



Activity Spotlight and Lessons Learned

Program: eTrade Alliance Evidence Summit

Dates: October 2023

Participants: USAID staff and eTrade Alliance private sector partners

Alliance Series: Digitization and Inclusive Trade

Description:

- eTrade Alliance hosted its inaugural Evidence Summit in-person at the Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, DC.
- The event was attended by a total of 48 participants and 18 speakers representing 13 countries.
- Speakers comprised partners from the private sector and the eTrade Alliance such as Upskill Digital, DHL, Mastercard, UPS, Hello Tractor, and more.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate the Alliance’s work, highlighting achievements and challenges.
- Assess the potential to scale Alliance activities.
- Discuss key priorities and strategies to promote SME development through digitization and ecommerce in developing countries.

Topics:

- Initiatives to Enable SMEs in Ecommerce
- Alliance Management Approaches
- Future of Private Sector Development through Ecommerce
- Approaches to Promote Ecommerce Ecosystems
- How to Drive Policy Reforms Conducive to Ecommerce

Evidence Summit:

Hybrid event convening USAID and private sector leaders to promote engagement and learning around MSME ecommerce in developing countries.

Participant countries:

Argentina, Chile, France, Guatemala, Israel, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, South Africa, Tunisia, United States

Links to Resources:

- [Video recordings and discussion summaries](#)
- [MarketLinks](#)

Keys for impact:

Provide breadth and depth in perspectives on enabling MSME ecommerce, facilitated by focused discussion questions.



I. Speakers and Participants

- Speakers mainly represented North America (United States and Mexico) as well as Africa (Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa) (Figure 1). One-third were female.
- Most participants were from the private sector (Figure 2) and one-half were female.

Figure 1 – Speakers by region

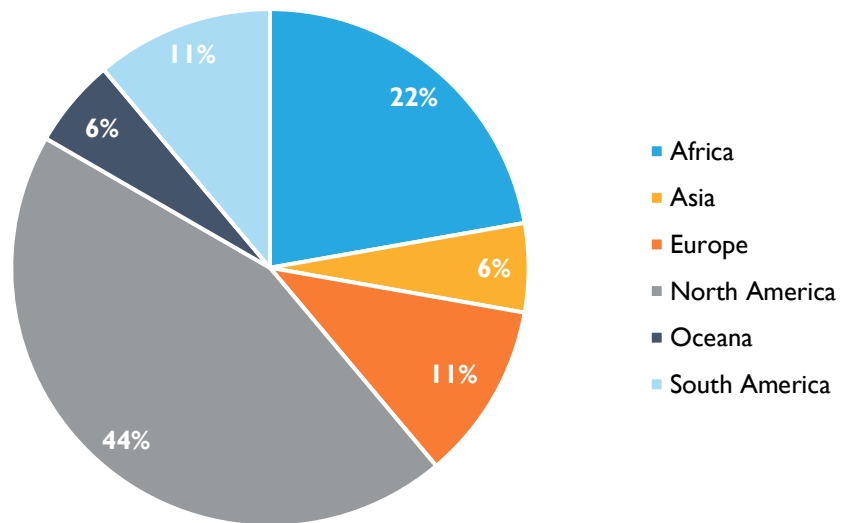
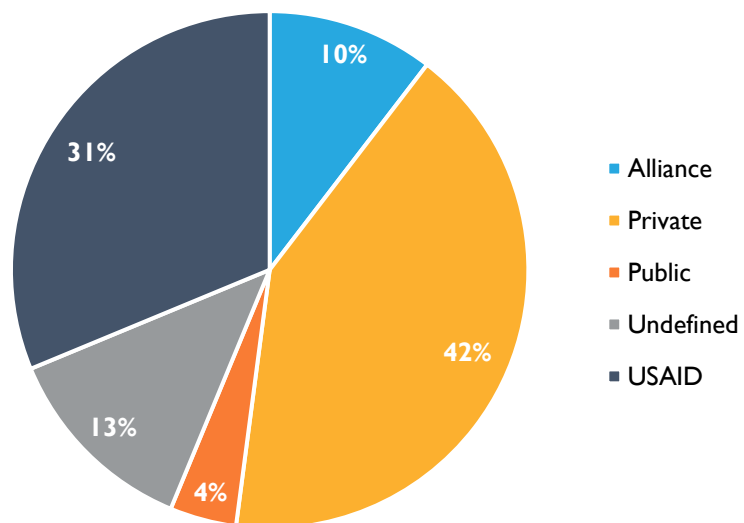


Figure 2 – Participants by sector





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II. Key Findings from Participants

There were three main panel discussions and two in-depth sessions focused on the enabling environment and on ecommerce ecosystems. Themes that were highlighted include:



Collaboration and co-creation approaches: A pillar of the eTrade Alliance's management approach is its focus on partner engagement and opportunity identification. They bring together private sector partners, USAID Missions, and local partners to identify opportunities for collaboration and co-creation.



Focus on capacity-building for SMEs: There has been a heavy focus on capacity building in eTrade Alliance projects, including training on digital skills necessary for SMEs to succeed in areas such as ecommerce-specific training, logistics, payments, and marketplace onboarding.



Tailored programming for women-led firms: Projects focused on women, most of the Alliance's projects, require additional considerations for success, namely in the areas of leadership, confidence-building, networking, and community-support.



Ensure sustainability: The Alliance needs to ensure sustainability by working with local ecosystem actors. One example is pursued in Latin America – where the Alliance is engaging local ecosystem partners such as online marketplaces to enable them to incorporate training programs which would enable SMEs to utilize their services and scale their sales online.



Emphasis on data and technical thought leadership: Partners stressed that the Alliance needs to continue collecting data for designing activities and pursue more technical and policy work in the area of logistics, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence.

At the end of the various panels, the participants completed a live survey to capture insights to help inform the Alliance's direction for the coming year:

- Participants strongly favored projects that scale proven models and working with existing USAID projects (Figure 3).
- In considering ways to promote the scalability and sustainability of the Alliance's work, participants saw as the most relevant approach working through the Alliance to bolster ecommerce ecosystems, followed by ecommerce-related policies (Figure 4).



- Participants highlighted the need for the Alliance to prioritize tooling MSMEs at scale with digital technologies that advance them on their digital journey, followed by working with the local ecommerce ecosystems and contextualizing work to local contexts (Figure 5).
- Most participants recommend the Alliance focus on working with MSMEs lead by youth (67%), women (61%), and/or undigitized (61%) (Figure 6)

Figure 3 – Approaches with highest potential to drive SME participation in ecommerce (0=lowest priority, 5=highest priority)*

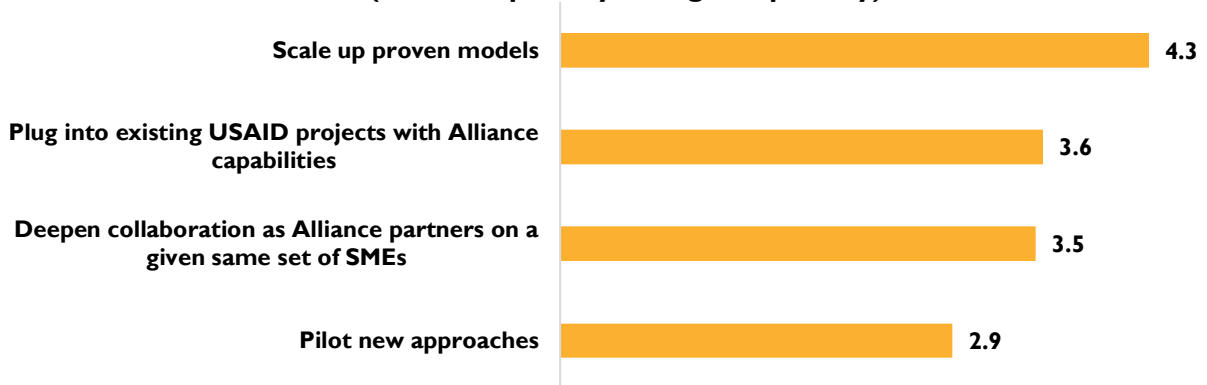
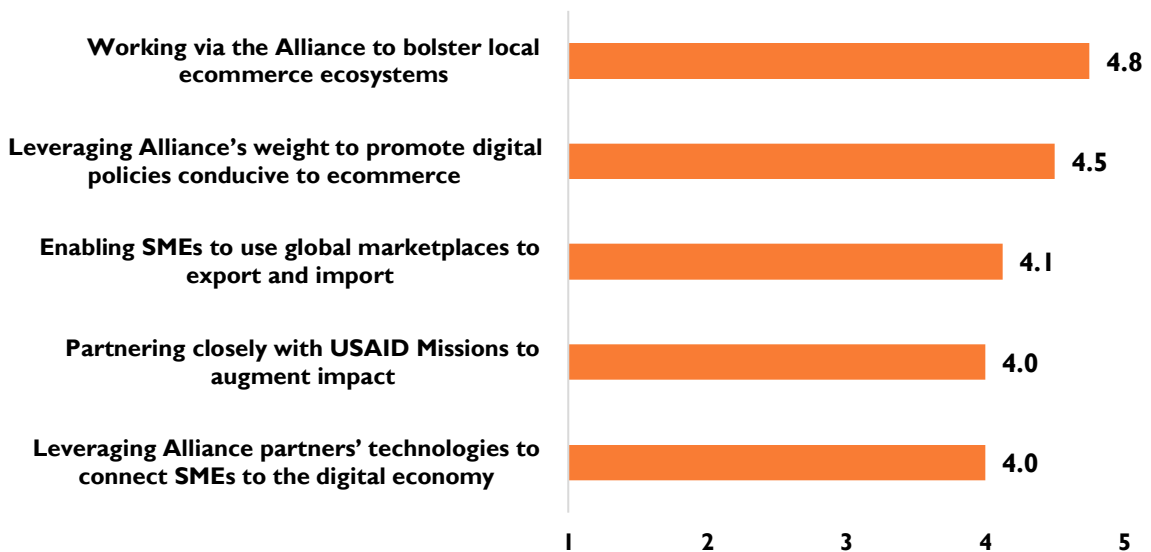


Figure 4 – Relevance of each approach to ensure scalability and sustainability of impact (0=least relevant, 5=most relevant)*



*weighted average score



Figure 5 – Types of projects the Alliance should prioritize (0=lowest priority, 5=highest priority)*

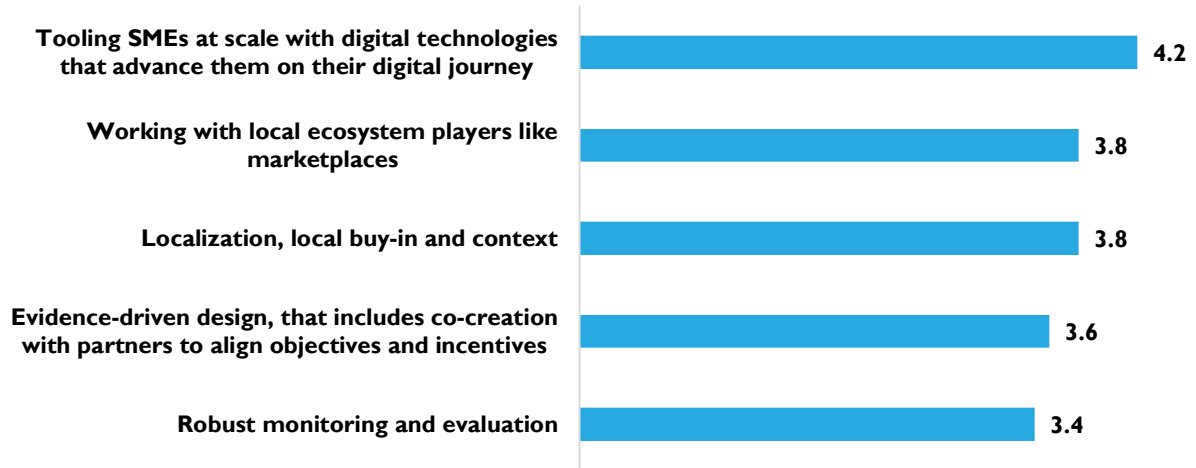
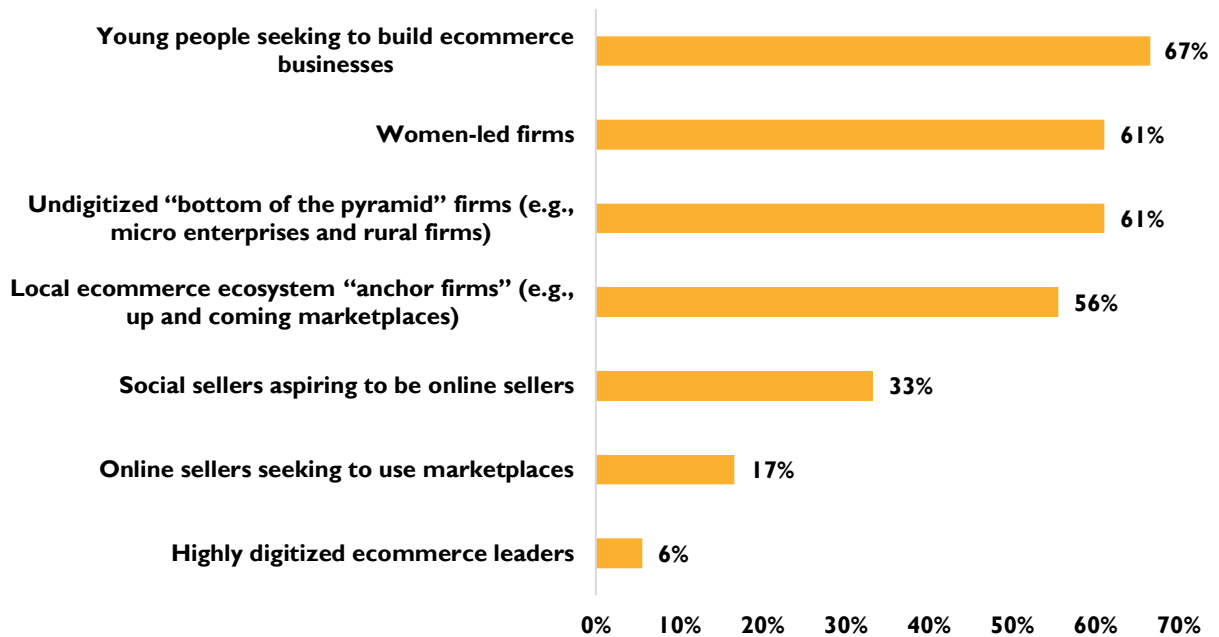


Figure 6 – Types of SMEs the Alliance should prioritize



*weighted average score



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- Prominent terms that were mentioned during the main panel that discussed initiatives to enable SMEs in ecommerce are “eTrade Alliance”, “MSMEs/SMEs”, and “Kenya” (Figure 7)

Figure 7 – Main panel word cloud



Quotes from the participants:

- “The key to addressing challenges - which is why the Alliance is good - is that no one party is going to address these challenges on their own. It does need collaboration, public and private.” – *Craig Kirkland, Director of Pacific Islands at Mastercard*
- “The eTrade Alliance gives us a number of benefits. First, it’s ground truth – it’s understanding what’s actually happening on the ground when you come out of the trade facilitation agreement. If you want to make a difference, you have to understand, first and foremost, what SMEs in that community are experiencing. Secondly, if you are going to take that step forward, the eTrade Alliance can be a much more targeted focused effort.” – *Roger Libby, Vice President and Head of Corporate Public Affairs in the Americas at DHL*
- “Collaboration is very important. We cannot solve these problems unless all stakeholders get together and fill the knowledge gaps and fill the roles gap in a complementary way. It would be very difficult to address challenges in digital policy today if we did not have these relationships already developed. In order to enable ecommerce would be difficult if we hadn’t already known each other [through the Alliance].” *Heba Shams, Vice President of Global Public Policy at Mastercard*



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III. Lessons Learned

What worked well in implementation:

- Strong participation of Alliance partners throughout the day.
- Diversity of insights from a variety of partners working at policy-, ecosystem- and MSME-levels and in different regions spanning the globe.
- Excellent and actionable recommendations for improving and scaling the Alliance's work and impact such as:
 - Initiatives should include components that facilitate government engagement for MSMEs and guarantee stakeholder buy-in and commitment to ensure sustainability.
 - Continue advocating for policies that prioritize digital and financial inclusion for MSMEs.
 - Leverage public-private partnerships to foster supportive policies that would maximize utilization of existing digital and physical infrastructure.
 - Explore strategies to optimize inclusivity, learning, and scalability.
- Participants saw a lot of value in dedicating the time to meet, review progress under the Alliance, and discuss how best to move forward. *It would be useful to hold these Evidence Summits every two years.*

Challenges and ways to improve engagement:

- Condensing the Alliance's extensive content and materials within a short timeframe and limited time for each discussion impeded deeper engagement with the audience. Ideally, each discussion would have included sufficient time for a robust question and answer session to integrate the insights and contributions of the participants in each issue area.
- This calls for further in-depth interactive technical discussions on key topics, for example through a public-private dialogue and webinars as well as podcasts to highlight specific areas and approaches that promote ecommerce for MSMEs.

This summary was prepared by Jem Marasigan, Nextrade Group.