



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## Activity Spotlight and Lessons Learned

Alliance Partner: **eCommerce Institute**

Dates: **2020-2021**

Program: **Ecommerce capacity-building for women-led MSMEs**

Alliance Series: **MSME capacity-building, inclusive trade**

### **What was done?**

- The eCommerce Institute selected women-led MSMEs to receive scholarships to take one of four types of courses on ecommerce topics as part of their eWomen program.

### **How was the program designed?**

- Women-led firms applied to receive scholarship for a course suitable for their digital maturity level:
  - "Internet Sales Operator" Course + Digital Acceleration Program (Beginner)
  - "Intensive Digital Commerce Program" (Intermediate)
  - "Senior Program in Digital Commerce" (Advanced)
  - "Advanced Program in Digital Commerce" including cross-border ecommerce (Advanced)
- Target firms selected to receive scholarships, based on the following selection criteria:
  - <250 employees
  - USAID presence country or Argentina
  - Woman CEO or 50%+ female executive team
  - Focus on rural and artisan sectors
  - Motivated and desire to learn
  - Viable product/service and proven demand
  - Dedicated time and investment in company to build ecommerce business

**Project:** Scholarships for ecommerce training for women-led businesses

**Country:** Various, Latin America

**Target segments:** Women-led MSMEs

**Outcomes:** 288 MSMEs selected in two rounds of applications, 139 completed the program

**Impacts:** Gains in ecommerce use, online sales, new customers

**Top Lesson:** Essential to ensure participant participation during and after the course

### **Keys for impact:**

- Rigorous selection criteria
- Courses tailored to firms' ecommerce readiness
- High-quality course content and teachers



## I. Participants

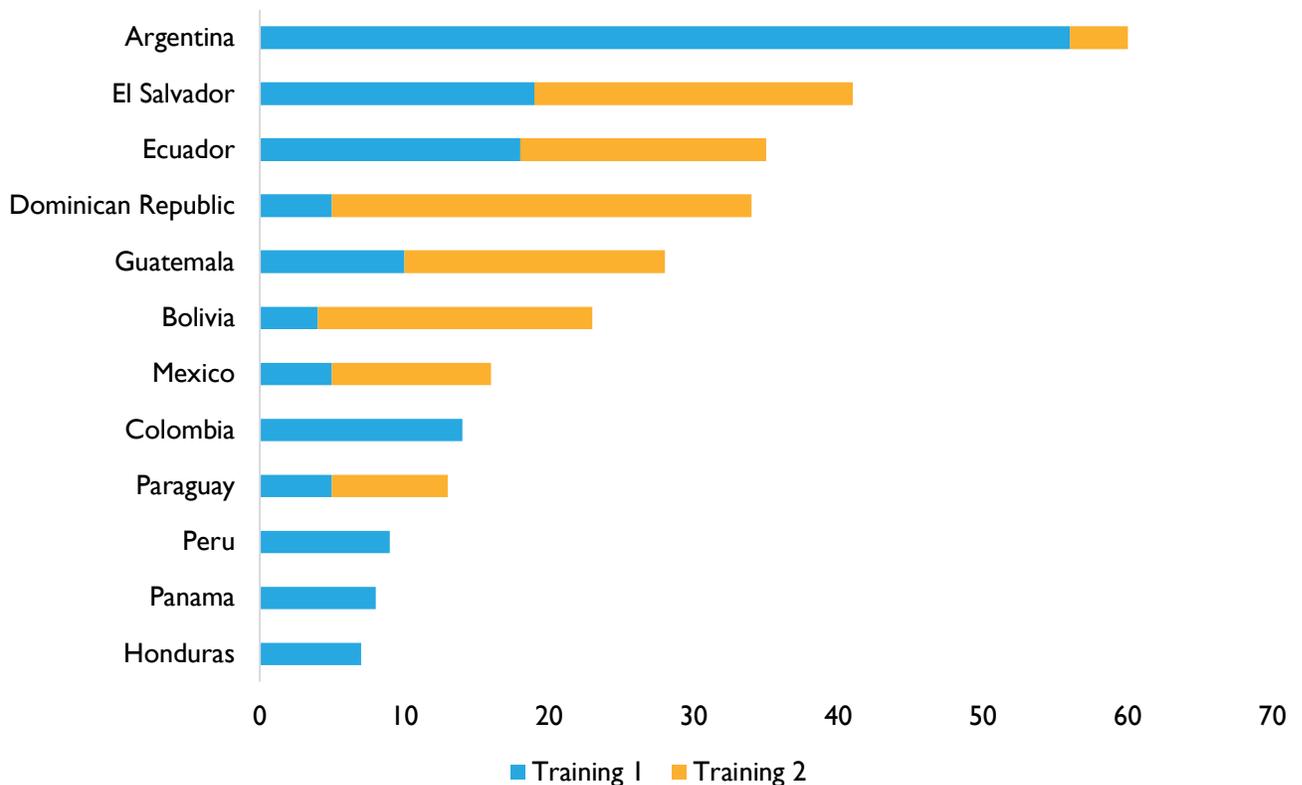
The eCommerce Institute’s scholarship program for women-led MSMEs provided training on ecommerce topics, with varying course levels based on the participant’s ecommerce readiness.

There were two rounds of applications and scholarships given out. In the first round, 160 women from 12 countries were selected to participate, 131 accepted the scholarship, and 70 completed the program.

In the second round, 128 women from 8 countries were selected to participate, all 128 accepted the scholarship, and 69 completed the program.

Figure I shows the breakdown of selected participants by country for each training.

**Figure I – Number of participants by country in each training**





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

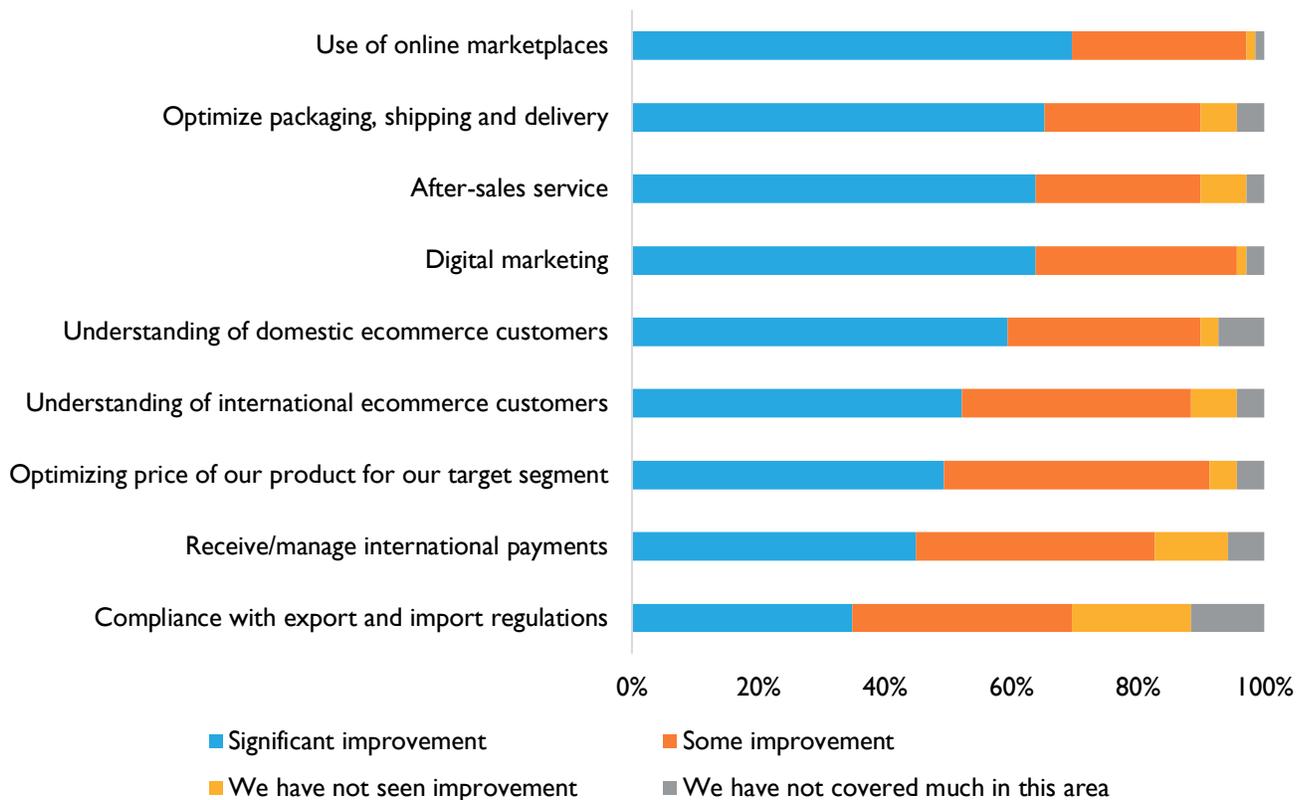


## II. Reported Impacts

In a post-course survey, a majority reported “significant improvement” in use of ecommerce (figure 2), specifically in:

- 70 percent in use of online marketplaces
- 65 percent in optimizing packaging, shipping and delivery
- 64 percent in digital marketing and after-sales service
- 59 percent in understanding online domestic online customers, and 52 percent in understanding international online customers.

**Figure 2 – Reported improvements in skills**



Respondents saw improvements in several business KPIs and revenue (Figures 3 and 4):

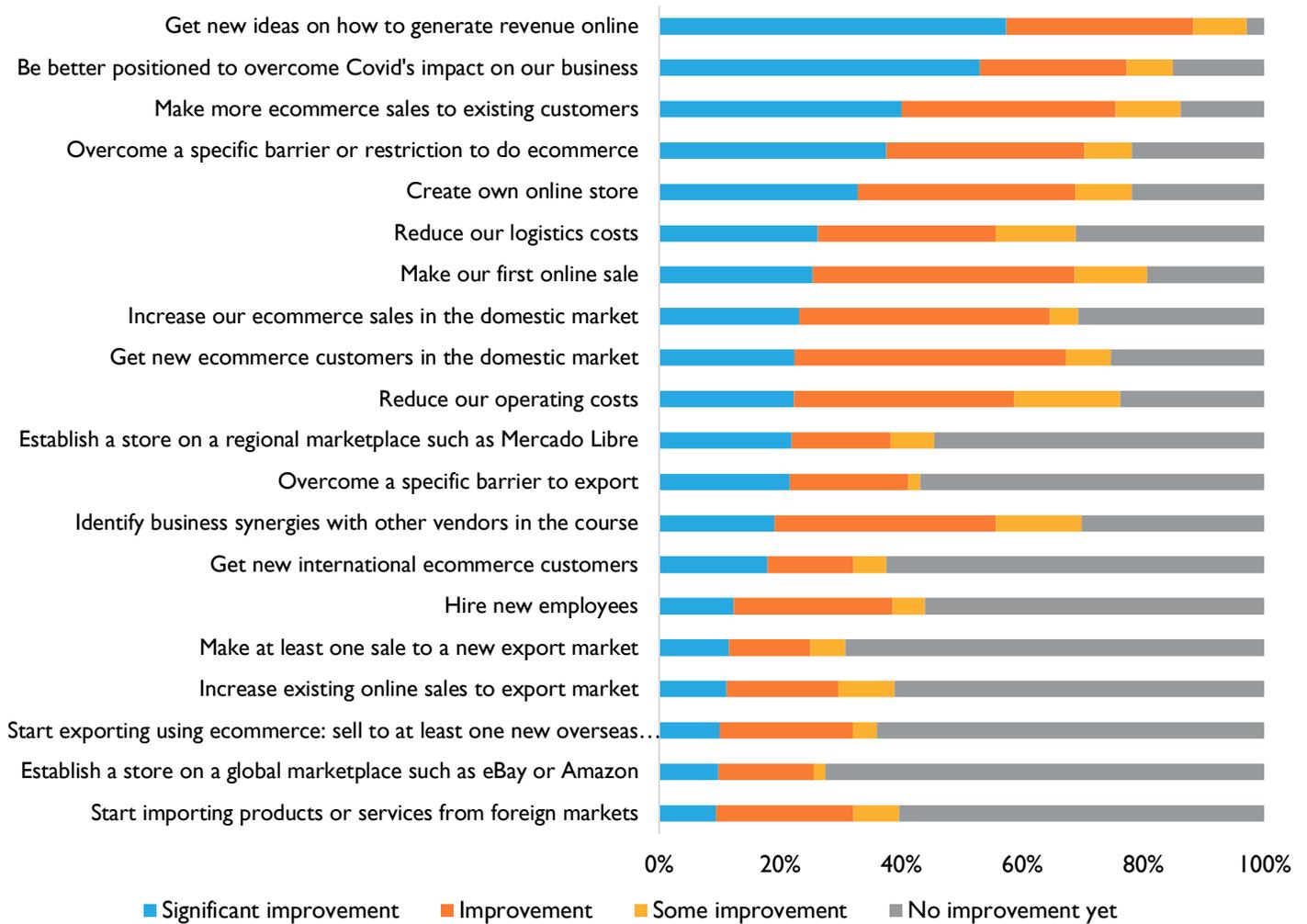
- 97 percent reported coming up with new ideas on how to generate revenue online
- 68 percent reported “improvements” or “significant improvements” in KPIs of making first online sales and 67 percent in gaining new domestic customers
- 37 percent reported improvements in KPIs in gaining international customers
- 70 percent reported growth of online sales since taking the course



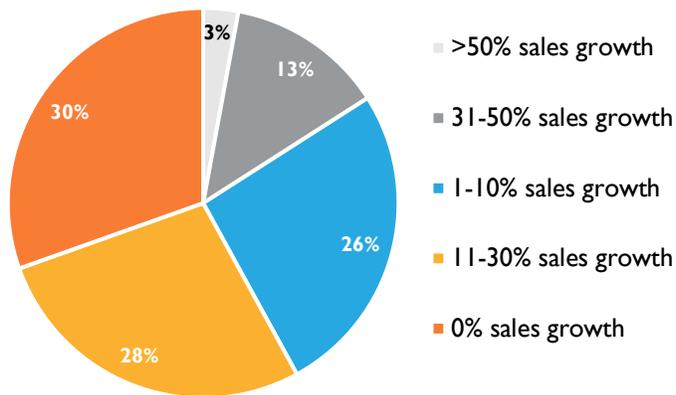
**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**Figure 3 - Reported improvement in Business KPIs**



**Figure 4 - Reported revenue growth**





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## II. Implementation analysis

What worked well in implementation:

- Rigorous selections and slotting of firms to the right course
- Course content and teachers were effective

Challenges in implementation:

- Almost half of the original selected participants did not complete the course. A survey was done for these drop-out participants after the first cohort which indicated that most of those who dropped out did so because of challenges due to time constraints, and Covid-related burdens.
- Did not receive post-course survey from all participants- 20/70 responses from first cohort, 49/69 responses from second cohort
- Participants often require further support after the course ends
- Some participants' low leadership skills and confidence

Recommendations to overcome challenges:

- Discuss time commitment in selection process
- Provide greater flexibility/options for taking the course
- Consider alternative methods of measuring impact, include hosting a focus group with past students to gather real time data, or offering incentives such as partner discounts or additional content for participating in the impact survey.
- Provide ongoing mentorship and support
- Training in general leadership skills



### Testimonial

***THANK YOU to eCommerce Institute for teaching me and believing in my potential. Please pass on my thanks to USAID for this opportunity they gave me. It is an excellent tool for my professional career and I encourage you to continue supporting women. The impact attained is incredible. –***

**Tete de Cid, Guatemala**

*This summary was prepared by Erica Vambell and Kati Suominen of Nextrade Group.*



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



### **About Alliance partner eCommerce Institute**

*The eCommerce Institute, based in Argentina, is a nonprofit regional organization that supports the development of the Digital Economy in Latin America through initiatives that strengthen and promote ecommerce. The Institute works with its network of 18 Latin American eCommerce and business associations to develop, promote, and accelerate the training and professionalization of human capital in the industry, as well as share knowledge, success stories, and best practices. The Institute distributes ecommerce training and capacity courses, and hosts regional eCommerce Days. As a partner of the eTrade Alliance, the Institute contributes to capacity building projects and policy dialogues.*