Together on the way to sell online

Partnering with ecomConnect to develop small business digital capabilities and improve e-commerce accessibility in developing countries.
Digital technologies are driving the future of trade and we need to make sure that small businesses can be on board.

For many small businesses, those technologies are out of their reach due to a combination of factors: cost, limited connectivity, know-how and more.

This is why the International Trade Centre is working with partner institutions and large enterprises to bring affordable solutions to small businesses, promote innovation and boost their participation in international trade.”

Pamela Coke-Hamilton
ITC Executive Director
About
The ecomConnect Programme helps small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in developing countries to market and sell their products online. We support our project SMEs with training, research, structures, partnerships, and digital tools and technologies.

Our goal is to connect SMEs to local, regional, and international online markets, in an inclusive and sustainable manner.
## Snapshot 2019-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>1,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sectors</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local coaches trained by ITC</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online community members</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-learning courses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online tools</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-commerce modules</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video tutorials</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact

- Collaborative: Working together to support existing or planned initiatives
  - Rwanda: Developed an e-commerce marketing and logistics strategy for domestic e-commerce with the Rwandan Ministry of Trade and Industry

- Scalable: Staged approach toward rapid adoption of e-commerce
  - Middle East and North Africa: Conducted online webinars and remote coaching through the MENA E-commerce Entrepreneur Knowledge Series to support businesses in their rapid adoption of e-commerce during COVID-19

- Inclusive: Tailored solutions for different business groups
  - Central Asia: Adapted training for e-commerce readiness for multiple SMEs and business support organisations. Covered beginner to advanced levels in 5 countries

- Community-based: Leveraging skills for continuous support
  - Central America: Supported advanced SMEs to mentor fellow beneficiaries through the regional E-commerce Leadership Programme

- Blended approach: Delivering assistance online and offline
  - Worldwide: Free resources for SMEs including webinars, workshops, guides, tutorials, and networking opportunities for potential collaborations via the ecomConnect.org online community
Presence

Ongoing projects 2017-2021
- Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama

Support women-led businesses to export handicrafts by creating of their own websites, marketplace stores, and social media

Finalized projects
- Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Senegal, Jordan, Morocco, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan

Ongoing projects 2020-2023
- Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

Develop digital capabilities for small businesses to trade regionally and internationally through online channels

Ongoing projects 2020-2022
- Vietnam, Laos, Ghana, Kenya, Peru

Enable sustainable brands offering tourism services, handicrafts, and agribusiness products, such as coffee, tea, or chocolate, to sell to international markets

Ongoing projects 2019-2021
- Tunisia, Lebanon

Provide women-led businesses with access to national and international markets through online marketplaces
What we offer SMEs

- Tailored online and face-to-face training for successful domestic and international e-commerce
- Advisory and research services to develop, expand, and resolve specific barriers, such as access to payment solutions, logistics, and e-commerce services
- Partnerships with private sector firms to provide key training, preferential payment support, and other essential e-commerce services
- Innovative tools and customized software solutions to support product digitalization, e-commerce readiness, and the development of e-commerce pricing strategies
- Promotional events to connect e-commerce businesses to international customers through online campaigns, trade fairs, and exhibitions
Methodology
Tools

- ecomConnect.org community
  Connects entrepreneurs, organisations and business experts with SMEs to share e-commerce solutions and success stories, and access free tools, via our online community.

- E-commerce Readiness Quiz
  Rapidly assesses e-commerce readiness in 5 areas: e-commerce planning, online presence, digital marketing, shipping, and inventory and customer service.

- E-commerce Cost Calculator
  Helps SMEs understand the costs of selling on popular e-commerce marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy, or their own online stores. Supports SMEs to set up pricing strategies and calculate sales margins.

- Online Payment Solution Finder
  Helps SMEs understand the costs of selling on popular e-commerce marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy, or their own online stores. Supports SMEs to set up pricing strategies and calculate sales margins.

- ecomConnect Market
  Brings together a selection of e-commerce businesses from around the world, to promote and showcase best practices achieved by the ITC ecomConnect Programme.

- Africa Marketplace Explorer
  Conducts a deep assessment of SMEs’ e-commerce capabilities before and after projects, covering general business maturity, online presence, payments, logistics, digital marketing, and customer service. Information is gathered via a comprehensive online survey. This tool is only accessible to project SMEs and is not publicly available.

- E-commerce Diagnostics tool
  Conducts a deep assessment of SMEs’ e-commerce capabilities before and after projects, covering general business maturity, online presence, payments, logistics, digital marketing, and customer service. Information is gathered via a comprehensive online survey. This tool is only accessible to project SMEs and is not publicly available.

- Track Me Tool
  Tracks SME sales and site traffic across different e-commerce platforms in a single dashboard. Helps SMEs measure their online performance. The tool is used in selected ITC projects.
The enterprises showcased have all gone through an extensive support programme and serve as a reference group for the quality of their products and implemented e-commerce strategy.

All selected companies are actively engaged in e-commerce – either through marketplace platforms or their own managed sites and have achieved some degree of success.

Selected companies benefit from:

- increased exposure
- support offered by partners in the ecomConnect programme

Vision for the ecomConnect market

We see the current showcase as just the beginning of what we can do to drive awareness and success of small enterprises in e-commerce.

We would like this to be a platform where we promote the contribution of partners, fund online campaigns that can boost sales for the selected enterprises and demonstrate the results we achieve together with our partners.
How ecomConnect works

ecomConnect covers activities and interactions in three levels: enterprise level, ecosystem level, and policy and institutional environment level. Our overall aim is to shift from improving to consolidating the capabilities of each SME, ensuring long term, sustainable change.

Higher Impact

- Enterprises level
  - Excellence
  - Peer-to-peer learning
  - Mastery
  - One-on-one coaching and sales activation
  - Understanding
  - Self-driven and live tailored group training
  - Awareness
  - E-learning and networking

Ecosystem level

- Development of partnerships that address country-specific barriers
- Creation of an E-commerce Hub to coordinate local support services, eventually shared facilities and sector development initiatives

Policy level

- Strengthen capacity of policymakers and institutions on the implications of e-commerce, centered on MSMEs
- Public-private dialogues and advisory in policy formulation

Lower Impact
Partners
Why partner with us

Advance the agenda for sustainable and inclusive access to e-commerce
Build solutions to underserved SMEs in collaboration with other private and public sector partners

Contribute to the growth of e-commerce in developing countries
Support long term development and opportunities for future business, and identify champions in local markets

Support the delivery of an established, effective and scalable project in key regions
Grow and extend a network of contacts among local, regional and international groups engaged in e-commerce
Levels of partnerships

**Funder**
- Fund and implement comprehensive programmes; brainstorm and generate innovative and integrated solutions; and engage multiple actors to boost e-commerce
- Financial contribution
- Design, build and run solutions
- Engage different actors

**Contributor**
- Provide in-kind contribution, expertise, and personalized support to advance e-commerce skills and ease of doing business
- Provide shared resources for training and support
- Provide preferential rates

**Supporter**
- Commit to e-commerce transformation of businesses; actively engage in dialogue and advocacy events to increase ecomConnect outreach
- Raise awareness of ecomConnect projects
- Organize and contribute to events
Case study
Since 2018, ecomConnect has worked with local partners in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama to support SMEs to build e-commerce businesses.

**Aim:** Train and support 200 women-led SMEs in Central America to develop their own successful online businesses selling handmade products.

**Method:** ecomConnect provided training on key product and market selection, content development, online store development, website optimisation, digital marketing, and customer service.

In addition, ‘e-labs’ were organised to provide the most seasoned businesses with specific support on website and Etsy and eBay stores optimization. By testing different online channels, learning digital marketing techniques, and measuring performance, participants developed e-commerce strategies that they could later pass on to less advanced beneficiaries through a peer-to-peer support programme: the E-commerce Leadership Programme.

Central America: Women and e-commerce
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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local institutions trained</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs trained</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites and marketplace stores created or optimized</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs making online sales</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online orders</td>
<td>2,449</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue gained (USD)</td>
<td>86,540</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markets reached</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional videos</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results as of November 2021
Central America Partners

Funder

Implementing partners

Contributors
This was a great experience. Thanks to this partnership, I was able to reduce my shipping time from 3-4 weeks to 3-4 days, without changing my pricing.

DHL’s preferential shipping rates also allowed me to offer free shipping to my customers, and we have since sent several products to Houston, Texas, which was previously an issue due to shipping. With ITC’s support, I can now send customers my products quickly and securely!”

Elena San Martin
Founder of Nicteel Ceramics, Honduras
“Thanks to the training provided by ITC and eBay, I have learnt about the importance of having good product photos, attractive and authentic product descriptions as well as a high quality packaging. With targeted online campaigns and continuous tracking of the sales metrics, I am able to successfully promote my brand abroad especially in the United States.

Soledad Borel
Founder of Soledad Art Jewellery
Costa Rica
Central America: Find more about the project

- Project page
- Online stores
- Hub on eBay
- Hub on Novica
- Facebook page
- Instagram page
- YouTube channel
Vision
**Vision**

> Building resources, solving issues locally

Create resource centres that offer locally adapted support for advice, learning, networking, and shared services.

Partner with local institutions to embed capabilities and create self-reinforcing learning and capacity building, including through peer-to-peer mentoring.

> Growing reach, involvement, and impact

Expand and extend the online community of entrepreneurs, experts and resources through the ecomConnect platform.

Build a network of private sector partners and e-commerce innovators to tackle access and affordability issues for small e-commerce SMEs in developing and least developed countries.

Increase geographic coverage and scale of projects.

> Extending the opportunities of digital trade to all

Extend and innovate learning modules and their deployment toward otherwise excluded populations.

Collaborate with digital infrastructure partners to bring connectivity and e-commerce access to rural, remote, and underdeveloped areas.

Work with ecosystem partners, in particular online platforms, to increase accessibility.

Facilitate improved access to financing SME e-commerce in developing countries.
Get in touch

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