



Lesotho Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment



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NOTE

Within the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, the ICT Policy Section carries out policy-oriented analytical work on the development implications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-commerce. It is responsible for the preparation of the Information Economy Report (IER) as well as thematic studies on ICT for Development.

The ICT Policy Section promotes international dialogue on issues related to ICTs for development and contributes to building developing countries' capacities to measure the information economy and to design and implement relevant policies and legal frameworks. It also monitors the global state of e-commerce legislation (unctad.org/cyberlawtracker). Since 2016, the Section has coordinated a multi-stakeholders' initiative entitled eTrade for all (etradeforall.org), which aims to improve the ability of developing countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), to use and benefit from e-commerce.

Reference to companies and their activities should not be construed as an endorsement by UNCTAD of those companies or their activities.

The following symbols have been used in the tables:

Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported. Rows in tables have been omitted in those cases where no data are available for any of the elements in the row;

A dash (-) indicates that the item is equal to zero or its value is negligible;

Reference to "dollars" (US\$) means United States of America dollars, unless otherwise indicated;

Reference to "M" means Loti, the currency of Lesotho, which is pegged to the South African Rand;

Details and percentages in tables do not necessarily add up to the totals because of rounding.



PREFACE

The eTrade for all Initiative, launched at the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of UNCTAD in July 2016, is a practical example of how to harness the digital economy in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, 9, and 17. The initiative seeks to raise awareness, enhance synergies, and increase the scale of existing and new efforts by the development community to strengthen the ability of developing countries to engage in and benefit from e-commerce by addressing seven relevant policy areas:

- E-commerce readiness assessment and strategy formulation
- ICT infrastructure and services
- Trade logistics and trade facilitation
- Payment solutions
- Legal and regulatory frameworks
- E-commerce skills development
- Access to financing

As part of the initiative, demand-driven assessments are envisaged to provide a basic analysis of the current e-commerce situation in the countries concerned, and to identify opportunities and barriers. The resulting reports will serve as a valuable input to these countries' involvement in various discussions related to e-commerce and digital trade, such as in the context of the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy. It may furthermore help developing countries, especially LDCs, to identify areas in which they could benefit from assistance by eTrade for all partners.

Lesotho's Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment is the eighteenth of such assessments conducted by UNCTAD. This report is expected to contribute to the efforts of the Government of Lesotho to build a robust, safe and business-friendly e-commerce and digital economy environment.

With the eTrade for all partners, UNCTAD is committed to supporting Lesotho in its resolve to make e-commerce work for the country's development.

Shamika N. Sirimanne

Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD



As a founding partner of the eTrade for all initiative, the EIF has been supporting the least developed countries (LDCs) in articulating their digital priorities through the eTrade Readiness Assessments led by UNCTAD. The eTrade Readiness Assessment of Lesotho illustrates the opportunities that digital trade can offer for economic development. It also stresses that realizing these opportunities requires concerted efforts by the government, the private sector and development partners.

Access to affordable Internet remains vital for Lesotho. However, the progress is still far from meeting the Sustainable Development Goal 9.c calling for universal affordable access to the Internet and reaching “1 to 2” Affordable Internet Target, with the 1 GB mobile broadband prices remaining high and above 2% of the average monthly income.

Building trust in digital solutions is essential. It requires ensuring confidence in ICT curricula in schools and universities, promoting lifelong learning, including through vocational training, and supporting digital skills of small businesses. In addition, ensuring access to finance remains important for small businesses to realize digital trade potential.

While acknowledging significant constraints, the report also shows progress in streamlining customs procedures and implementing trade facilitation reforms, including the ratification of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Among the next steps feature the adoption of a Single Window System and development of postal services to support the handling of small-parcels.

The EIF support has proven to be fundamental to address some of the recommendations identified in various e-trade readiness assessments conducted in the past. The recent examples range from targeted support to develop e-commerce strategies in Cambodia and Senegal, to developing new ICT/e-commerce regulations in Myanmar and Rwanda, to supporting Bhutanese farmers in online auctioning of potatoes.

The recommendations identified in the eTrade Readiness Assessment of Lesotho serve as a springboard for bringing the solution-orientated partnership between EIF, UNCTAD and the broader partnership in the EIF with the government and people of Lesotho to the next level.

I would like to thank the authors of the report and our colleagues in UNCTAD for bringing to light the state of play of e-trade readiness in Lesotho, taking stock of recent progress, and identifying the necessary actions that will further support digital development in Lesotho. I would also like to express my gratitude to Hon. Mr. Tefo Mapesela, Minister of Trade and Industry, the EIF in-country team: Mr. Soaile Mochaba, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Mr. Phera Lepati, Director of Planning, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the government of Lesotho for the commitment in realizing the country's potential in digital economy.

The EIF stands ready to support Lesotho's trade-led development efforts in any way it can.

Ratnakar Adhikari
EIF Executive Director



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This Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment of Lesotho was prepared by Paul Baker, UNCTAD Consultant, in close collaboration with a team comprising Cécile Barayre, Iris Macculi, and Marian Pletosu, under the overall guidance of Torbjörn Fredriksson. The in-country technical and coordination support of UNCTAD national consultant, Makuena Leboela, was instrumental in ensuring the substantive depth of this assessment. Pablo Quiles and Kananelo Makoetlane provided strong research support to the team.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
AWSB	Association of Women in Small Business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
BEDCO	Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation
BoS	Bureau of Statistics
C2C	Customer-to-Customer
CBL	Central Bank of Lesotho
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CMP	Customs Modernization Programme
CPSS	Committee on Payment and Settlement Systems
DAI	Digital Adoption Index
EASSy	Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System
ETL	Econet Telecom Lesotho
FBB	Fixed Broadband
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSDS	Financial Sector Development Strategy
GNI	Gross National Income
GoL	Government of Lesotho
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Association
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDI	ICT Development Index
IER	Information Economy Report
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOSCO	International Organization of Securities Commissions
IRU	Indefeasible Right of Use
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KMs	Kilometres
KYC	Know Your Customer

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