

Activity Spotlight and Lessons Learned: Digital Trade Dialogues

Program: **Policy Dialogues**

Dates: **2020 - 2022**

Participants: **Public officials, USAID leadership, and eTrade Alliance private sector partners**

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

Description:

- eTrade Alliance has hosted 10 virtual Digital Trade Dialogues touching on over 70 countries
- Nearly 900 participants attended these closed-doors events
- Speakers and attendees included leading government officials, representatives from regional organizations, global and local business leaders, and the Alliance's member partners
- Dialogues were held virtually to maximize country coverage and attendance, as well as comparative viewpoints from other regions

Objectives:

- Promote engagement among public and private sector leaders on fresh policy ideas and global best practices to promote MSME ecommerce
- Gauge need for ecommerce development and develop impactful partnerships and programs

Topics:

- Digital regulations
- Technology and innovation
- Trade facilitation and ecommerce logistics
- Capacity building, skills training and workforce development
- Policy enablement
- Inclusive trade - focus on women-led and rural MSMEs
- Digital financial services
- Interoperability of digital platforms and services

Digital Trade Dialogues:

Virtual events convening government officials, private sector leaders, and industry associations to promote MSME ecommerce in developing economies

Countries and regions:

Bolivia, Colombia, Pacific Islands, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Ecuador, African Union Members, South and Southeast Asia

Purpose:

Forum for relevant stakeholders to discuss and develop policies, technology pilots, business models, and development initiatives to promote and facilitate MSME ecommerce

Keys for impact:

- Actionable engagement between key public and private sector leaders
- Data-driven and empirically grounded discussion, drawing on latest research
- Building on global best practices
- Alliance's funding to act on ideas discussed concrete initiatives

I. Activity highlights

The eTrade Alliance has hosted 10 virtual Digital Trade Dialogues to promote micro, small and medium-sized enterprises' (MSMEs) ecommerce and cross-border trade through better enabling environments for ecommerce. The dialogues were premised on the notion that enhancing the policy environment for MSME ecommerce is critical for impact in other Alliance activities, such as MSME ecommerce capacity-building.

The dialogues were data-driven and highly actionable, centering on:

- MSMEs' current use of ecommerce and pain points in growing their ecommerce sales in the target markets, such as a capacity and policy constraints;
- The state of the ecommerce ecosystem, such as digital payments, financial and logistics services;
- Good global practices and innovative business and policy options in such areas as workforce development, access to technology, digital regulations, and trade facilitation for ecommerce; and
- Pilot program ideas to operationalize solutions that further MSME ecommerce, specifically through public-private development partnerships such as the eTrade Alliance.

The ten events covered altogether over 70 countries and involved 895 local and regional public officials, leaders from USAID missions and the private sector, as well as the Alliance's member partners (Figures 1-2). The agendas for the dialogues can be found [here](#).

Figure 1 – Digital Policy Dialogues Countries and Regions

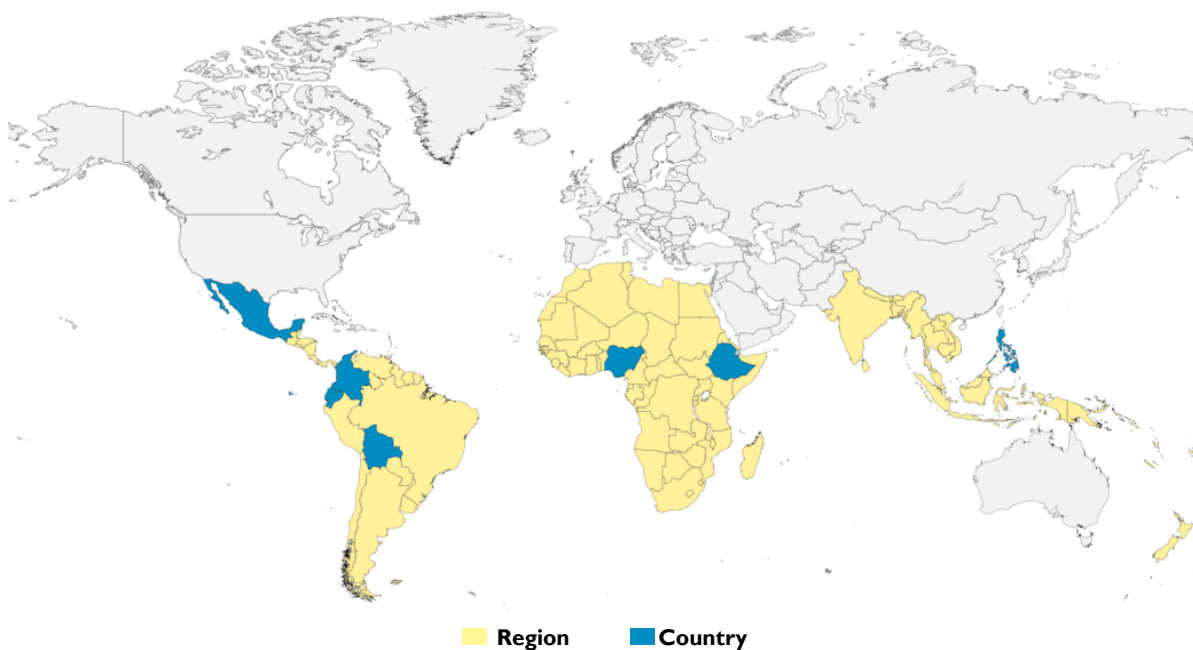
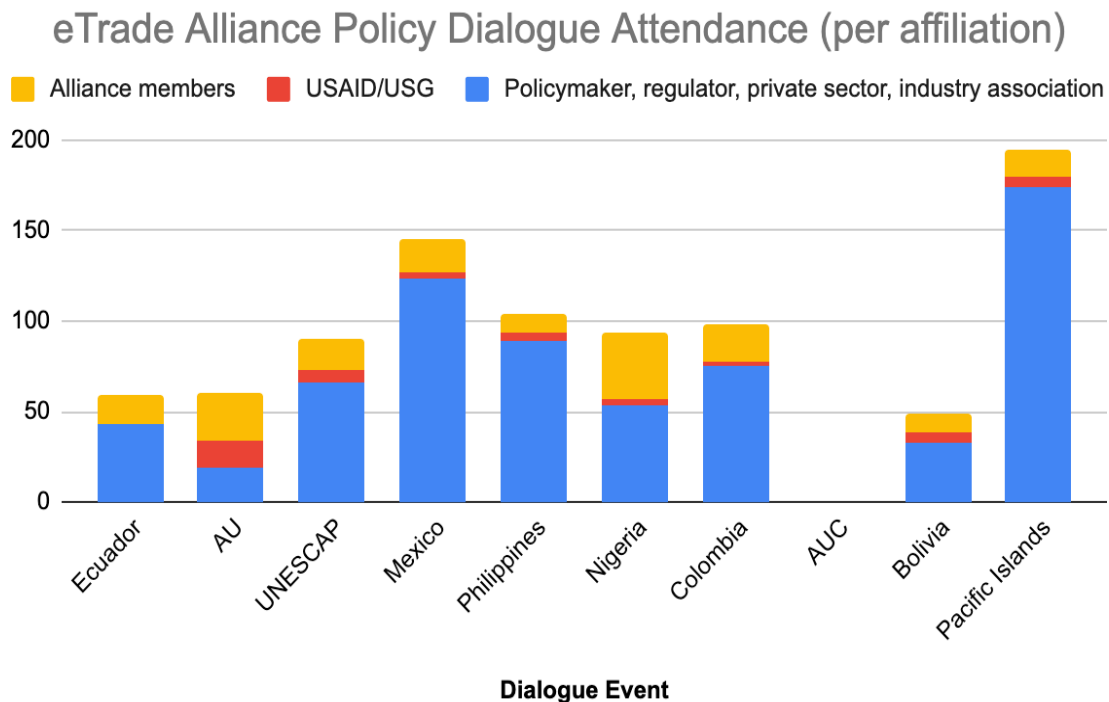


Figure 2 – Digital Trade Dialogues by Country/Region and Type of Attendee



Each dialogue convened senior policymakers and private sector leaders in the local ecommerce ecosystem to maximize impact. For example, in the Colombia Dialogue, Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez gave opening remarks; in the Mexico Dialogue, the Secretary of the Economy Tatiana Clouthier, provided a keynote speech. Several dialogues featured congressional representatives, ICT and trade ministers, leaders from central banks and national chambers of commerce, as well as regional executives and MSMEs, who shared their ecommerce journeys and discussed key challenges they face.

The dialogues were co-hosted with regional partners including Alliance partners’ local offices, local ecommerce associations, and regional bodies so as to promote the events in the local ecosystems and enhance participation.

While centered on promoting MSMEs’ ecommerce development, the main topics of the dialogues were contextualized to the respective countries and regions where they were hosted (Table 1). For example, in Mexico, the dialogue focused on enabling MSMEs in cross-border ecommerce, specifically in North America, while the 2021 regional dialogue with the African Union focused on data transfer policies, a topic of keen current interest to African governments.

In each dialogue, the Alliance presented research and diagnostics on local MSMEs’ ecommerce and policy challenges in the respective host country and region, so as to center the discussions on priority problems and

catalyze ideation of pertinent solutions. In each dialogue, the Alliance also catalogued results in writeups that can be found [here](#).

Table I – Topics and Co-Hosts in the Alliance’s Digital Trade Dialogues

Dialogue	Co-hosts	Topics	Selected Speakers	Selected presentations and feature studies
Bolivia 18 February 2022	eCommerce Institute Bolivian eCommerce Association (ABCe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSME Digital Inclusion MSME ecommerce capacity building Women owned SMEs and rural enterprises Digital payments for ecommerce Law and policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mariela Baldivieso</i>, National Congresswoman and Representative <i>Marlene Salinas Duran</i>, President, Bolivian Chamber of Businesswomen & Female Entrepreneurs <i>Lorenzo Catala</i>, Manager of Strategic Planning and Finance, Bolivian National Chamber of Commerce 	Ecommerce policy report and index Alliance for eTrade
Pacific Islands 4 March 2022	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pacific Regional Ecommerce Strategy and Roadmap MSME ecommerce capacity-building Cross-border payments Cross-border and last-mile logistics costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Henry Puna</i>, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum <i>Ajay Jagannath</i>, Regional Technical Specialist, UN Capital Development Fund <i>Tolefoa Nella Tavita-Levy</i>, Assistant CEO of Trade, Samoan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade <i>Truman Bradley</i>, CEO, Fintech Pacific 	Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap
Colombia 28 July 2021	eCommerce Institute Colombian Chamber for eCommerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colombia’s National Ecommerce Policy MSMEs’ use of cross-border ecommerce Access to secure online payments, financial services Low-cost cross-border logistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>H.E. Marta Lucía Ramírez</i>, Vice President, Colombia <i>Ana María Prieto</i>, Head of the Payment System Department, Central Bank of Colombia <i>Gheidy Gallo</i>, High Advisor for Women’s Equity, Office of the President, Colombia <i>Diana Perez Forero</i>, Legal Manager, Andean Marketplace, Mercado Libre 	Diálogo de Comercio Digital Colombia Best place for MSMEs in ecommerce Alliance for eTrade
Mexico 3 March 2021	Mexican Association of Online Sales (AMVO) eCommerce Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USMCA and ecommerce Covid-19 recovery Cross-border digital payments Digital identity and cyber security Last mile logistics, trade facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>H.E. Tatiana Clouthier</i>, Secretary of the Economy, Mexico <i>Roberto Martínez</i>, Director, OECD Mexico Center <i>Miguel Díaz</i>, Gen. Director of Payment Systems & Market Infrastructures, BdeM <i>Luz María de la Mora</i>, Undersec. for Foreign Trade, SE, Mexico <i>Alehiria Orozco</i>, Head of Public Affairs, Mercado Libre 	Accelerating MSME eCommerce in Mexico Impacts of FinTech lending on online seller MSMEs: early insights from Mexico



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Dialogue	Co-hosts	Topics	Selected Speakers	Selected presentations and feature studies
Philippines 17 June 2021	The Asia Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philippine Ecommerce Roadmap 2022 Rural MSMEs in ecommerce and last-mile logistics Urban retailers and MSME ecommerce Trade policies for MSME ecommerce Digital payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mary Jean Pacheco</i>, Asst. Sec., Digital Philippines and Ecommerce Lead, Dept. of Trade & Industry, Philippines <i>Jerry Clavesillas</i>, Director, Bureau of SME Development, Dept. of Trade & Industry, Philippines <i>Elvin Uy</i>, Executive Director, Philippine Business for Social Progress <i>Atty. Allan Gepty</i>, Asst. Sec., Industry Development & Trade Policy Group, Dept. of Trade & Industry, Philippines <i>Tengfei Wang</i>, Economic Affairs Officer, UN ESCAP 	Philippines Trade Dialogue E-Commerce Philippine - 2022 Roadmap
Nigeria 30 June 2021	Ringier One Africa Media (ROAM) + Jobberman American Business Council of Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure cross-border payments and fast-disbursing working capital Ecommerce logistics, last-mile delivery MSME ecommerce capacity building Workforce development, digital skills training Digital trade policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>H.E. Hon. Niyi Adebayo</i>, Minister, Nigerian Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment <i>H.E. Hon. Isa Ali Pantami</i>, Minister, Nigerian Federal Ministry of Communications & Digital Economy <i>Clemens Weitz</i>, CEO, ROAM Massimiliano Spalazzi, CEO, Jumia Nigeria <i>Musa Itopa Jimoh</i>, Director of Payments, Central Bank of Nigeria <i>Chris Folayan</i>, CEO, Mall for Africa <i>Teniola Tayo-Olugbode</i>, CEO, Tamak Logistics 	Nigeria Digital Trade Dialogue Accelerating MSME ecommerce in Africa: a roadmap
Ecuador 3 July 2020	eCommerce Institute Ecuadorian Chamber for eCommerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital regulatory frameworks Logistics and MSME trade facilitation Cross-border payments Ecommerce capacity-building Pilot program ideas and policy initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Leonardo Ottati</i>, President, Ecuadorian Chamber of eCommerce (CECE) <i>Daniel Legarda</i>, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade, Ecuador <i>Julio Muñoz</i>, Vice Minister of Information & Communication Technologies, Ecuador <i>Verónica Chávez Man-Ging</i>, Vice Minister of Export Promotion, ProEcuador <i>Nelly Lara</i>, Undersecretary, Ministry for Economic Inclusion & Social Mobility, Ecuador 	Ecuador MSME ecommerce Alliance for eTrade Expanding MSME Ecommerce in Developing Countries: State of Policies and Path Forward

Dialogue	Co-hosts	Topics	Selected Speakers	Selected presentations and feature studies
African Union 17-18 September 2020	African Union Commission (AUC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border payments and transactions • Digital identity solutions • Access to innovative working and growth capital loans • Workforce development for digital economy • Ecommerce logistics and last-mile delivery • Pilot programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>John Kelley</i>, Deputy Chief of Mission to the U.S. Mission to AU • <i>Chiza Charles Chiumya</i>, Head of Trade Division, AUC • <i>Moses Bayingana</i>, Senior Policy Officer, ICT, AUC • <i>Tapiwa Ronald Cheuka</i>, Trade Policy Officer, AUC • <i>Clemens Weitz</i>, CEO, Ringier One Africa Media (ROAM) 	MSME Ecommerce in Africa Alliance for eTrade
African Union 22 September 2021	African Union Commission (AUC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) • MSME ecommerce data transfer policies and technologies • Digital transfer roadmap for Africa • AU and UNECA digital trade and MSME ecommerce promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Souhila Amazouz</i>, Senior Policy Officer, Dept. of Infrastructure and Energy, AUC • <i>Jamie Macleod</i>, Trade Policy Expert, UN Economic Commission for Africa • <i>Alastair Tempest</i>, CEO, E-Commerce Forum Africa • <i>Alison Gillwald</i>, Executive Director, Research ICT Africa • <i>Olufemi Daniel</i>, Lead, Data Regulations Monitoring & Compliance, National IT Development Agency, Nigeria 	Digital Trade Dialogue - eTrade Alliance and African Union Commission
South and Southeast Asia 4 December 2020	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-led MSMEs, and the impact of Covid-19 • Access to digital finance solutions and growth capital • Ecommerce capacity building; platform onboarding • Secure cross-border payments • Ecommerce logistics, last-mile delivery, trade facilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Jeffery Senior</i>, Counselor and Permanent Observer to ESCAP, Govt. of Canada • <i>H.E. Neav Chanthana</i>, Deputy Governor, National Bank of Cambodia • <i>Tina Jabeen</i>, CEO and Managing Director, ICT Ministry, Government of Bangladesh • <i>H.E. Zunaid Ahmed Palak</i>, Hon. State Minister, Ministry of Posts, Telecom & IT, Bangladesh • <i>Angelica Sarmiento</i>, Dir. IV, Central Mgmt., Dept. of Finance, Philippines 	ASEAN Ecommerce Work Program 2017-2025 at Midpoint: State of MSME Ecommerce and Path Forward Digital Acceleration Dialogue: Enabling MSME Ecommerce in SE and South Asia

II. Key impacts

The dialogues were designed to promote discussion on current policy challenges to ecommerce, but they led to multiple useful outcomes. For example, the dialogues enabled the Alliance to:

- Shape and promote policies and policy proposals in the target economies;

- Gauge the state and direction of ecommerce-related policies and challenges in the various economies and start identifying solutions;
- Catalyze actionable discussion between public and private sector leaders in the target economies;
- Identify local ecommerce champions and partners the Alliance could work with; and
- Ideate and catalyze pilots and initiatives that were launched, for example, in Ecuador, Mexico, Bolivia, Pacific Islands, the Philippines (Table 2).

Table 2 – Alliance activities following Digital Trade Dialogues, by Country/region

Activity	Country/Region	Project Description	Key Partners
Training, capacity building, and skills gap assessments	APAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAF is working with DHL to integrate training into the Accelerate program in Malaysia, specifically in upskilling and capacity building of women-led MSMEs • SME ecommerce skills gap assessment is being conducted in Indonesia, and 2 proposed assessments in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, informing training programs planned to launch promptly thereafter 	<p><i>DHL</i></p> <p><i>The Asia Foundation (TAF)</i></p> <p><i>Palladium</i></p>
Ecommerce training programs	Pacific Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot program launched to train a cohort of 30 Fijian SMEs to improve their selling through ecommerce, including using an improved payment gateway solution developed by Mastercard • DHL is exploring opportunities to provide regional ecommerce training across the Pacific Islands Forum member states 	<p><i>Mastercard</i></p> <p><i>Westpac Bank</i></p> <p><i>Ygap</i></p> <p><i>DHL</i></p>
“Women Exporters Program (WEP)”	Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a 5 module, self-paced online curriculum for women-led SMEs designed to help navigate the export process and expand their market reach, grow their bottom line, hire more employees, and invest in their families and local communities — as of August 2021, over 200 women-led businesses are taking the courses with new SMEs enrolling every month 	<p><i>UPS</i></p> <p><i>Monterrey Technical Institute</i></p>
“Mayors for eTrade”	Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border ecommerce course providing training to Ecuadorian MSMEs on how to export, specifically through onboarding onto global ecommerce platforms such as Amazon — ~70 MSMEs have participated thus far, with a second phase planned to train on gaining access to favorable cross-border logistics and payments solutions with Alliance partners DHL and Mastercard 	<p><i>eCommerce Institute</i></p> <p><i>DHL</i></p> <p><i>Mastercard</i></p> <p><i>Nextrade</i></p>
Platform onboarding, policy roadmap	Bolivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 activities are planned and have received concurrence: one will support the onboarding of SMEs onto two Bolivian ecommerce platforms - Kolau and Tienda Llave; the second activity will support select partners to develop policy roadmaps, each catering to a specific ecommerce issue (e.g., epayments and logistics) 	<p><i>eCommerce Institute</i></p> <p><i>ABCe</i></p> <p><i>CNC</i></p>



III. Implementation analysis

What worked well in implementation:

- Identification of and outreach to players in the ecommerce ecosystem and identification of key topics for discussion, accomplished specifically by working with local organizations and ecommerce associations
- Engagement of Alliance partners and the local private sector
- Discussions based on rigorous data analytics on current challenges and solutions
- Engagement of representatives from international organizations and development banks

Challenges in implementation:

- Securing key policymakers, especially regulators, to speak took considerable effort
- Quickly acting on recommendations required significant stakeholder engagement locally and on the Alliance side
- Promoting insights derived from dialogues that inform and effectuate ecommerce ecosystem solutions and pilot programs

Recommendations and activities to overcome challenges:

- Dedicated support by USAID Missions and private, closed-door dialogue without the press, under Chatham House rules, enables informed and more informal discussions and engagement of top policymakers
- Commitment to workshopping solutions ex-ante with local counterparts enables the Alliance to promptly issue solutions and concrete activities after the dialogue