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WACOMP Programme Highlights

Issue #2

Regional Component

E-learning courses set to boost ECOWAS business support organisations



In the wake of COVID-19, ITC has sought to find solutions with the newly imposed no-contact and travel restrictions for health and safety measures across the world. To continue delivering support to regional business support organisations (BSOs), the WACOMP programme engaged ITC's SME Trade Academy. Encouraging BSOs to enrol for a selected suite of nine online learning courses and training.

Through the SME Trade Academy, the WACOMP programme was able to engage business support organisations in a series of courses available in French and English. Each course takes two weeks to complete and includes readiness assessments, tasks and assignments.

Participants also receive an e-certificate upon the completion of their training. The nine course series began in June and will run for a period of three months, with the English courses concluding in August and French in September.

BSOs will have access to courses that cover trade subjects including: Considering Export Markets, Understanding the Role of Trade Support Institutions, Women and Procurement, Approaching Banks for Financing and more.

SME development agencies take part in week-long access to finance workshop



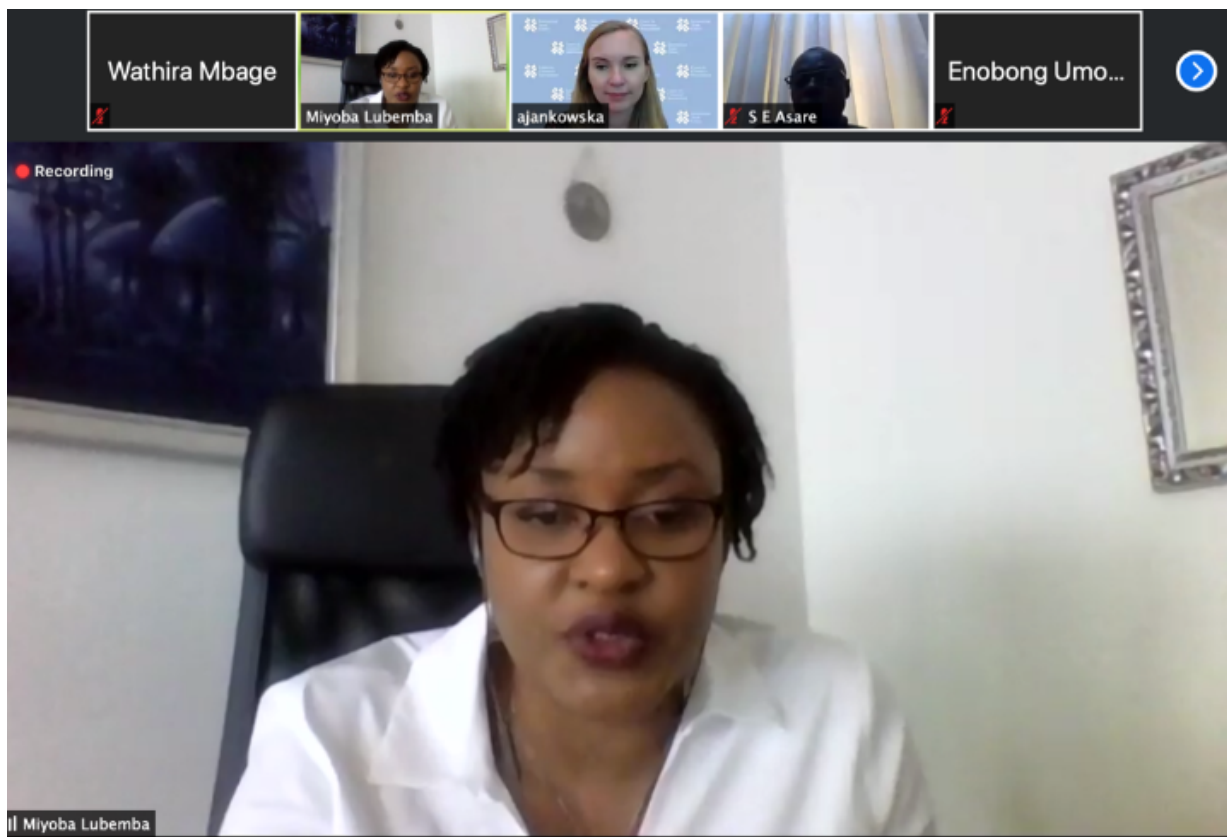
To ensure SMEs in the ECOWAS region receive improved support from local business development agencies, the WACOMP programme held an Access to Finance workshop in June. The training focused on SME development agencies improving the service portfolio for SME members by installing creative incentives for SME members to pay for agency services and providing guided interventions

for SMEs adapting to COVID-19.

With over 30 SME development agencies set to participate, ITC partnered with the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE), and used Singapore as a case study for observation and best practices for SME promotion and financing initiatives. The courses took place from 9 to 24 June in both English and French with a variety of sessions including Business Planning, Risk Capital as well as Financial Products, Services and Sustainability.

Following the weeklong training, Ms. Bellamech from the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Mauritania (CCIAM) said the workshop was “a lively and successful session that addressed Access to Finance, as a major issue for African SMEs, and allowed for the exchange of good practices and knowledge.” 10 women representatives took part in the five day workshop.

Learning to navigate COVID-19 using ITC trade Intelligence tools



With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic striking the daily functions of global trade, ITC set out to train regional Business Support Organisations (BSOs) and Trade Promotion Organisations (TPOs) on the Global Trade Helpdesk. The

helpdesk will provide these trade organisations with the skills to identify and compare export opportunities during the COVID19 crisis.

Over 220 participants from across West Africa were taken through current global business challenges, market access opportunities, export potential as well as applied and preferential tariffs. “The webinar session was really good and insightful. Quite refreshing content from the webinar overload, we have been experiencing so far,” said Aramide Abe, Director of Naija Startups after the session. Thereafter, ITC recorded nearly 25 percent of its helpdesk users in June from ECOWAS countries.

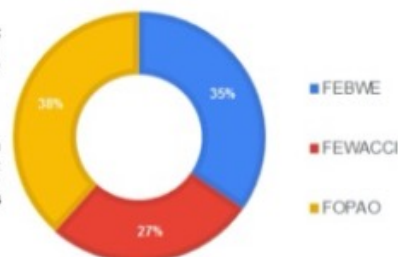
Through the Global Trade Helpdesk participants gained access to pertinent consolidated information, trade policy changes and new regulatory requirements related to the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 Impact on Business Support Organisations

Sample Profile

The COVID-19 Impact survey was conducted in late June 2020 with the objective of gathering views of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) on the present and future (potential) impact COVID-19 (may) have on their organisation and delivery of their services.

This report is based on the feedback received from of 23 representatives from 21 BSOs in the ECOWAS region, who are members of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI), the Federation of West African Employers' Associations (FWAEA) or the Federation of Business Women and Entrepreneurs (FEBWE).



Challenges faced by BSOs



Challenges Faced by Business Support Organisations

While BSOs have a crucial role to play in supporting businesses to survive and thrive, they are themselves negatively impacted by the COVID Pandemic

100% of respondents report that their revenue stream has been affected. BSOs are facing difficulties to collect membership fees and to access external funding with most of their income-generating activities severely constrained.

Paying staff salaries and allowances has therefore become a challenge, which consequently (could) result in placing staff on unpaid leave.

Many BSOs are unable to deliver their services as they rely on physical channels and face to face engagement. This is worsened by the fact that some BSOs are not tech savvy and/or lack appropriate Information and Communication Technology.

Measures Taken by Business Support Organisations

Despite the challenges, BSOs were eager to provide new solutions and opportunities to their business members

BSOs transitioned to **home-based work** and put in **place health measures in their workplace**.

Many have leveraged **online options for service delivery** and for maintaining regular contact with their members.

BSOs have also adopted **new strategies** to help their members manage ongoing challenges related to the pandemic.

Notably, BSOs are providing **essential information** to companies on solutions available to them and on containment measures taken by the government. They are **assessing the business impact of the crisis** and are **advocating intensively for governments** to take initiatives to address emerging challenges.

Strategies adopted by BSOs to cope with the crisis



Urgent BSO Needs



Support Needed

The WACOMP project will support regional BSOs through targeted capacity building to enable them effectively represent and stimulate ECOWAS private sector recovery.

BSOs need to support small businesses, producers and entrepreneurs' resilience and recovery more than ever. They must be proactive, despite disruption and anxiety they are personally facing, and **occupy a front line role**.

Under the project, Regional Business Associations will receive support in the areas of **strategy and service portfolio consolidation** to ensure an effective COVID response, **robust business modelling** and **service delivery digitisation**.

Country Components

The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying the ITC Export Potential Map website. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'exportpotential.intracon.org/en/'. The website header includes the ITC logo and the text 'Export Potential Map SPOT EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADE DEVELOPMENT'. Below the header is a navigation menu with 'HOME', 'PRODUCTS', 'MARKETS', 'EXPORTERS', 'ABOUT', 'RESOURCES', and 'ITC TOOLS'. The main content area features the heading 'Spot export opportunities for trade development' and a brief description of the tool. A list of opportunities is provided, including 'products, markets and suppliers with (untapped) export potential' and 'opportunities for export diversification'. A search bar at the bottom asks 'What is the export potential for' followed by a dropdown menu for 'Search a product or country...'. On the right side, a video conference interface is visible, showing a grid of participants with names: 'obiananmaagbim', 'Hanne Knockaert', 'Osman Alpha Kargbo', and 'ahabtemariam'. A small video thumbnail of a man is also visible.

Sierra Leone

In May, various institutions in the country compiled a group of representatives to participate in the e-learning course the Role of Standards in Sustainable Supply Chains. Thereafter in June, Sierra Leonean Business Support Organisations (BSOs) participated in a market analysis tools workshop.

The virtual introductory training took trainees through ITC's market analysis tools over two weeks. BSOs learned to use the primary ITC market analysis tools to enhance their data and information on international opportunities to share with small business owners in the country.

Guinea

In June, a consultative meeting was held with public and private stakeholders from the Guinean pineapple sector. The exchanges were aimed at selecting two target markets in the country's pineapple sector and to identify export opportunities for continental and international markets.

The draft study on the country's market opportunities will serve as ITC's key approach during programme implementation. Following the discussions, ITC will adapt the structure of the EU market research study as well as assess the feasibility of covering several markets within the country's sub-region.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

WACOMP ITC



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