

Switch ON

Digital connectivity and trade

Switch ON aims to get more MSMEs online and engaged in digital trade and entrepreneurialism. An initiative of the International Trade Centre (ITC), it is structured into an integrated framework for action across the dimensions of policy, institutional and enterprise capabilities, and partnerships.

The initiative is integral to ITC's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, which prioritizes digital connectivity as a key enabler to an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous world.

Digital connectivity matters in development

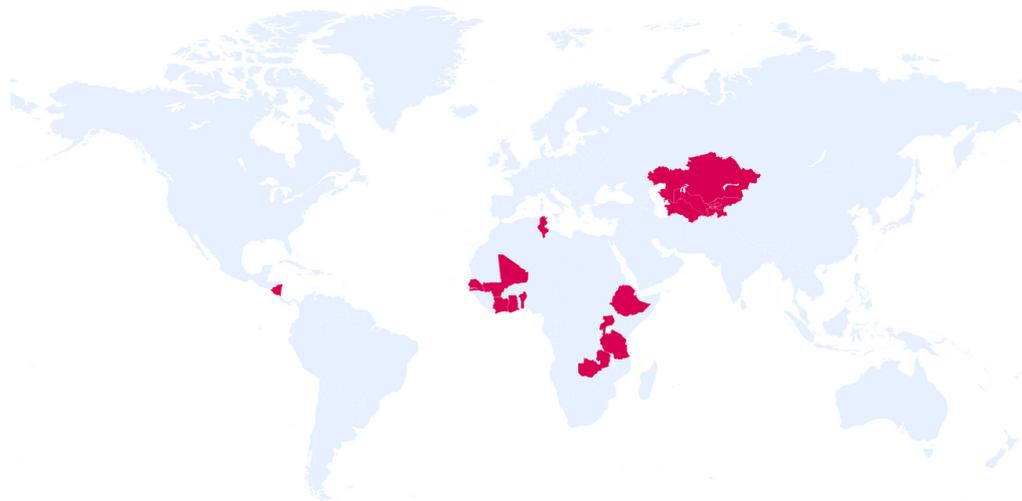
During the pandemic, we saw how doing business online went from being useful for business to critical for survival. Now, facing an impending downturn in the global economy, we need an even bigger and more broad-based boost in connectivity.

MSMEs face several constraints to achieving meaningful connectivity, including lack of affordable access, low awareness and adaptation to digital, low availability of advisory and technical support from the business support ecosystem and a lack of digital skills among management and the workforce.

Through the Switch ON initiative, ITC focuses its efforts on ensuring that investments in connectivity are prioritized and that the conditions are in place for MSMEs in the developing world to profit from digital trade and entrepreneurialism.

Goals by 2025

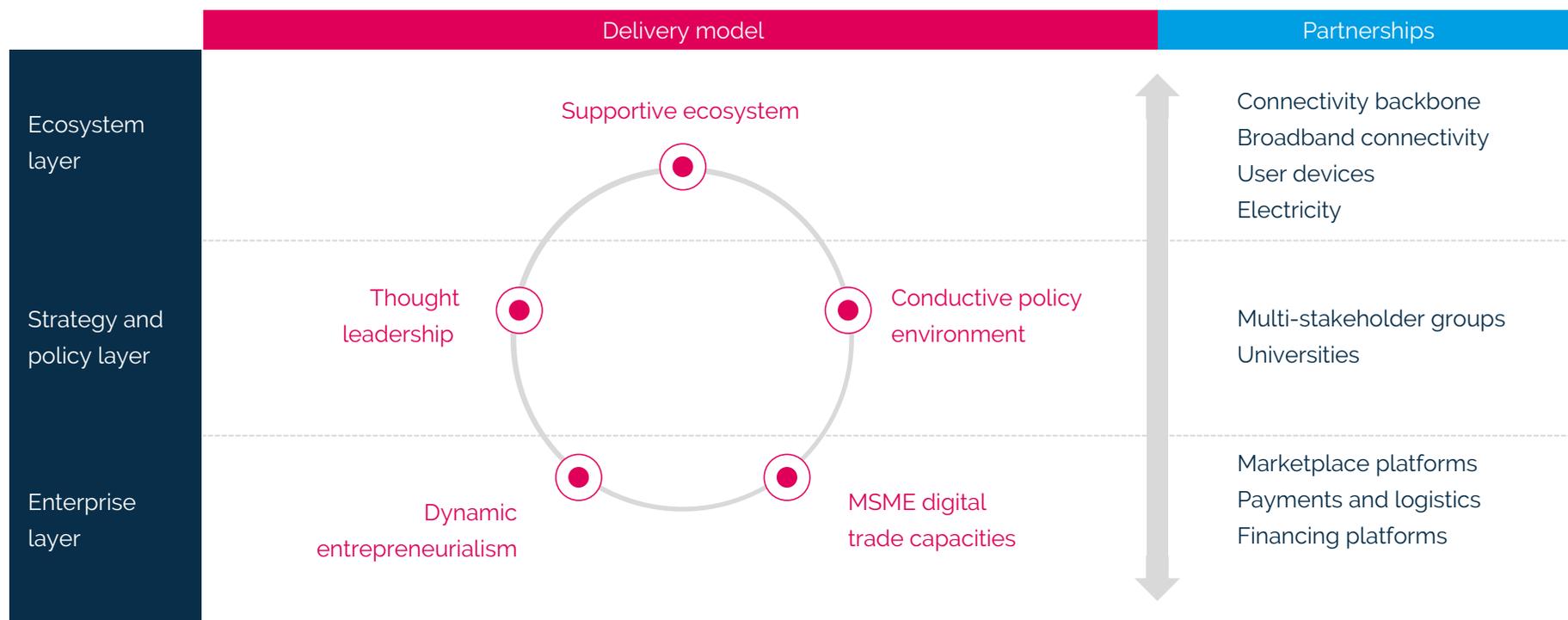
3	17	17	30	4,000	20,000
continents	countries	connectivity policy changes	BSOs advocating for connectivity	digital start-ups connected	MSMEs connected



Core impact areas

The Switch ON initiative is based on a delivery model that is cross-cutting, combining the expertise of teams across ITC to address three layers: (i) **Ecosystem layer** to support BSOs to digitalize their clients and advocate for more affordable connectivity; (ii) **Strategy and policy layer** to disseminate evidence-based innovations in policy and thought leadership; (iii) **Enterprise layer**, through increasing the profile of and attracting investment to new models in MSME connectivity and directly and indirectly enabling MSMEs to connect and to trade digitally.

Partnerships with local and international private sector firms are expected to play a key role, and will require the contribution of partners beyond those traditionally engaged in "Aid for Trade". These partners may have a far more specific and technical role in delivering connectivity and infrastructure and services: ITC's contribution is to ensure that MSMEs receive appropriate attention and support to deliver on the potential. We welcome discussions on how we can best work together toward this outcome.



Why Zambia: Opportunities for the first Switch ON country

Building on ITC's digital experience in the country

ITC's former project in Lusaka, #FastTrackTech Africa, benefitted leading tech hubs, tech start-ups and digital entrepreneurs. Under Switch ON, ITC aims to expand to the field of e-commerce and a specific focus on digital connectivity.

Prioritizing digital transformation in the National Plan

Zambia's 8th National Development Plan (8NDP), recently approved, and to be implemented from 2022 to 2026, highlights digital transformation as one of the key drivers of economic growth. The government has recognized the obstacles to e-commerce, including a high priority on areas such as payment solutions and has recently embarked on the development of a new national logistics strategy.

The Plan promotes an enabling environment to encourage financial service providers to develop innovative and customer centric products, with the ambition of increasing the provision of digital, mobile and agency banking services to underserved populations.

Increasing the investment in digital skills development

The Plan highlights the importance of investing in digital skills to contribute to the creation of decent jobs, particularly for the youth.

Creating digital transformation centres

The Zambian Government has proposed the deployment of digital transformation centres - a wider area network coverage in all parts of the country, starting with 50% of the districts that are situated in the remotest parts.

Integrating digital technologies

Building on the Zambian Government willingness to roll-out digital communications infrastructure, especially to connect rural areas to socio-economic services through mobile phones.

New opportunities from the AfCFTA

AfCFTA is expected to build an integrated regional market, generating new business opportunities, including in e-commerce and digital trade.

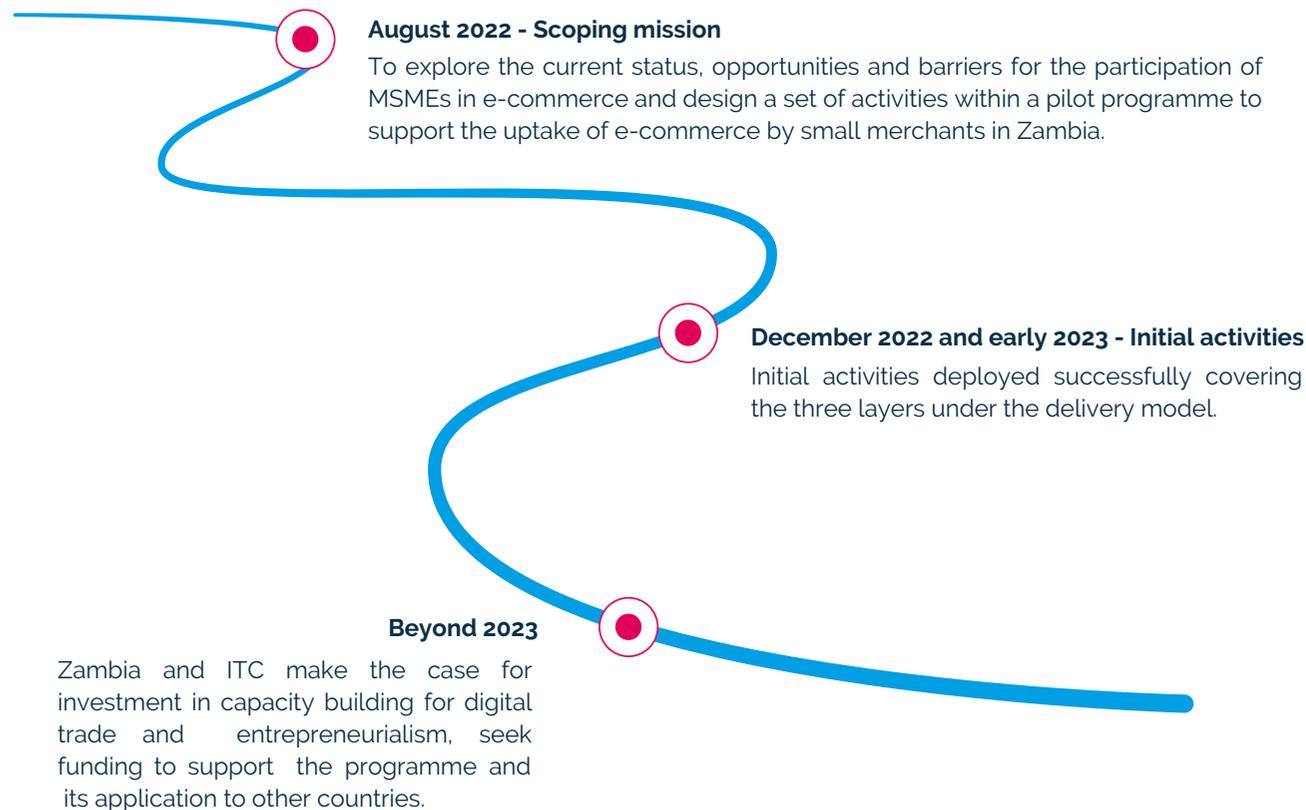
Ambitions of Switch ON

- Institutions are capable of developing and implementing policy and initiatives to support MSMEs access and use digital connectivity
- Internet connectivity is affordable and reliable in urban and non-urban locations
- Access to online payment conditions is easy and affordable
- Vibrant e-commerce services are developed, including local marketplaces and other service providers
- Digital entrepreneurialism is promoted and supported, ensuring the development and uptake of local solutions

Switch ON Zambia: Action plan

In the initial phase, in 2022, ITC proposes to finance the work with Zambia in order to evaluate the potential for supporting connectivity to digital trade. The initial phase will involve defining how and where the ambitions of the Government of Zambia can be supported, the potential role of partners from the private sector and how, by working together, we can develop the case for investment in digital connectivity.

Zambia would have a particular role to play as a pilot country for this initiative: we would aim to define a programme that can result in further projects in Zambia itself, in other African countries and beyond.



Become a
Switch ON
partner!

Are you a public or private organization working in any area related to digital connectivity?

Contact us at ecomconnect@intracen.org to explore how we can work together to deliver on this programme.

 [intracen.org](https://www.intracen.org)

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