arising from the pandemic-forced changes.

The STDF also presented a film, “Shaping a safer world.” Interviews with STDF partners, including the WBG experts, were recorded virtually during the pandemic.

Event recording:

www.standardsfacility.org/events

STDF film (featuring WBG experts) “Shaping a safer world”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT3dnlz-nTg&feature=youtu.be>

X. WORKSHOP ON ENHANCING WTO TFA COMPLIANCE THROUGH COOPERATION IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA—VIRTUAL, MARCH 2021

From March 16–18th, the WBG co-hosted a regional workshop with the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) to highlight measures of the WTO's TFA. Countries from across Europe and Central Asia participated in the event and shared experiences, best practices, and lessons learned from TFA implementation. Key measures discussed included: pre-arrival processing, risk management, Authorized Economic Operators, Single Window, cross-border cooperation, and National Trade Facilitation Committees.

Y. SERBIA NTFC PRESENTS ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SERBIA—VIRTUAL, MARCH 2021

The WBG provided support to the NTFC in Serbia to develop an annual report for 2020 that outlines key trade facilitation achievements and activities. The report highlights a number of initiatives supported by the WBG, including: the development of new software for advance

rulings for tariff classification; Single Window blueprint development; the regional SPS risk management trainings; and the WBG tracking tool to monitor the progress made in implementation of trade facilitation reforms in Serbia. The report was presented to the government of Serbia for adoption in accordance with the transparency principle and publication requirements of the TFA.

NTFC annual report:

<https://nktot.mtt.gov.rs/en/documents/reporting/>

Z. AID-FOR-TRADE STOCKTAKING: SESSION ON EL SALVADOR—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), MARCH 2021

The El Salvador Ministry of Economy hosted a session at the WTO’s Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event on “MSMEs Promoting Economic Recovery in a post-COVID-19 World: A Trade Facilitation Approach.” Transactional efficiency is a key determinant of a country’s international competitiveness. Removing supply chain barriers or reducing international trade costs in open economies, like El Salvador and Singapore, could have a larger impact than removing tariffs and can increase the competitiveness of exports. The session explored the benefits of trade facilitation strategies and measures, their modalities, the importance of their design and implementation, especially for MSMEs, and the crucial role of international cooperation. The discussion also considered the intersectionality of trade facilitation with e-commerce and contextualized how these efforts can be leveraged to ensure a better and faster economic recovery in a post-COVID-19 world.

The WBG was invited to participate on a panel and answer the following questions:

- As the early adoption of trade facilitation strategies and measures helped MSMEs navigate the worst of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, how has Aid-for-Trade facilitated the implementation of the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement in areas that have been key for the survival of MSMEs during the pandemic, such as the delivery of essential goods like medicine and food?
- How have constraints to investment slowed down or been hampered by trade facilitation reforms, and what more can be done to encourage quick implementation in areas such as: streamlining border measures and controls. Where should we focus our efforts? More transparency? Digitalization and technological infrastructure?
- How can trade facilitation assist and expedite MSME’s adoption of e-commerce strategies and their participation in global markets?

WTO Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking website:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr21_e/gr21_e.htm

Event web page:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr21_e/gr21ext_session_e.htm?session=21

El Salvador Ministry of Economy website:

<http://econiadiadigital.minec.gob.sv>

AA. AID-FOR-TRADE STOCKTAKING: HOW CAN TRADE FACILITATION PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN COVID-19 RECOVERY?—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), MARCH 2021

The WBG team joined the WTO TFAF at the Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event on March 25th to co-host a discussion on how countries have relied on trade facilitation measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep essential supplies moving across borders. Participants also discussed how greater trade facilitation can lead to resilient recovery. Speakers included the TFAF, the WBG, DHL, the government of Sierra Leone, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom in Geneva. The event was aimed at least developed countries, developing countries, and small island nations.

Event page:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr21_e/gr21ext_session_e.htm?session=38

Social media:

WBG (@WBG_Finance)

https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1375133969507827714?s=20

https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1375075730036494337?s=20

https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1373635830774894600?s=20

Re-tweeted WTO posts:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375107637927411721?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375088844937256969?s=20>



WTO (@WTO)

Live tweeting—

Donor perspective—UK Government:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375109584558432263?s=20>

WBG role:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375107637927411721?s=20>

Private sector perspective:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375104791580446726?s=20>

Regional perspective:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375102764469092352?s=20>

National perspective:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375098726797180933?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375096590571085833?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375093642784874496?s=20>

Pre-event communications:

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1375088844937256969?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/wto/status/1373611606052110341?s=20>

BB. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), MARCH 2021

On March 3rd, the WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to present the status of ratification and the notification process. Presentations were also made from various members on different thematic areas.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

CC. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), APRIL 2021

From April 22nd–23rd, WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to present the status of ratification and the notification process. Members shared experiences on key thematic issues, and the WTO TFAF presented recent and upcoming events.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

DD. FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP ON RISK MANAGEMENT—UZBEKISTAN, APRIL 2021

The WBG is providing trade facilitation advisory support via the TFSP to the Uzbekistan State Customs Committee and Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade. As part of this support, a survey was conducted on trade facilitation challenges. It was disseminated to over 35 private sector traders, brokers, and transporters. In April, a focus group with 10 firms was hosted to obtain further details on the responses provided in the survey.

EE. WTO PANEL DISCUSSION ON LESSON LEARNT FROM TFA IMPLEMENTATION—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), JUNE 2021

On June 15th, the WBG participated in a panel discussion on “lessons learnt from the TFA implementation” at the WTO. The objective was to provide WTO Members participating in the Investment for Development (IFD) negotiation with first-hand insights on the implementation of the TFA. The aim was for the discussion to be relevant and useful to the upcoming discussions on the implementation, technical assistance, and capacity building (TACB) under the future IFD Agreement.

The session provided an opportunity for practical and concrete experience sharing from speakers with different perspectives on this matter. The WBG presented on the TFSP and answered the following questions: How has the WBG assisted in easing TFA implementation by developing countries and LDCs? What types of TACB has been most needed/provided (e.g., training/human resources; assistance with the design of legal frameworks; financial assistance)? In processing requests for technical assistance, what eligibility criteria are applied to select beneficiaries/projects for TACB? Based on your experience, could you provide two concrete suggestions in terms of TACB provided for implementation that could be most useful to the IFD negotiations?

FF. WTO TF COMMITTEE MEETING—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND (VIRTUAL), JUNE 2021

From June 22nd–23rd, WTO Members met under the Trade Facilitation Committee to present the status of ratification and the notification process. The chair also shared information on upcoming due dates. Members shared experiences on key thematic issues, and the WTO TFAF presented recent and upcoming events.

TF Committee Meetings:

https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/comm_tradfa_e.htm

GG. WEBINAR: TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: WHY DOES FACILITATING SAFE TRADE MATTER?—VIRTUAL, JUNE 2021

On June 28th, the WBG team participated in the United Nations Food Systems Summit in a webinar hosted by the STDF. The webinar, “Transforming food systems for the 21st century: Why does facilitating safe trade matter?,” engaged members to share experiences and learning about innovative and collaborative safe trade solutions and explore how they are contributing to food systems transformation; reflect on how ongoing trends are influencing SPS capacity development and what this means for food systems transformation; and identify new opportunities to influence and catalyze sustainable improvements in SPS systems.

The WBG presented the critical factors for advancing improvements in facilitating the safe trade of food, plants, and animals, including the importance of SPS agencies in implementing the articles of the WTO TFA; improving border collaboration; increasing transparency through automation, including the impact on gender; the importance of public and private sector consultation; and a public-private sector approach to risk management to ensure systems rely less on environmentally harsh interventions such as pesticides, fumigations, etc.

Event pages:

<https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/21898/>
<https://www.standardsfacility.org/events>



Annex C

Communications

Communications is an important element of the Trade Facilitation Support Program mission and focuses on:

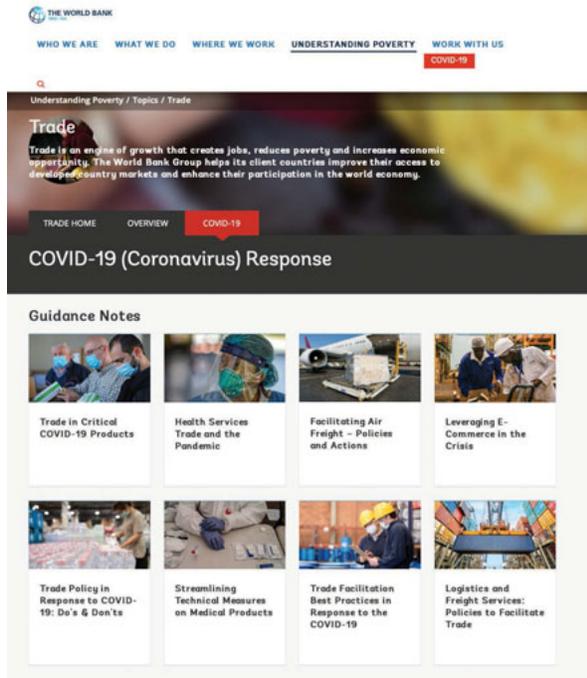
- Raising awareness of program activities, results, and effects
- Increasing the visibility of the program and donor partners
- Disseminating useful trade facilitation material to stakeholders

During the reporting period, the TFSP Secretariat continued to build a foundation for communications and to embed it within project activities. The communications plan for FY20–21 guides the program’s approach to strategic communications and is supplemented with guidance (including donor visibility requirements) for team members on how to incorporate communications into specific activities. The Secretariat stepped up communications support to specific projects in the reporting period and will continue this effort going forward to increase visibility of projects and ensure that the results reach target audiences.

The TFSP leveraged the following communications channels in FY21 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021):

I. PROGRAM WEBSITE

The TFSP website (www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program) is the main vehicle for program communication. It houses communication products, COVID-19 resources, reform news, and blogs of interest to stakeholders and other users. The number of website visitors has continued to grow steadily since the launch of the website: from 1,500 page visitors at the end of FY17 to **10,887 on June 30, 2021**.



II. COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TFSP communications pivoted quickly to relevant topics that enabled a virtual dialogue with our government partners. The team continued to build on this approach developed at the end of the last reporting period and shared targeted COVID-19 communications with clients. Since the mission travel ban was still underway, virtual communication remained important for the team's work.

The team continued to share the short **video** produced during the last reporting period. The video enabled our experts to virtually connect with our clients and share best practice on managing risk and facilitating trade during COVID-19 (580 views):

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/06/22/managing-risk-and-facilitating-trade-during-covid-19>

The video continued to be promoted on the WBG social media platforms, including on Twitter (@WorldBank: 3.5M followers) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/worldbank: 2.67M followers). It was also re-tweeted on the @worldbankdata (65.4K followers) and @WBG_Poverty (35.8K followers) accounts.

The WBG TFSP team continued to disseminate a series of **guidance notes** related to COVID-19 and trade with government clients across regions. The resources

were also shared widely with WTO Members at the Trade Facilitation Committee meetings held in October 2020: <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/G/TFA/W29.pdf&Open=True>

The first note focused on managing risks during the pandemic and included a checklist for client countries: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/751981585606039541/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Managing-Risk-and-Facilitating-Trade-in-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

The note was widely disseminated in multiple languages: **English (16,162 downloads)**, **French (105 downloads)**, **Russian (201 downloads)**, **Spanish (175 downloads)**, and **Portuguese (191 downloads)**.

A second note was produced on best practices of border processes and procedures, including specific country examples (**1,231 downloads**): <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/824081587487261551/pdf/Trade-and-COVID-19-Guidance-Note-Trade-Facilitation-Best-Practices-Implemented-in-Response-to-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>

All materials were published on the TFSP website and the WBG's dedicated external webpage on COVID-19 and trade, along with additional notes prepared by the WBG's Global Trade and Regional Integration Unit (**6,771 views**): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/brief/trade-and-covid-19>.

Both the video and guidance notes were shared widely with donor partners, country clients, and implementing partners. Many of these organizations



VIDEO

Managing risk and facilitating trade during COVID-19

continued to share the resources with their stakeholders, thereby further expanding the reach of these communications. Some examples include: the guidance notes and video were published on the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility: COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Repository: <https://tfafacility.org/news/2020/05/launch-covid-19-trade-facilitation-repository>; tralac (Trade Law Centre South Africa) COVID-19 Resources: https://www.tralac.org/news/article/14477-covid-19-resources-page.html?utm_source=tralac+Newsletter&utm_campaign=414eff1a9f-tralac_August_2020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a95cb1d7ad-414eff1a9f-311121458; and the video was shared in the latest newsletter of STDF: <https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?u=1dd65e410f4f874eaf3175abc&id=025d4eeb46>

III. TRADE AND GENDER STUDY

During this reporting period, a key milestone in the TFSP communications effort focused on gender and trade facilitation with the launch of the Pacific Trade and Gender Study. The publicity campaign was a team effort across the global and regional teams at both the World Bank and IFC.

Five country reports and one regional report were professionally designed with infographics to ensure the findings and recommendations were easily digestible among the various target audiences. Early on, the team decided to bring the survey findings to life by capturing

the faces and voices of the women that were surveyed. In Fiji, the team commissioned professional photographs of women traders in their business settings and recorded quotes from them. However, when COVID-19 hit, the team was unable to do the same in the other countries. Therefore, the team collaborated with the communications teams in each WBG country office to leverage existing photos of local businesswomen.

The reports were published online and are easily accessible for stakeholders. A **publication page** was created on the World Bank global online platform and housed the five country reports and regional publication (4,643 views): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/trade-facilitation-challenges-for-women-traders-in-the-pacific-region>

Reports:

- [Regional report](#)
- [Fiji](#)
- [Papua New Guinea](#)
- [Samoa](#)
- [Timor-Leste](#)





■ **Vanuatu**

The team had initially planned to produce a video showcasing the women who participated in the study. Due to the pandemic, however, this plan had to be adjusted, and instead they produced an innovative, short **animation** (1.30 mins) to raise awareness of the study and highlight the key findings from the research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-2t7RxDh4>

Both the publications and the animation were further promoted via other World Bank Group websites:

- TFSP website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program>
- World Bank Trade Topic page: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade>
- World Bank Trade and Gender page: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/brief/trade-and-gender>
- World Bank Home Page: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/home>

A branded **email** was created with links to the publication page, reports, and animation and was shared with over 120 stakeholders, including government clients and regional organizations, among others.

Social media: The team collaborated with various communications teams from across the World Bank and IFC (not only with global teams in the trade, external corporate relations, and gender units, but in the region and the countries where the surveys were conducted). The promotion campaign generated substantial coverage across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn and reached over **2.3M followers** across the various channels. The campaign lasted approximately four weeks and was promoted in two phases: the initial communication push took place in February, and the second was implemented in conjunction with International Women’s Day 2021.

Selected coverage below:

Twitter

- @WBG_Finance (8,743 followers)
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1365056409466003461?s=20
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1365327060223279104?s=20
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1365426434542551050?s=20
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1365527167573110786?s=20
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1365301379347189760?s=20
- https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366282259423236096?s=20

https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366644624236965890?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366463681748467716?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366282259423236096?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366886301119750150?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1367853060307968001?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366644624236965890?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1366463681748467716?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1367853060307968001?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1367965713424474114?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1368879622637641737?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1369000395884879876?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1368879622637641737?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1368818998125748228?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1368637801693077513?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1368577493691736065?s=20

@WB_AsiaPacific (103.5K followers)

https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1365190851966681089?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1365433983136395267?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1366143651152297984?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1366506050074124289?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Finance/status/1367965713424474114?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1369549845850185728?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1369777671203401730?s=20
https://twitter.com/WB_AsiaPacific/status/1369882037239353344?s=20

@WBG_Gender (18.7K followers)

https://twitter.com/WBG_Gender/status/1365519564197535744?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Gender/status/1365700822638723076?s=20
https://twitter.com/WBG_Gender/status/1366425659560591366?s=20

@WBG_Jobs (8,455 followers)

https://twitter.com/WBG_Jobs/status/1366516178164854791?s=20

IFC East Asia Pacific (@IFC_EAP) (5,757 followers)

https://twitter.com/IFC_EAP/status/1365110889683189765?s=20
https://twitter.com/IFC_EAP/status/1366193232812539905?s=20
https://twitter.com/IFC_EAP/status/1367968678977802242?s=20
https://twitter.com/IFC_EAP/status/1367988453120610312?s=20

Facebook

World Bank Pacific (272,188 followers)

<https://www.facebook.com/worldbankpacific/posts/1853813071451455>

IFC East Asia Pacific (10,125 followers)

<https://www.facebook.com/IFCcap/posts/4039579902748468>
<https://www.facebook.com/IFCcap/posts/4051002664939525>
<https://www.facebook.com/IFCcap/posts/4063370373702754>
<https://www.facebook.com/IFCcap/posts/4071441102895681>

LinkedIn

World Bank (1.5M followers)

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/the-world-bank_trade-facilitation-tradeandgender-asiapacific-activity-6773801846403416064-bBo1
1,296 views

IFC Financial Institutions (11,863 followers)

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ifc-financial-institutions_trade-paperlesstrade-womentraders-activity-6777964039021580289-t4Zi

Instagram

World Bank (873K followers)—promoted on Instagram Stories

The social media campaign was **re-shared** by a number of country and regional organizations, including the Pacific Women’s Network @PacWN (188,054 followers).

A **press release** was disseminated in the region and in each country to the local media working through the network of communications teams at the WBG and IFC: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/25/reducing-trade-barriers-would-benefit-women-owned-businesses-in-the-pacific-and-timor-leste-survey-finds>

The release was **re-published** by key organizations, including the [Pacific Islands News Association \(PINA\)](#), whose work regularly syndicates to many of the daily newspapers in countries/territories around the Pacific.¹⁷

The survey was also promoted in various World Bank Group newsletters including the Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment (MTI) Global Practice, the Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions (EFI), and Finance, Competitiveness & Innovation Global Practice (FCI).

¹⁷ Many of these newspapers do not have an online presence, making it difficult to track, reach, and provide readership numbers.

IV. TRADE POST BLOG

The WBG team has written a number of blog posts about the work and experiences of TFSP-funded activities. The posts have been published on the WBG Trade Post blog, a global platform to bring together observations from the field and reflections on research by the WBG’s experts on international trade.

The following blog posts were developed during the reporting period (*page views are from the date published up to June 30, 2021*). The blogs focused on relevant trade facilitation themes in light of the pandemic, including the importance of digitalization and automation:

Keeping Business Flowing in Serbia Amid COVID-19 (1,148 page views):

https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/impact-stories/keeping-business-flowing-in-serbia

This blog focused on the WBG support provided to the Serbian Customs Administration to automate the business processes for the origin of goods. A new, easy-to-use IT application enabled three core business



processes: post-clearance verification of the origin of goods; approved exporters; and the advance rulings on the origin of goods. The new processes bring Serbia closer to international trade standards, including the [WTO TFA](#).

During this reporting period, the WBG TFSP team also collaborated with the regional communications team in Europe and Central Asia to write the following blog about the preparations for the national Single Window in North Macedonia, which was then pitched to local and regional media.

Digital trade can help North Macedonia build back better post-COVID-19:¹⁸

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/digital-trade-can-help-north-macedonia-build-back-better-post-covid-19>

The article was published in the local media in English and local languages.

The blog was also promoted on social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/IFCeca/posts/3974287162656192>

https://twitter.com/IFC_ECA/status/1392433522397360131

https://twitter.com/IFC_ECA/status/1391740330211520512

Managing organizational performance in a crisis period: <https://mag.wcoomd.org/magazine/wco-news-95-june-2021/managing-organizational-performance-in-a-crisis-period/>

This blog, co-written by the WBG and the ISO, was published in the WCO magazine. It was developed as part of a global webinar series: “Managing HR through a crisis and beyond.” The purpose was to create a platform for sharing and collecting international best practices relating to the role of customs HR professionals in managing the COVID-19 crisis and potentially future similar crises. The initiative drew on the knowledge and experiences of international organizations.

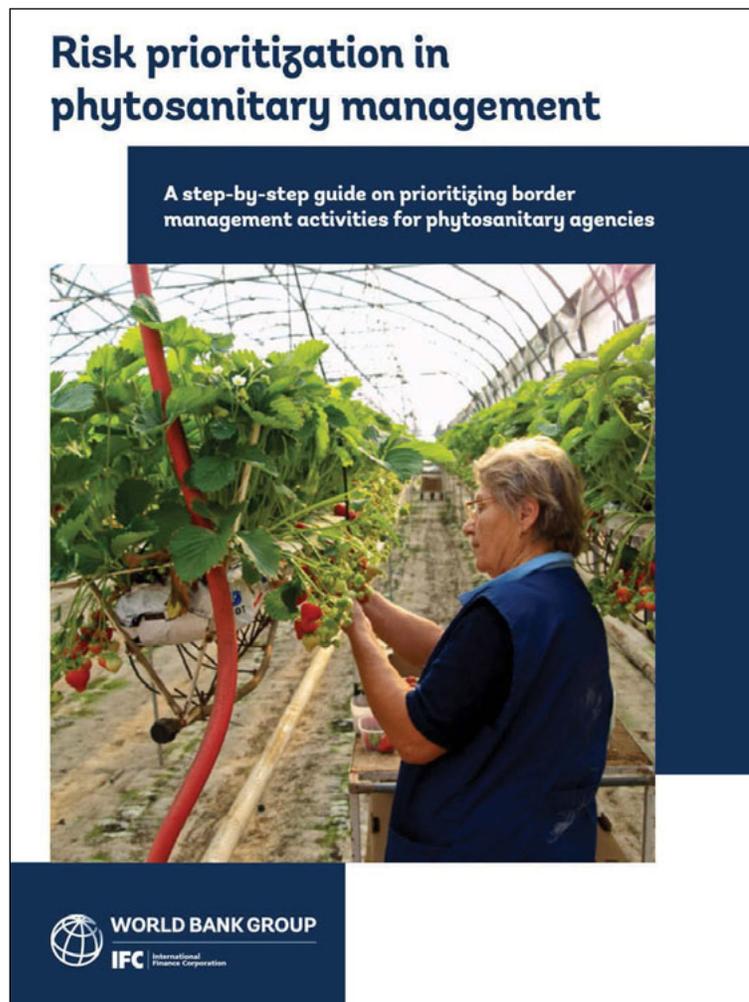
¹⁸ Page views were not available from the local media publications.

V. TRADE PUBLICATIONS

During the reporting period, the WBG’s TFSP team produced a publication on: [Risk prioritization in phytosanitary management: A step-by-step guide on prioritizing border management activities for phytosanitary agencies](#). The guide was developed to assist plant health services in emerging economies in Europe and Central Asia in prioritizing their border interventions to focus on high-risk trade. It presents information on risk analysis, risk prioritization, and risk-based inspection. The implementation of risk-based border measures is key to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of plant protection services while facilitating safe trade.

Publication:

<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/186841605045083824-0090022020/original/WBGRiskPrioritizationinPhytosanitaryManagementFINALweb.pdf>



Social media coverage:

https://twitter.com/IFC_ECA/status/1328303174235598848?s=20

<https://www.facebook.com/IFCeca/posts/3492414017510178>

VI. SOCIAL MEDIA

The program supports updates widely on the WBG social media platforms, including on **Twitter** (@WorldBank: 3.5M followers; @WBG_Finance: 8.8K followers; @WB_AsiaPacific: 103.5K followers; @IFCAfrica: 131.6K followers; @IFC_ECA: 1.5K followers) and **Facebook** (www.facebook.com/worldbank: 2.65M followers; World Bank Pacific: 272K followers; IFC Africa: 32K followers; IFC Europe and Central Asia: 9.2K followers). From time to time, the WBG senior leadership team co-promotes TFSP-supported initiatives (@CeylaP_WBG, 23.1K followers—formerly with the WBG and now with the IMF; @CarolineFreund, 10K followers).

VII. BROCHURE AND BANNERS

The TFSP brochure (<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/119111561482785120/TFSP-Brochure-2019-web.pdf>) and pop-up banners were updated in the previous reporting period to increase the visibility of the program and donor support at key events. The brochures continue to be shared virtually at events, missions, and meetings and can also be downloaded from the TFSP website. Two program-wide banners are at the team’s disposal for use at key events.

VIII. FACTSHEETS

The factsheets developed in the previous reporting period provide a short summary of the program as well as an outline of its mandate, activities, and results. Regionally specific factsheets also have been created to provide more specific information about TFSP supported activities in the regions. In addition, thematic factsheets have been developed to promote certain project areas, such as our work in trade and gender and the TFA Tracking Tool. All have the logos of TFSP’s donors.



The Trade Facilitation Support Program

Making international trade work for developing countries



In partnership with



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Find out more

www.worldbank.org/tfsp
tfsp@worldbank.org

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All photos: World Bank Group



Trade Facilitation Support Program

Making trade faster and more affordable



The Program

The Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) was launched in June 2014 to assist developing countries in aligning their trade practices with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). The TFSP is designed to provide practical and demand-driven assistance, and supports client countries with:

- Identifying existing constraints and bottlenecks to cross-border trade;
- Designing and planning for the implementation of reforms; and
- Increasing the predictability, transparency, and harmonization of systems and procedures in line with international standards covering import, export, and transit activities.

In the reporting period, the factsheets were distributed to participants in virtual events and government clients.

IX. PRESENTATIONS

Program-specific presentations have been developed for key events according to the specific thematic areas of focus. The aim is that the templates—with the latest program information and donor attribution—can be readily accessed by the program team and customized accordingly. This ensures that programs, activities, and key messages are communicated consistently, regardless of the location or event.

X. MEDIA ENGAGEMENT/OUTREACH

The program works in close consultation with the WBG global communications network to leverage greater coverage for TFSP activities. At the country level, this involves working closely with WBG communications coordinators on the ground who have an established network of local media contacts to reach target audiences in TFSP-supported countries. It may also involve working with the relevant authorities—customs, the NTFC, and others—in TFSP-supported countries to assist in media engagement.

Some recent examples include the publishing of the Pacific Trade and Gender Study; the launch of Trade Information Portals in Lesotho, Eswatini, Mongolia, and Nepal; the preparations for the National Single Window for trade in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia and the launch of the Single Window in Nepal; the launch of the free trade agreements portal in Vietnam; the development of an automated rules of origin database in Serbia; the development of an annual report by the NTFC in Serbia; the launch of the Authorized Economic Operators program in Montenegro and new AEOs certified in Kosovo; the development of a step-by-step guide to assist plant health services in prioritizing their border interventions to focus on high-risk trade in the Western Balkans; a time release study in Zambia; and the Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event—joint activities implemented with WTO TFAF, including a session on trade facilitation as a key element for COVID-19 recovery. Local media engagement at the country level is an effective way to engage the private sector through local press articles.

Here is a selection of other articles/media mentions throughout the reporting period:

August 25, 2020: Lesotho intensifies online efforts to boost trade

<https://www.thereporter.co.ls/2020/08/25/lesotho-intensifies-online-efforts-to-boost-trade/>

September 3, 2020: Lesotho online trade gets a boost

<https://news4u.co.ls/lesotho-online-trade-gets-a-boost/>

September 8, 2020: Lesotho government revamps trade portal

<http://lestimes.com/govt-revamps-trade-portal/>

September 10, 2020: Eswatini Trade Information Portal to go live in September

<https://imanidevelopment.com/eswatini-trade-information-portal-etip-to-go-live-in-september/>

September 18, 2020: A Kosovar company is also certified as an Authorized Economic Operator

<https://dogana.rks-gov.net/certifikohet-edhe-nje-kompani-kosovare-si-operator-i-autorizuar-ekonomik/>



Media interview with Serbian customs
© Serbia Customs

September 28, 2020: Eswatini Prime Minister officially launched the Eswatini Trade Information Portal
<https://www.ecorys.com/united-kingdom/latest-news/eswatini-prime-minister-officially-launched-eswatini-trade-information>

September 30, 2020: 430 documents in Eswatini Trade Portal
<http://www.times.co.sz/business/130155-430-documents-in-trade-portal.html>

September 30, 2020: Eswatini Trade Information Portal will provide a simpler, faster, and lower cost trade facilitation environment for businesses
<https://independentnews.co.sz/local-news/4553/eswatini-trade-information-portal-will-provide-a-simpler-faster-and-lower-cost-trade-facilitation-environment-for-businesses/>

October 3, 2020: Government launches Trade Information Portal
<http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=11783>

October 10, 2020: Eswatini's one-stop shop for trade goes live
<http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=13895>

October 20, 2020: Freshfel and World Bank webinar on trade facilitation steps to crisis-proof operations in COVID-19 and beyond
<https://twitter.com/Freshfel/status/1318461365946908674?s=20>
<https://www.facebook.com/Freshfel/photos/a.689495071230569/1637789423067791/?type=3>

October 28, 2020: Regional private sector dialogue on trade facilitation
<https://www.caribbeanchambers.net/upcoming-events/regional-private-sector-dialogue-on-trade-facilitation>

November 18, 2020: A National Single Window: Convenience for business
<https://www.monitor.al/nje-dritare-e-vetme-lehtesi-per-biznesin/>

November 18, 2020: Customs is the coordination for a new National Single Window in Serbia
<http://www.customs.gov.mk/index.php/mk/informacii-mk/vesti-mk/2712-carinskata-upravnositel-i-koordinatorka-za-vostavuvanje-na-noviot-nacionalen-ednoshalterski-sitem-na-republika-severna-makedonija>

November 18, 2020: "National One-Stop Shop": Trade facilitation is a strategic and political commitment of the country and the need for better regional cooperation
<https://vlada.mk/node/23157>

December 11, 2020: A single source for all cross-border trade information in Mongolia
<https://pressroom.ifc.org/all/pages/PressDetail.aspx?ID=26103>

December 11, 2020: Mongolia launches Trade Information Portal to boost trade
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/11/c_139582190.htm



www.eswatinitradeportal.gov.sz



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December 11, 2020: Nathan is thrilled to launch the International Finance Corporation-funded Mongolia Trade Information Portal

<https://www.nathaninc.com/mongolia-trade-info-portal/>

December 11, 2020: New Trade Information Portal a boost for trade in Mongolia amid COVID-19

<https://mongolia.gogo.mn/r/wmj9m>

December 12, 2020: Go-live announcement: Mongolia Trade Information Portal

<https://www.mongolchamber.mn/a/502>

December 12, 2020: Foreign trade database opened

<http://www.mfa.gov.mn/?p=53388>

December 15, 2020: Lesotho re-launches trade portal

<https://www.thepost.co.ls/news/lesotho-re-launches-trade-portal/>

December 14, 2020: Foreign trade database has been launched

<https://news.mn/r/2382849/>

December 14, 2020: Government of Mongolia launches information portal to boost trade

<http://embassyofmongolia.co.uk/?p=3509&lang=en>

December 14, 2020: New Trade Information Portal a boost for trade in Mongolia amid COVID-19

<http://www.amcham.mn/dnw/daily-news-wire-for-december-14-2020/>

December 23, 2020: Vietnam launches first-ever free trade agreement portal

<https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-launches-first-ever-free-trade-agreement-portal/193660.vnp>

<https://vovworld.vn/en-US/spotlight/vietnam-launches-first-web-portal-on-free-trade-agreements-934742.vov>

<https://en.nhandan.vn/business/item/9428502-vietnam-launches-portal-on-free-trade-agreements.html>

<https://vnanet.vn/en/anh/vna-photos-1027/vietnam-free-trade-agreement-portal-launched-5197561.html>

December 24, 2020: Trade Information Portal to boost trade in Mongolia amid the pandemic

<https://montsame.mn/en/read/247898>



As Mongolia is going through a lockdown, maintaining trade flows is more important than ever in providing access to essential food and medical supplies. We know the global pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to world trade, so it's critical for Mongolian businesses to be able to access the trade information they need to help spur a resilient recovery.

RUFAT ALIMARDANOV
IFC's Resident Representative for Mongolia

 MONGOLIATRADEPORTAL.GOV.MN

December 24, 2020: Vietnam launches portal on free trade agreements

<http://ven.vn/vietnam-launches-portal-on-free-trade-agreements-44176.html>

<http://hanoitimes.vn/vietnam-launches-free-trade-agreement-portal-315524.html>

<https://wtocenter.vn/chuyen-de/16642-viet-nam-launches-first-ever-free-trade-agreement-portal>

January 20, 2021: Vietnam free trade agreements portal officially launched

<https://hkmb.hktdc.com/en/NjQ4MjU4Mjlx/hktdc-research/VIETNAM-Free-Trade-Information-Portal-Officially-Launched>

<https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/NjQ4MjU4Mjlx>

January 24, 2021: Customs offices turn 'cashless'

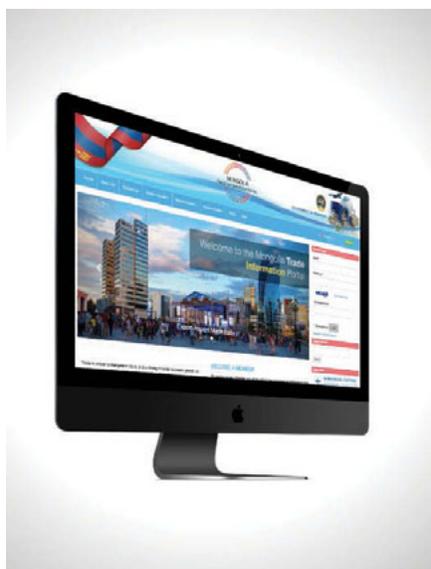
<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/customs-offices-turn-cashless/>

January 26, 2021: Nepal National Single Window System goes online from today

<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepal-national-single-window-system-goes-online-from-today/>

January 28, 2021: Nepal National Single Window System goes online

<https://www.maritimegateway.com/nepal-national-single-window-system-goes-online/>



The portal will be a game changer for the business community as both importers and exporters will be able to save time and money by having critical information at their fingertips.

ASRALT BATBOLD
Chairman
Customs General Administration

 MONGOLIATRADEPORTAL.GOV.MN

February 3, 2021: Nepal National Single Window Launched

https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/535079403/nepal-national-single-window-launched

February 9, 2021: Webb Fontaine announces official launch of far-reaching Nepal National Single Window Trade and Customs project

<https://webbfontaine.com/2021/02/09/webb-fontaine-announces-official-launch-of-far-reaching-nepal-national-single-window-trade-and-customs-project/>

February 12, 2021: Nepal Launches National Single Window and Nepal Trade Information Portal with Help from SGS

<https://www.sgs.com/en/news/2021/02/nepal-launches-national-single-window-and-nepal-trade-information-portal-with-help-from-sgs>

February 16, 2021: Nepal National Single Window Launched

<https://customstrade.asia/nepal-national-single-window-launched/>

February 23, 2021: Vietnam launches first-ever free trade agreement portal

<https://www.vietnamchamber.nl/vietnam-launches-first-ever-free-trade-agreement-portal/>

May 8, 2021: Digital trade can help North Macedonia build back better post-COVID-19

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/trade-facilitation-support-program/publication/digital-trade-can-help-north-macedonia-build-back-better-post-covid-19>

June 2021: Managing organizational performance in a crisis period

<https://mag.wcoomd.org/magazine/wco-news-95-june-2021/managing-organizational-performance-in-a-crisis-period/>

XI. COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

In some cases, deeper communications support is required to ensure that the technical assistance provided and results supported by the TFSP are disseminated locally and made known to the end beneficiaries (that is, the private sector) so that they can take advantage of reformed processes. This effort involves working with the relevant local authorities (such as the customs administration and the NTFC) to structure their communication around the reforms through dissemination plans and targeted media engagement.

For example, in the **Pacific**, the TFSP launched a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the findings and recommendations from the Trade and Gender Study with governments, business associations, and traders and agents (customs brokers, freight forwarders, etc.) in five countries: **Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu**.

In **Montenegro**, the TFSP helped to raise awareness about the AEO program within customs, other border agencies, and the private sector. A targeted communications campaign aimed at businesses promoted the benefits of AEO status.

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In **Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, and Nepal**, the TFSP helped the government to raise awareness and endorse the roadmap for the National Single Window and the associated benefits.

The team supported the development of a communications strategy and the launches of Trade Information Portals in **Eswatini** (www.eswatinitradeportal.com), **Lesotho** (www.lesothotradeportal.org.ls), and **Mongolia** (www.mongoliatradeportal.gov.mn).



Eswatini Trade Information Portal Project
International Trade Department (ITD)
Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade,
Mbabane, Kingdom of Eswatini
Gwamile Street

M: + 26 87 604 1864
E: eswatinitradeportal@gmail.com

ETIP is part of Eswatini's Trade Facilitation Programme under the auspices of the NTFC, Led by MCIT, and supported by WBG-IFC.



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XII. MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS

The program has produced a number of videos, which are showcased on the TFSP website and hosted on the WBG YouTube channel. In previous reporting periods, the program embarked on a new and innovative approach to reach audiences. The TFSP produced two 360° virtual reality films aimed at transporting stakeholders to client countries to witness the effect of the program's projects. The videos continue to be shared widely and watched (views are from the date published up to June 30, 2021):

- Trading across borders in Guatemala and Honduras:
 - English (**852K+ views**): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2019/02/06/360-video-trading-across-borders-in-guatemala-and-honduras>
 - Spanish (**1,698 views**): <http://blogs.worldbank.org/es/latinamerica/uni-n-aduanera-entre-guatemala-y-honduras-de-10-horas-15-minutos>
- Making Trade Faster, Cheaper and Easier in Sierra Leone (**1 million views**): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2019/06/27/making-trade-faster-cheaper-and-easier-in-sierra-leone>

Both videos were among the top 40 videos with the most views on the WBG YouTube channel, which has hundreds of videos (if not more). The videos are also showcased on partner websites, including the [WTO TFAF](#).

A third 360° film, focusing on the TFSP gender work in the Pacific, was planned during this reporting period. Due to the COVID-19 situation and associated travel restrictions, the team pivoted its approach and produced a short **animation (675 views)**: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2021/02/25/unlocking-trade-for-women-in-the-pacific> (see earlier section for more details)



The team continued to share the short **video** that was produced during the last reporting period, which enabled our experts to virtually connect with clients and share best practice on managing risk and facilitating trade during COVID-19 (**580 views**): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/06/22/managing-risk-and-facilitating-trade-during-covid-19> (see earlier section for more details)



Container ship
© Pexels/Pixabay



Loading cargo at the port
© Pexels/Emre Can Acer

Annex D

Financial Overview

All amounts are in USD thousands and as of end June 2021.

Cash receipts

Donor	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20***	FY21	Total cash receipts by donor
Australia	0	1,745	1,472	1,500	1,559	0	0	1,523	7,799
Canada	1,821	0	0	0	0	0	0		1,821
EU	0	0	4,388	0	3,554	1,869	2,156	1,181	13,148
The Netherlands	0	0	0	0	443	443	444	444	1,774
Norway	0	5,504	0	0	750	1,538	409	1,063	9,264
Sweden	0	0	0	0	596	1,651	1,041	581	3,869
Switzerland	0	300	1,000	200	812	410	402	439	3,563
UK*	0	0	754	3,217	1,350	2,539	0	1,336	9,196
US**	950	0	0	650	965	190	240	238	3,233
Total by year	2,771	7,549	7,614	5,567	10,029	8,640	4,692	6,805	53,667
Cumulative		10,320	17,934	23,501	33,530	42,170	46,862	53,667	
Minus 5% admin fee (amount to allocate)	2,632	9,804	17,037	22,326	31,854	40,062	44,519	50,983	

* The UK has indicated that they will not be able to transfer the remaining commitment due to a cut in ODA caused by the pandemic.

** Includes core and Zambia-specific support.

*** FY20 amounts adjusted from previous report to reflect receipts before administrative fee deduction of all contributions.

Outstanding donor payments

Donor	\$
Australia	—
Canada	—
EU	2,354
The Netherlands	
Norway	
Sweden	
Switzerland	
UK*	1,379
US**	
	3,733

* The UK has indicated that they will not be able to transfer the remaining commitment due to a cut in ODA caused by the pandemic.

** Includes core and Zambia-specific support.

Cash receipts as percentage of overall donor commitments

Total receipts and outstanding commitments	57,400
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Percentage receipts	94
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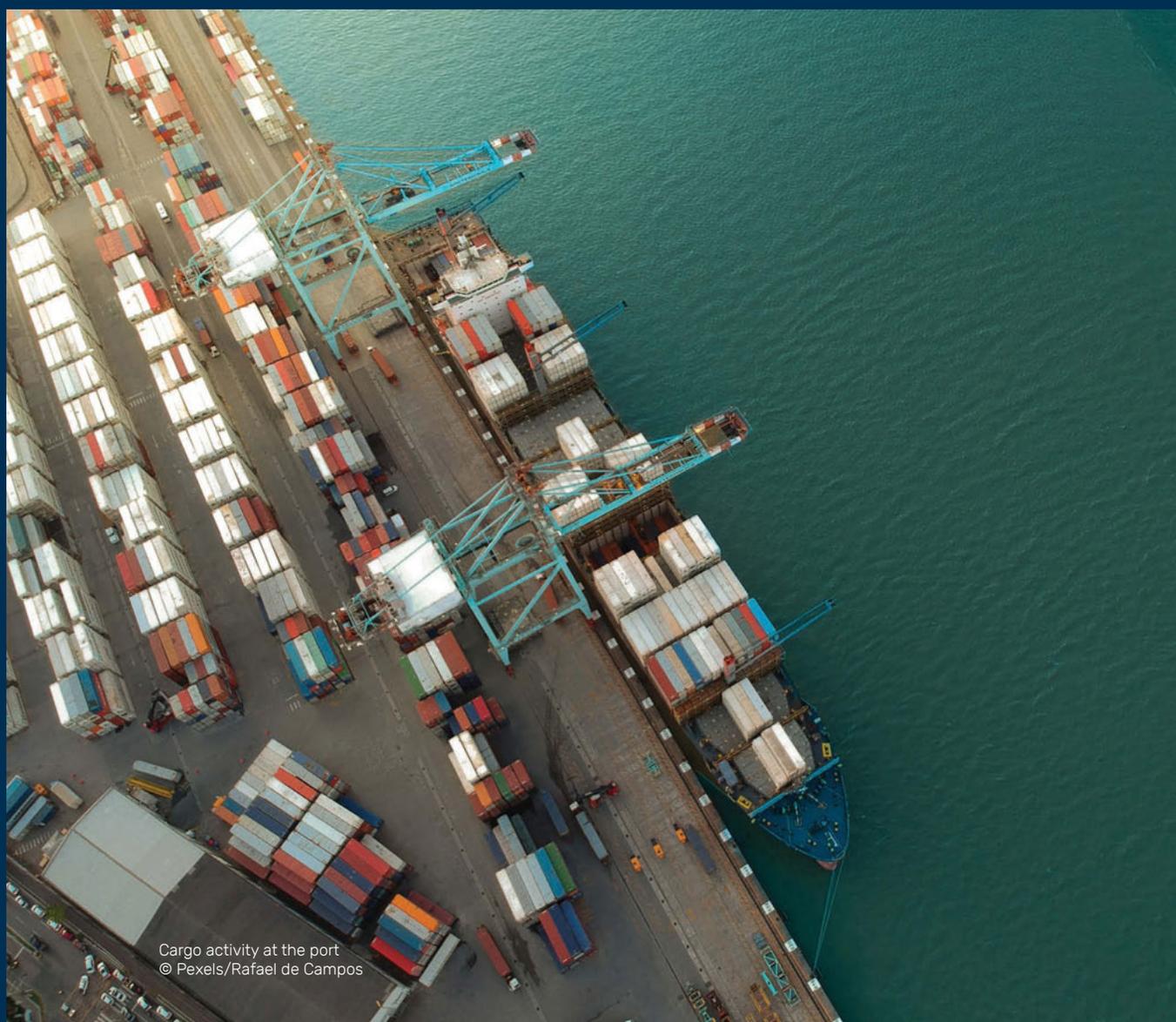
Disbursements

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	TOTAL
Total	224	2,191	5,307	7,467	6,867	7,367	6,237	4,358	40,018
Cumulative	224	2,415	7,722	15,189	22,056	29,423	35,660	40,018	

Disbursements rates*

	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Total	9%	25%	45%	68%	69%	73%	80%	78%
Including commitments								81%

* Adjusted from previous reports to include 5% administrative fee.



www.TFAFacility.org



www.tfadatabase.org



Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility

Donors:



WORLD BANK GROUP
Ensuring the successful implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

In partnership with:



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands



Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



For more information:

www.worldbank.org/tradefacilitation

TFSP@worldbankgroup.org