

COVID-19: TRADE FACILITATION RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC



WORLD BANK GROUP

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Context....

- ❑ The duration of COVID-19 is uncertain
- ❑ Containment measures implemented by many countries may have
 - ❑ provided some immediate relief in the short term
- ❑ Recovery preparation and sustainability are critical



WBG Trade Facilitation Support Program Response

- ❑ WBG activated 14 Billion in emergency financing to support COVID-19 country responses including health, PPE, & Trade Facilitation
- ❑ TFSP increased the use of virtual modalities and local staffing . The team produced two **guidance notes** and a **video** to assist recipient countries with responses to the crisis.

Guidance Notes

- ❑ [“Managing Risk and Facilitating Trade in the COVID-19 Pandemic”](#): provides initial guidance on measures to support business continuity and protection of front-line officers, as well as to facilitate safe cross-border trade
- ❑ [“Trade Facilitation Best Practices Implemented in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”](#): provides examples of good practices implemented by countries in response to COVID-19 in order to support governments in dealing with the crisis and improve trade in critical commodities

Video

- ❑ [“Managing Risk and Facilitating Trade during COVID-19”](#): trade facilitation experts discuss how countries can mitigate pandemic-related trade risks in a time of crisis

TFSP-SUPPORTED RESPONSE

Country support examples:

**Maintaining
business
continuity**

- The TFSP-supported teams quickly adapted their work programs to **virtual modalities**. For example, in **Vanuatu**, a remote video conferencing assistance schedule was developed with Vanuatu officials. In **Malawi**, the TFSP supported the government to procure WiFi Routers, especially for the NTFC. These are expected to assist the committee to host its first virtual meeting.

**Keeping trade
flowing in the
short and
medium term**

- In **Fiji**, the TFSP supported the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service in releasing the “COVID-19 Response Budget and Revenue Policies” paper to provide details of arrangements to assist with the border clearance process during the pandemic.
- In **Malawi**, the TFSP supported the Malawi Revenue Authority with implementation of a risk management program on the expedited release and clearance of critical imports.

**Taking a forward-
looking view
towards
recovery**

- In **Sierra Leone**, the TFSP supported continued engagement with the government on project activities and positioned the project to accelerate delivery to respond to post-COVID-19 recovery challenges. The team will focus on streamlining customs procedures and harmonization with other border agencies procedures; strengthening existing automation systems.

TFSP-SUPPORTED RESPONSE (REGIONAL)

Central America

- At the request of the Central American Secretariat of Economic Integration and the Regional Customs Committee, the TFSP-supported WBG team prepared and delivered an inventory of constraints being faced by the private sector and best practice solutions seen globally

Europe and Central Asia

- TFSP-supported SPS experts have commenced developing a guide and a set of virtual training sessions on risk management in SPS agencies in the Western Balkans and beyond

Africa

- In **Southern Africa**, recovery action plans are being developed at national and regional levels with NTFCs.

LESSONS LEARNED

The COVID-19 pandemic has **re-confirmed the criticality of trade facilitation** to keep essential goods moving across borders to limit the pandemic's impact on human health and the economy.

The WTO TFA should continue to be leveraged to implement measures that expedite trade, especially to aid in recovery efforts and in preparation for when a vaccine is developed and ready for wide and swift distribution across the world, particularly for LDCs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interactions must be limited. While there are online modalities available, not all officials have the same technological capabilities or capacity to access online resources. The program must remain **flexible** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by pivoting and adapting work streams. The TFSP continues to support guidance and technical assistance to countries to implement best practices to facilitate the flow of goods.

Governments have to re-allocate resources and priorities to combat the spread of the virus, but a watershed event such as the pandemic can spur governments to expedite the implementation of certain trade facilitation measures and reforms in order to minimize disruptions to trade flows. If these measures can be extended beyond the current crisis, these trade facilitation reforms can have economy-wide impacts on recovery efforts.

Thank you



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For more information:

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