



2024

WTO Technical Assistance

Results at a glance

Higher results and impact



Xiangchen Zhang
Deputy Director-General
World Trade Organization

“ In 2024, the WTO started the year on a high note by welcoming two new Members at the 13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in February. Comoros and Timor-Leste (two LDCs) became the 165th and 166th Members of our organization.

Like other developing and LDC Members and Observers, Comoros and Timor-Leste benefited from WTO Technical Assistance (TA) programmes throughout their accession process. Their accession highlights the critical role of TA in building the expertise and institutional frameworks necessary for developing economies to fully participate in global trade.

2024 also witnessed progress across various other areas where TA comes into play. For the second consecutive year since the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, WTO TA delivered positive results, with 82% of targets fully or partially met. Most indicators point to growth, stable performance, or promising prospects. WTO trained in 2024 the second highest number of government officials on record: over 19,000, of which more than 5,000 from LDCs.

A core function of the WTO, technical assistance and capacity-building activities seek to enhance professional and institutional trade capacities in developing and least-developed WTO Member and Observer governments. WTO TA provides beneficiaries with enhanced know-how to take full advantage of the opportunities from the rules-based multilateral trading system and address potential challenges. Within the WTO Secretariat, the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) oversees these activities.



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WTO TA 2024 - Key takeaways

- WTO TA overall results maintained an upward trajectory in 2024, with 82% of performance targets fully or partially achieved, consolidating the strong rebound recorded in 2023.
- Over 300 TA activities were delivered, the highest number in the past decade, training more than 19,000 government officials worldwide.
- The blended approach to TA delivery—combining virtual, in-person, and e-Learning elements—gained momentum.
- Activities on agriculture, import licensing, standards, and trade and environment increased markedly, aligning with beneficiaries demands.
- A pioneering digital trade initiative was launched, offering targeted capacity building to help Members harness the economic potential of e-commerce.
- Training on trade negotiation skills fully resumed in 2024, following a suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Higher success rate

In 2024, the TA success rate, which measures the achievement of objectives based on indicators approved by Members, reached 82%, up from 79% in 2023. An analysis of the results shows that fully met targets (57%) remained relatively stable (60% in 2023), while partially met targets increased to 25% (from 19%) and missed targets declined to 16% (from 19%). These year-on-year improvements reflect sustained gains in performance, building on the satisfactory results of 2023, when they fully rebounded from the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

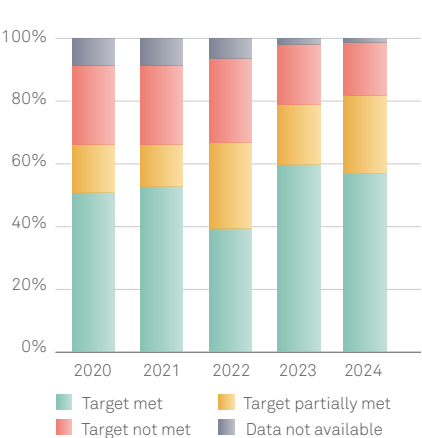
Growing participation

Over 19,000 government officials participated in more than 300 TA activities delivered to strengthen their capacities in trade-related areas, in accordance with the needs expressed by beneficiaries. The overall participation increased by 19% compared to the previous year and was back at the average recorded between 2016 and 2019.

This growth was primarily driven by a substantial 45% growth of participation in e-Learning courses. The level of participation in online courses was the highest ever (13,700 participations), whilst participation in face-to-face activities ebbed in 2024, representing less than 25% of the total. This is a significant evolution, as prior to the pandemic, face-to-face TA activities used to represent approximately half of the participation.

Looking at the types of face-to-face activities delivered, the number of national activity requests—a key indicator of Members' direct demand for WTO TA—declined by 27% from the record-high levels of 2023. Nonetheless, participation in national activities outstripped global and regional ones, in line with previous years, and requests remained above historical averages, reflecting continued interest in tailored, country-specific assistance.

Success Rate (2020 – 2024)



In addition to training courses, the Secretariat continued to offer high-value learning-by-doing programmes through on-the-job training. A total of 65 participants benefited from these programmes, maintaining the record-high intake of 2023.

A more relevant curriculum

The Secretariat continuously refines its training content to address pressing trade-related issues, explore less conventional WTO topics, and enhance existing activities. The untapped potential of digital trade for developing economies prompted the launch of the Digital Trade for Africa project, which entered its implementation phase in 2024 with substantial TA support.

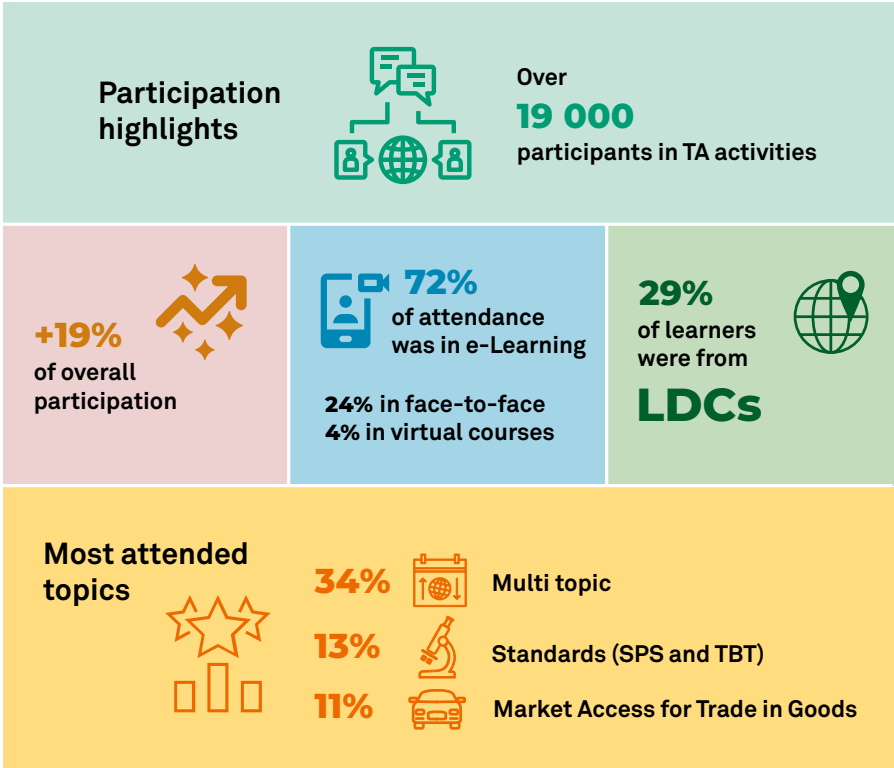
Several other training activities addressed the link between trade and environment, including the revival of the Advanced Thematic Course on Trade and Environment after a six-year hiatus. Across face-to-face and online formats, these activities engaged over 900 participants. The Secretariat also explored the intersection of trade and public health through multidisciplinary workshops. Training on trade negotiation skills, disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resumed at an accelerated pace.

Balancing demand and financial constraints

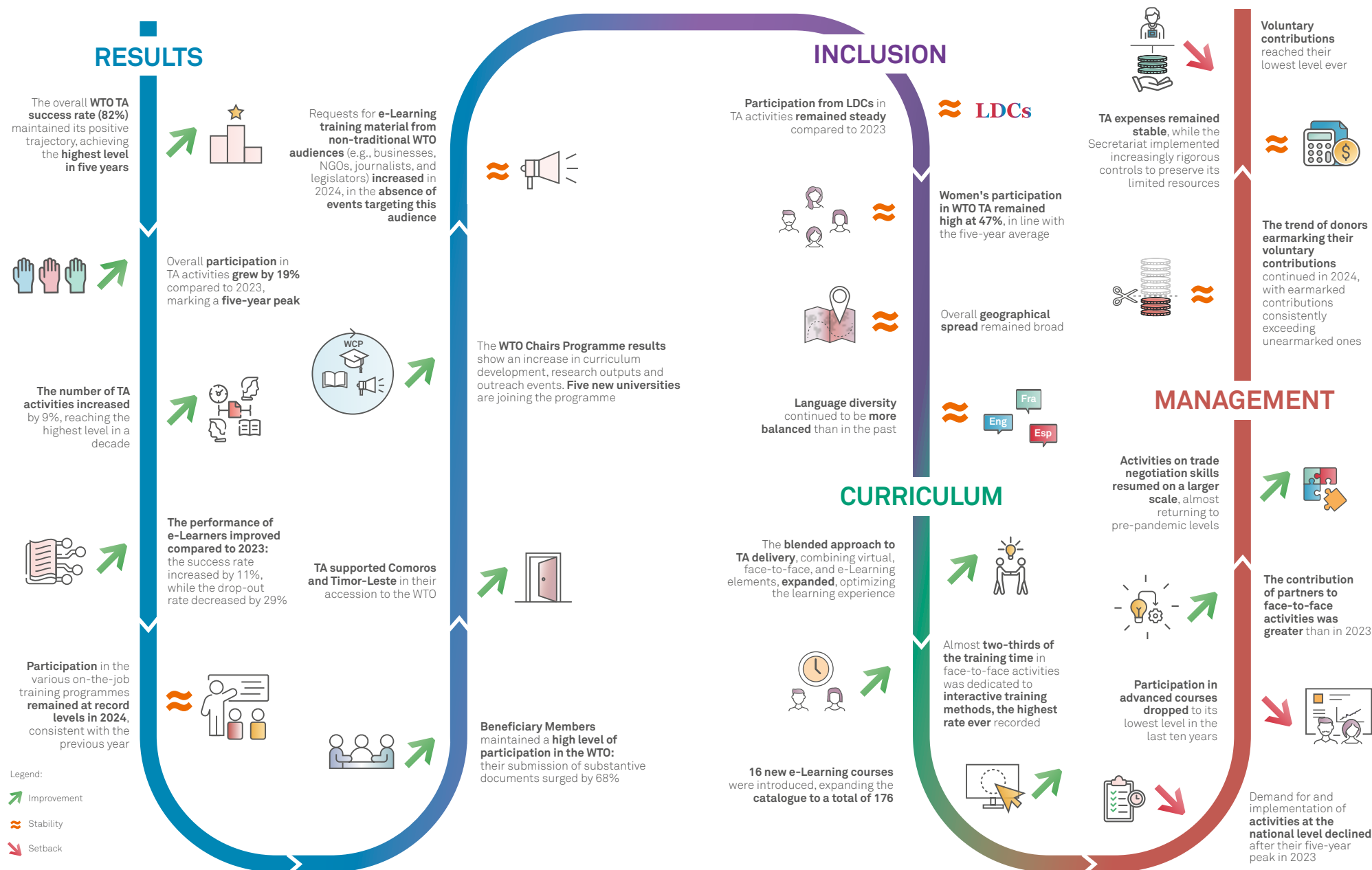
WTO TA continued to face unprecedented financial pressures, with voluntary contributions declining to their lowest level in 25 years. In 2024, unearmarked voluntary contributions received from donor Members totalled less than CHF 3 million.

The Secretariat implemented stringent cost-control measures throughout the year to mitigate the situation. While these measures preserved the volume and quality of TA delivery, further reductions could begin to impact both participation levels and the overall effectiveness of WTO TA programmes.

Participation highlights



2024 results at a glance



In the spotlight

Technical Assistance at the Heart of Pioneering Initiatives on Digital Trade

A survey conducted in 2023 as part of the preparation of the WTO TA 2024–2025 plan highlighted digital trade as the top priority for TA beneficiaries in areas without multilateral agreements. In recent years, the WTO Secretariat, in partnership with the World Bank, has launched an important initiative addressing this topical issue. The project, which saw the implementation of several activities in 2024, includes TA support.



Digital Trade for Africa: Unlocking the Development Potential of e-Commerce

In July 2023, the WTO and the World Bank presented a joint policy note to African officials titled Turning Digital Trade into a Catalyst for African Development.

In 2024, the Digital Trade for Africa project entered its second phase, resulting in digital trade needs assessments conducted by the World Bank and the WTO in six pilot economies that had expressed interest: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Rwanda. The assessments offered in-depth analyses of the domestic policy and regulatory frameworks for digital trade,

benchmarking them against international best practices. They were presented in a regional workshop in Gaborone, Botswana in which participants formulated several solutions to key identified challenges, including establishing national committees on digital trade, developing and harmonizing regulations, raising awareness through training and capacity-building initiatives, fostering public private partnerships, and exploring participation in the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) to facilitate access to digital technologies.

In the spotlight

Boosting government officials' trade negotiation skills

In an organization created to provide a forum for trade negotiations, enhancing the capacities of Members and Observers to conduct trade negotiations is a must. Intensive training courses are designed to equip government officials with the required skills, strategies and tactics.

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions led to the suspension of trade negotiation skills training as the highly interactive nature of negotiation simulations could not be adequately replicated online. Following a gradual restart in 2022, these training programmes experienced a resurgence in 2024 to respond to the consistent demand and strong interest from beneficiaries. Seven national workshops on trade negotiation skills were conducted in El Salvador, Jamaica, the Kyrgyz Republic, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, and Tonga.

In addition, a regional workshop in Grenada brought together local participants from Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. A total of 182 government officials took part in these training programmes.

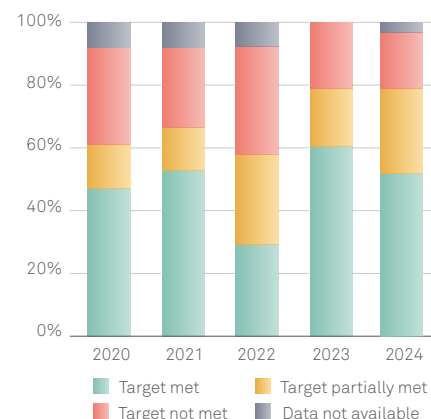
The comprehensive curriculum covered all stages of trade negotiations—from preparation, through initial consultations, to the final agreements. Participants engaged in both theoretical and practical exercises, including simulation and case studies based on real-world data.



Irvine Daniel Jr.
Coordinator
Ministry of Trade, St. Kitts & Nevis
Participant in the Regional Workshop in Grenada

“ The activity significantly boosted my professional confidence in engaging in trade negotiations. It also reignited my passion for trade policy, inspiring me to further my development in this field.

KEY RESULT 1 Implementation of WTO Agreements



Victor Orlando Bisonó Haza
Minister of Industry, Trade and MSMEs,
Dominican Republic

“ The national workshop on import licensing and notifications strengthened technical capacity and inter-institutional coordination, enabling the Dominican Republic, after 15 years, to submit the annual import licensing questionnaire.

Continued support for Members and Observers

The primary objective of WTO TA is to enhance the capacity of government officials from developing and LDC Members and Observers to fulfil their WTO commitments and leverage their rights within the multilateral trading system.

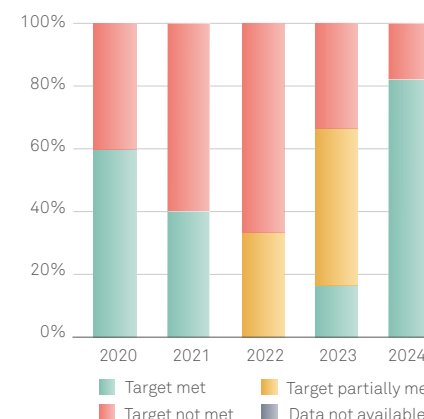
The number of ‘substantive’ documents submitted by TA beneficiary Members, alone or jointly with others, to WTO bodies increased by 68% from the previous year, reaching 1,178, the highest figure recorded in over a decade. This serves as a proxy indicator of their growing involvement in the work of WTO bodies.

Transparency-related initiatives remained a priority to reduce notification backlogs under various WTO Agreements. Overall, developing and LDC Members submitted 86% of total Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) notifications and 74% of total notifications on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures in 2024.

The expansion of action-oriented TA activities on transparency to Customs Valuation and Import Licensing led to exceptional progress in submitting pending notifications under these Agreements.

TA Beneficiary Members also remained active in raising Specific Trade Concerns (STCs) related to SPS measures and TBT, demonstrating continued engagement in WTO Committees.

KEY RESULT 2 Accessing governments are participating in accession negotiations



Ahmed Mzé
Economic Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Comoros to the WTO

Accompanying new accessions

For the first time in eight years, two new Members, Comoros and Timor-Leste joined the WTO after the approval of their membership terms during the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13). This was the culmination of a long and intense process that benefited from the constant support of the Secretariat until its very final stages.

After these two accessions, the TA priorities switched to some of the 22 other governments seeking to join the WTO: Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and LDCs such as Ethiopia and Somalia.



Antonio Da Conceicao
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Timor-Leste to the WTO

“ From the start of negotiations to their conclusion, more than 20 government officials were trained on various WTO Agreements. These officials played a key role in both bilateral and multilateral negotiations. The technical assistance provided by the WTO Secretariat helped Comoros build the necessary expertise in trade negotiations, which was one of the major challenges in the accession process.

“ During the accession process, the Secretariat helped Geneva-based diplomats and capital-based officials navigate through the accession and post-accession roadmap. Visits, workshops and consultations strengthened the expertise of the negotiating team, particularly in reviewing important negotiating inputs and commitments before circulation to Members at multilateral level.

KEY RESULT 3

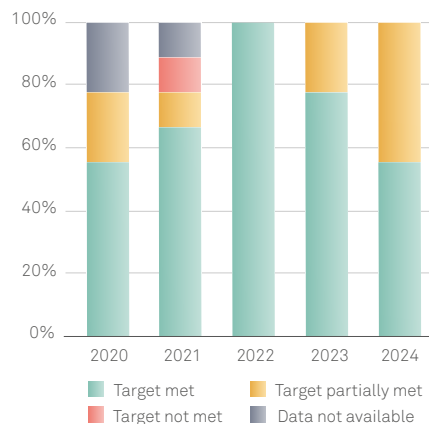


Academic institutions and other stakeholders are analysing WTO issues and reaching out to policy makers

Advancing academic research and policy dialogue

The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) supports academic institutions and researchers in developing Members, reinforcing their capacity to conduct trade-related research and inform policy debate.

In Phase III of the programme, which continued through 2024, research outputs of the 15 participating Chairs grew by 16%, while outreach events expanded by 23%, reflecting the programme's increasing impact. In preparation for Phase IV in 2025, five new universities were selected, broadening the WCP global network to 39 Chairs and increasing representation of certain regions.



Ambassador Ram Prasad Subedi

Nepal's Permanent Representative to the WTO

Chairperson of the WTO Committee on Trade and Development

“To ensure that the WTO meets the needs of all its Members, we must acknowledge the unique challenges faced by developing countries and LDCs. It is essential to take concrete steps to support their integration into the multilateral trading system. This is where the WTO Chairs Programme plays an important role.”

KEY RESULT 4

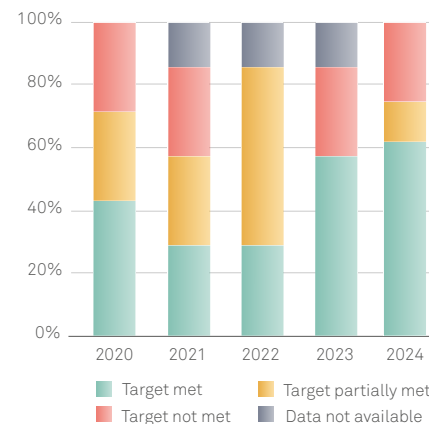


Non-governmental stakeholders and legislators are aware of and knowledgeable about WTO work and issues

Enhancing outreach and engagement with non-traditional stakeholders

The WTO TA also engages non-governmental stakeholders such as members of parliament, journalists, civil society organizations, and the private sector who indirectly influence trade policy in their countries. Budgetary constraints in 2024 led to a sharp decline in outreach activities for these groups, with only two events conducted for journalists. Self-study training materials made available to the general public through the e-Learning platform received over 9,000 requests, illustrating the continued relevance of TA beyond government institutions.

Efforts to increase awareness about TA activities and disseminate trade-related information to a broader audience were further strengthened through the web and social media platforms. In 2024, the number of visits to WTO TA web pages doubled compared to the previous year, enhancing engagement with diverse stakeholders and raising their awareness on TA's role to foster an inclusive multilateral trading system.



Prioritizing inclusion



**38 LDC's
benefited from
WTO TA**

The main objective of the WTO TA is to level the playing field in the Multilateral Trading System so that the weakest and most vulnerable are not excluded. This requires paying a particular attention to the inclusion of LDCs and women, and to make sure that TA is widely available across the world and in the three WTO languages.

In 2024, 29% of TA beneficiaries were nationals from LDCs, representing 38 WTO Members and Observers, maintaining a stable level compared to 2023.



Ambassador Kadra Ahmed Hassan of Djibouti
Permanent representative to the WTO
Coordinator of the WTO Group of LDCs

“WTO technical assistance is a key tool for our countries' inclusion so that we can achieve our development and poverty reduction goals. Existing programmes help our officials and experts to better understand and actively participate in trade negotiations, implement WTO Agreements, and harness the benefits of trade to boost economic development.



**47%
of Women
participation**

The share of women participation in WTO TA activities (47%) remained high. It increased in the Caribbean, Latin America, CEECAC and global activities, was stable in Asia-Pacific and e Learning, but declined in Africa and the Middle East.

Driven by e-Learning, participation in WTO TA activities increased in all regions, especially in Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Caribbean.

The proportion of languages used to conduct TA activities has not changed much since 2021 and was more balanced than in pre-pandemic years. Half of all TA activities – both e-Learning and face-to-face – were conducted in English (49%), while the use of French and Spanish accounted for 21% and 25% of activities respectively. The rest (5%) were activities delivered with interpretation.



Bernardine Sindzi Indouyi
Research Officer, Ministry of Trade of Gabon
Participant in the Advanced Course on Trade in Services

“What made the training particularly impactful was its delivery in French. For francophone participants like me, the opportunity to engage with complex concepts and discussions in our native language was invaluable.

TA Expenditure: Stringent controls

Overall, TA expenses in 2024 remained almost at the same level as in the previous year, confirming that the pandemic years were definitely over. Total TA expenses amounted to CHF 13.7 million, marginally below the 2015-19 average.

The overall TA expenses remained within the available TA resources during the year, thanks to the reserves accumulated during the pandemic and the Secretariat was able to fully respond to the TA requests of beneficiaries.

Ever more stringent controls on TA expenses were progressively implemented during the year to preserve as much as possible the TA cash reserves and maximise the return for TA beneficiaries. Measures taken included a reduction in the number of trainers or external

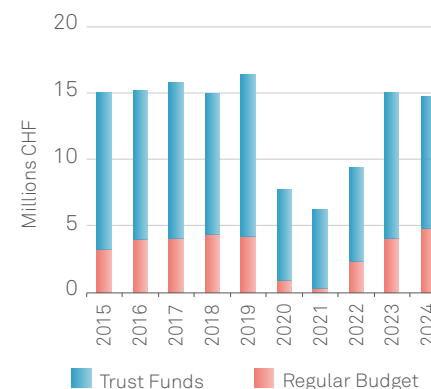
speakers financed, greater pressure on TA partners to finance part of the activity costs, preference given to cheaper venues for TA activities, negotiation of more favourable hotel and transport conditions, etc. So far, the Secretariat broadly preserved the quality and volume of its TA activities but is now reaching the limit of what can reasonably be achieved. Further savings will impact TA volumes or quality, if not both.

TA Resources: Racing to the bottom!

The WTO TA is traditionally financed through a combination of Regular Budget funding and voluntary contributions to trust funds, earmarked or not. Whilst Members kept the Regular Budget envelope for TA constant at CHF 4.5 million since 2012, some savings in other parts of the budget allowed the Secretariat to increase a bit the share of TA expenses which it could finance. After a rapid growth during the first decade following the creation of the WTO, voluntary contributions for TA have regularly decreased since 2007.

Less than CHF 3 million of unearmarked voluntary contributions were received in 2024 from 7 donors, the lowest level for 25 years, equivalent to 13% of the contributions received during the peak years of 2006-9. Meanwhile, earmarked voluntary contributions remained constant. They now systematically exceed unearmarked voluntary contributions, which increases the donor-driven proportion of the WTO TA offer.

Technical Assistance Expenses (2015-2024)



Norifumi Kondo
Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the WTO

“Japan contributed approximately EUR 230,000 to the Global Trust Fund in 2024 and donated over EUR 13.6 million to the various WTO Trust Funds for over 20 years. By supporting WTO's technical assistance activities, Japan aims to strengthen trade-related expertise and institutional frameworks of Members, contributing to their sustainable development.

WTO TA funding

Almost 57% of WTO TA resources in 2024 were voluntary contributions from the donor Members, while the remaining 43% came from the WTO regular budget



WTO Members that have contributed to WTO Trust Funds in recent years.



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation

World Trade Organization

Centre William Rappard,

Rue de Lausanne 154

CH-1211 Geneva 2

Switzerland

Tel. +41 (0)22 739 51 11

Email: TAMS@wto.org

Website: <https://www.wto.org>

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