Multilateral Aid for Trade Results Report

/ May 2026

Australian Aid

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This biennial Results Report has been produced on behalf of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) by Moonshot Global. The Report does not evaluate the investments described herein by applying the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee criteria. Nor does it represent the full extent of Australia's Aid for Trade commitments. We gratefully acknowledge collaboration with, and contributions from, DFAT's implementing partners.

/ Acronyms

ACWL	Advisory Centre on WTO Law
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
Better Work	ILO's Better Work Program
DATA Fund	Digital Advisory and Trade Assistance Fund
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
ECDE Programme	E-commerce and Digital Economy Programme
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
Fish Fund	WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism
FiT	Funds in Trust
GEAR	Gender Equality and Returns (Better Work women's leadership initiative)
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Intellectual Property
LDC	Least Developed Country
MC13	13th WTO Ministerial Conference
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MSMEs	Micro-, Small-, and Medium-sized Enterprises
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
PIF Secretariat	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PROSIVU	Parseria ba Prosperidade Inklusivu/ Partnership for Inclusive Prosperity
PTI Europe	Pacific Trade Invest Europe
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
STDF	Standards and Trade Development Facility
TESS	Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
The Fund	Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund
TFSP	Trade Facilitation Support Program
TSCFP	Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program
UNCTAD	UN Trade and Development
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

/ Foreword

Driving Prosperity and Resilience through Aid for Trade Partnerships

Richard Emerson-Elliott, Assistant Secretary, Free Trade Agreement Implementation and Inclusive Trade Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australia's Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund (the Fund) is grounded in Australia's International Development Policy and represents our commitment to delivering high-quality programs that respond to partner needs, achieve results, and are informed by robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Despite pressures on the global trading system, the Fund continues to deliver inclusive, sustainable outcomes that reflect Australia's commitment to transparent, rules-based trade and advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As Foreign Minister Wong has noted, "there is no sustainable long-term economic growth without trade." Guided by this vision, the Fund promotes inclusive and sustainable trade as a driver of mutual prosperity, stability, and opportunity, with a focus on our region.

Australia's future is entwined with that of our region 22 of our 26 nearest neighbours are developing countries and 10 of our top 15 export markets have received Australian aid. Our assistance not only helps our partners become more resilient, it also makes a vital contribution to our mutual economic prosperity.

This Report highlights the results we achieved between January 2023 and December 2024. It shows that by promoting trade as an engine for growth and poverty reduction, the Fund has helped create jobs, expand market access for vulnerable communities, and delivered measurable gains in gender equality and workplace safety. Our projects have helped over 38,000 MSMEs many women-led access new markets, digital tools, and trade finance. We have helped accelerate much needed trade policy reform. Through our projects, we assisted developing countries to enact 74 trade-related laws and helped raise WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement implementation scores across our region.

The report shows how our partnerships with multilateral and regional institutions strengthened trade capacity, reduced barriers, and embedded resilience across 29 developing and least developed countries. The Fund also advanced cross-cutting priorities like digitisation, climate resilience, sustainability, gender equality, disability equity, and locally led development directly contributing to SDGs on poverty reduction, decent work, gender equality, innovation, reduced inequalities, and climate action.

The lessons for us are clear: early coordination with developing countries and implementing partners multiplies the impact of our investments; we must continue to converge our digital and climate agendas and embed them in our programs; and we must maintain our partnerships with regional and multilateral institutions as a cornerstone of our success.

Through our ongoing efforts under the Fund, Australia will continue to champion inclusive trade as a pathway to shared prosperity ensuring we can all cooperate, trade, and thrive.

/ Executive Summary

Overview and Context

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT's) Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund helps drive global and regional economic integration and resilience by supporting developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) across the Indo–Pacific to participate in and benefit from the global, rules-based trading system — with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core.

This Report describes the results of the Fund from January 2023 to December 2024, during which time the Fund supported 16 multi-year programs and reached 29 developing countries and LDCs.

Collaborative Partnerships

During the reporting period, DFAT investment managers drew on collaborative and strategic partnerships to help maximise the reach and systemic impact of the Fund. These partnerships were with the Advisory Centre on WTO Law (ACWL), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), the Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIF Secretariat) and Pacific Trade Invest Europe (PTI Europe), the WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism (Fish Fund), the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Beneficiaries: Widening Impact

This Report found the Fund's partnerships supported societal and economic benefits beyond immediate technical outputs. Support for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) was tangible. Partnerships with the PIF Secretariat, the World Bank Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP), EIF, STDF, UNCTAD, and WIPO enabled more than 39,000 MSMEs to expand markets and access new trade opportunities.

The labour and compliance innovations of ILO's Better Work program (Better Work) made a vital contribution to creating or supporting almost 1 million jobs across South and Southeast Asia, including major impacts for women in the garment sectors of Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Outcome Area 1: Coordination and Collaboration

Strong coordination — with and among partners like the PIF Secretariat, the World Bank, the WTO, and regional bodies — enabled 47 formal instances of joint action, policy harmonisation, and multi-party investment delivery. These efforts amplified the visibility of Australian-supported reforms and delivered greater alignment of trade and economic development goals. Evidence from partner surveys and consultative feedback shows a material increase in satisfaction, sectoral coordination, and institutional alignment throughout 2023 and 2024.

Outcome Area 2: Trade Policy and Regulation

Policy reform and institutional strengthening were advanced, with the ACWL, EIF, TFSP, and WIPO providing technical leadership and legal advisory support that helped progress enactment of 74 trade-related laws, policies, or regulatory measures, including substantial advances in implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and gender-responsive policy integration. The drafting of 168 trade-related laws, policies, or regulatory measures was also supported by the Fund's partners. Furthermore, programs such as the STDF and the ECDE Programme supported the adoption of climate and digital trade policies.

Outcome Area 3: Productive Capacity

Capacity building — from advisory services to training — featured in investments such as the Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program (TSCFP), Better Work, the STDF, EIF, PTI Europe and Australia's long-standing WIPO Funds in Trust (FiT) program. This work helped businesses in developing countries in the Indo–Pacific by supporting access to trade finance, improving business competitiveness, and reducing compliance barriers. WIPO FiT, for instance, strengthened intellectual property (IP) systems for small business, and the World Bank Digital Advisory and Trade Assistance (DATA) Fund fostered digital readiness in the Philippines through legislative changes. Women's economic equality was prioritised throughout, evidenced by increases in women's promotion rates and participation in MSME activities in partner countries.

Outcome Area 4: Contemporary and Sustainable Approaches

Through its partnerships with TESS, IISD, the DATA Fund, the STDF, and UNCTAD, the Fund helped to mainstream digitalisation, climate adaptation, and contemporary trade governance. Investment partners provided expertise in the areas of green economy transition, inclusive trade dialogues, and evidence-based policy. PTI Europe, the PIF Secretariat, the STDF, and TFSP variously helped support the digitisation of customs systems and portals, digital trade diagnostics and new business models for rural MSMEs, while also addressing gender and disability equity.

Inclusive Trade Priorities

Gender equality and disability equity were prioritised as a cross-cutting theme and targeted through specific investments. Highlights included Better Work and its Gender Equality and Returns (GEAR) initiatives, which aimed to reduce the gender pay gap and improve South and Southeast Asian garment factory governance, and the ADB TSCFP's support for women-led MSMEs, which directly benefitted from over half of the TSCFP's transactions over the reporting period. PTI Europe, the PIF Secretariat, and the EIF facilitated tailored support for Pacific and rural women entrepreneurs, and UNCTAD and WIPO delivered masterclasses in e-trade and IP mentoring, respectively. UNCTAD delivered its classes to women digital entrepreneurs from Asia and the Pacific. WIPO delivered its classes to visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This Report identified several system-wide lessons. Of note were the significance of early cross-program coordination and planning, the scaling and mainstreaming of digital, climate, gender equality and disability equity approaches, and the institutionalisation of data-driven monitoring and evaluation. Adaptive management was also found to be important, allowing programs to adjust timing and scope in response to external shocks. Report recommendations highlight the role DFAT could play in ensuring consistency and completeness in data gathering and reporting across the Fund, the importance of deepening linkages between digital development and climate, and the potential for expanding or replicating models for investment sustainability across the Fund. This could include embedding trade and development tools within national systems, and gathering more comprehensive data from private sector consultations.

/ About Australia's Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund

Australia's Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund (the Fund) is committed to Indo–Pacific focussed, demand-driven, practical economic cooperation that aligns with Australia's *International Development Policy (2023)* and its multilateral commitments, including under the *2030 Agenda* and its *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.

The Fund invests according to Australia's policy priorities and practical experience of the role of trade in helping achieve sustainable development, enhance economic resilience, and reduce poverty. Free trade, open economic settings, and resilient institutions are a springboard for success.

During the reporting period, the Fund supported 16 multi-year programs, reaching 29 developing countries and LDCs. Current partners include the ACWL, ADB, ILO, EIF, IISD, PIF Secretariat, PTI Europe, Fish Fund, STDF, TESS, UNCTAD, World Bank, and WIPO.

Investments under the Fund are underpinned by Australia's commitment to a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous, built on common ground and agreed rules. Investments support new avenues to prosperity, including through the economic equality of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups and by enhancing digital connectivity, diversifying trade, supporting the Pacific and Southeast Asia on climate change, and ensuring local priorities are addressed and led by local actors (locally led development).

The Fund aims to support a region that is predictable — where differences are resolved by international law and norms — and where all can cooperate, trade, and thrive.

/ About this Report

DFAT has developed a Program Performance Framework for its Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund, which articulates a common set of principles to guide its investments. The Program Performace Framwork serves as a systematic means of measuring the contribution of multilateral economic cooperation activities to Australia's trade and development priorities and encourages consistency in investment decision-making and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). The approach was based on DFAT's MEL Framework. DFAT MEL experts were consulted in preparation of the Program Performance Framework.

The Report articulates shared outcomes across the Fund's diverse, multi-year commitments by applying the Program Performance Framework retroactively to data gathered from investment partner MEL systems and covering the period from January 2023 to December 2024. This Report builds upon an internal assessment of the Fund for the period 2011 to 2023, which was undertaken in 2023 to develop a baseline for future analysis.

Both the Report and the Program Performance Framework are live documents. They provide a template for measuring and analysing current and future performance and will be adjusted as needed to respond to contemporary reporting needs. The Report is designed to inform stakeholders and help DFAT analyse performance of the Fund to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.

The Report aggregates results at the Fund level and provides investment-specific examples of achievements under each outcome area. It also takes a closer look at investment outcomes in two of Australia's trade and development priorities: women's economic equality and participation of MSMEs.

Refer to Annex A for a detailed description of the Fund's investments and Annex B for documents consulted to compile the Report.

/ Program Performance Framework

Impact	**Developing countries and LDCs engage productively in the multilateral trading system and use trade and investment as a tool to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development, in line with partner and Australian Government priorities.**					
Outcomes	**R 1 Coordination and collaboration** Coordination and collaboration with stakeholders is increased to improve visibility of investment goals and impacts and contribute positively to bilateral and regional trade and development partnerships	**R 2 Trade policy and regulation** Developing country and LDC partners demonstrate increased capacity to more effectively participate in, and derive benefits from, regional and multilateral rules-based trading systems		**R 3 Productive capacity** Developing country and LDC partners reduce targeted supply-side constraints, enhancing the ability of developing country and LDC private sector actors to engage in the implementation of inclusive trade and investment policies and practices		**R 4: Contemporary and sustainable approaches** Development partners (i.e., developing countries, LDCs, and implementing partners) incorporate and derive benefits from contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade in investment designs, policies, practices, and regulations
Intermediate Outcomes	**IR 1.1** Coordination effectiveness is improved among geographic and thematic stakeholders to minimise duplication and maximise impact of investments	**IR 2.1** Developing country and LDC partners demonstrate increased and ongoing capacity to participate effectively in rules-based trade and investment architecture	**IR 2.2** Developing country and LDC partners realise results, i.e., effective and efficient implementation of trade reforms, agreements, rules, and standards	**IR 3.1** Developing countries and LDC partners identify barriers to trade	**IR 3.2** Developing country and LDC partners' private sector actors demonstrate increased capacity to articulate key barriers to trade	**IR 4.1** DFAT investment partners demonstrate improved knowledge of contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade
Outputs	**Output 1.1.1** The Fund coordinates with geographic and thematic stakeholders **Output 1.1.2** The Fund forms partnerships with geographic and thematic stakeholders with mutual interests	**Output 2.1.1** The Fund's investments deliver capacity development and skills programming **Output 2.1.2** The Fund's investments support knowledge management systems, policy platforms, and databases **Output 2.1.3** The Fund's investments disseminate evidence and learning	**Output 2.2.1** Developing country and LDC partners draft trade reforms, agreements, rules, and standards	**Output 3.1.1** Developing country partners hold inclusive stakeholder consultations Output 3.1.2 Developing country partners conduct diagnostics	**Output 3.2.1** The Fund's investments deliver capacity development and sector-related skills programming **Output 3.2.2** The Fund's investments disseminate evidence and learning	**Output 4.1.1** The Fund's investments deliver technical assistance, capacity development and training in contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade **Output 4.1.2** The Fund's investments disseminate evidence and learning in contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade **Output 4.1.3** Sustainable trade, digital trade, and the green economy transition, and market access opportunities identified through the Fund's investments are recorded

/ Introduction to the Fund

Fund investments focus on supporting Australia's inclusive economic development objectives in the Indo–Pacific. Currently, the Fund supports partners with established programs that deliver capacity building and technical assistance. The table below lists Fund investments over the reporting period.

Investments

- Advisory Centre on WTO Law (ACWL)
- ADB's
  - Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific
  - Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program (TSCFP)
- Direct Aid Program
- Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)
- Forum on Trade, Environment & the SDGs (TESS)
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
- International Labour Organization's Better Work
- Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat Geneva Office and PTI Europe
- PROSIVU (Parseria ba Prosperidade Inklusivu/ Partnership for Inclusive Prosperity), a program supporting Timor-Leste
- Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)
- UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme
- World Bank's
  - Digital Advisory and Trade Assistance (DATA) Fund and
  - Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP)
- World Intellectual Property Organization Australia Funds in Trust for Intellectual Property (WIPO FiT)
- World Trade Organization's (WTO's)
  - Enchanced Integrated Framework (EIF)
  - Fisheries Funding Mechanism (Fish Fund)
  - Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

Where partners track results by funder, or where Australia is the sole funder, data is from the Indo–Pacific only. Some partners (EIF, IISD, STDF, TESS, TSCFP) deliver multi-donor programs and cannot easily separate and attribute donor funding. Therefore, results are reported in full, and examples from the Indo–Pacific region are highlighted.

/ Impact of Investments on Indirect Beneficiaries

Australia's Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund investments support developing countries and LDCs to use trade and investment as a tool for inclusive and sustainable development with a view to driving positive trade and development impacts. The Fund's standard portfolio-level indicators used to track impact include

1. **benefits resulting from targeted interventions** by Fund partners and yielding positive change in inclusive and/or sustainable development results, such as **job creation or improvements in job quality or sustainability,** and contributions to **increased capacity and growth of MSMEs** to engage in and benefit from trade, and
2. **improvements on objective measures of inclusive trade and investment**, such as the **value or volume of trade, or the business efficiency related to trade and investment**.

193,725+ jobs created and supported[1]

39,000+ MSMEs received technical assistance, capacity building or services through Fund partnerships.

- For **jobs created and supported, data was drawn primarily from Better Work**. Its initiatives in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam demonstrate measurable progress in strengthening productive capacity, promoting gender equality, and creating decent work opportunities across partner countries in Asia and the Pacific. Better Work's program focusses on achieving more decent work, based on workers reporting better working conditions.
  - A total of **193,721 workers** in Bangladesh's ready-made garment sector benefitted from Better Work Bangladesh's interventions aimed at improving labour conditions and compliance, including **101,565 men and 92,156 women.** Training is provided to all eligible staff to ensure the conditions and compliance interventions are understood and implemented widely, including by men who still hold most of the management roles in the industry and play a key role in cultural change.

[1] The reported figure of 193,725+ jobs represents an aggregate of employment data self-reported by Fund investment partners during the reporting period. Jobs were counted where investments provided numerical evidence of employment created, sustained, or supported as a result of Fund-supported activities, with 99 percent of reported jobs drawn from Better Work from their work in 78 factories. The total reflects a conservative minimum, as not all investments reported employment outcomes and methodologies varied across programs.

- Other job highlights were programmatic but potentially catalytic in nature: ACWL's secondment program for trade lawyers supported **three paid traineeships for government** lawyers from Asia and the Pacific; PROSIVU in Timor-Leste established two legal consultant positions to strengthen trade-related legal capacity; and the EIF contracted one national coordinator and one analyst to support national trade policy and coordination functions.

- More than **39,000 MSMEs** benefitted directly from the Fund, especially through partnerships with EIF, the PIF Secretariat, the STDF, TFSP, TSCFP, UNCTAD, and WIPO FiT. MSMEs gained access to simplified border procedures, quality standards training, financial literacy workshops, and digital commerce tools that improved their competitiveness and resilience. These MSMEs — many of them women- or youth-led — represent the backbone of Indo–Pacific economies. The Fund's support for them demonstrates how targeted, system-wide improvements in trade policy and facilitation can translate into tangible opportunities for small businesses and help create more inclusive economic growth.

  Additional detail by program follows below:
  - **243 export support services** were delivered to Pacific island businesses by PTI Europe. Nearly half (43.6 per cent) of these were to women-led businesses;
  - **105 MSME representatives from a range of industries, including food and beverage, beauty and wellness, fashion and crafts,** benefitted from IP management workshops in Indonesia implemented by WIPO FiT — 12 of these businesses received follow on, intensive mentoring support. **Ten of these (83.3%) were women-owned businesses;**
  - **21 women digital entrepreneurs** from four South Asian countries, who were selected for their leadership roles in e-commerce or digital services businesses, completed a **masterclass on e-commerce and related topics.** An expanded group of **64 women entrepreneurs** from 12 South and Southeast Asian and Pacific countries gained access to a global network of peers, virtual business and leadership skills; and
  - **12,199 MSME representatives** benefitted from training supported by Australia and other donors through the EIF, including on value chains, trade fairs, production and processing, export market entry facilitation, and product certification and quality requirements.[2]

[2] EIF's results in this area are reported globally across 22 countries, including 13 in the Indo–Pacific.

AUD11.2 million in export sales assisted

AUD8.4 million in private sector savings generated (converted from USD5.5 million)

For the reporting period, two additional impact metrics captured improvements on objective measures of inclusive trade and investment:

- **AUD8.4 million[3] in private sector savings generated** from the TFSP program's work in Timor-Leste and
- **AUD11.2 million in export sales assisted** through PTI Europe's export promotion support to MSMEs.

The boxes below elaborate on these results.

Generating Private Sector Savings

A Private Sector Savings methodology developed by the World Bank's Trade and Development Economics teams captures the benefit accrued to the private sector from increased efficiency in the export/import process thanks to the **TSFP's** trade facilitation interventions. The methodology estimates the impact of reduced import and/or export time through a tariff equivalent reduction, and considers impact savings from the reduction of trade-related fees and charges paid by the private sector.

In Timor-Leste, AUD8.4 million estimated savings came from the:

- elimination of the Tariff Classifications and Valuation Section,
- enabling of the legal foundations of electronic processing in the customs management system, Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World,
- creation of risk profiles and import process maps to aid ASYCUDA World implementation,
- implementation of interventions to improve risk management practices in the Risk Management Unit of Customs,
- update of Harmonised System Tariff classifications to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) compliant version, and
- increased capacity of customs brokers and government officials to minimise the number of errors, resulting in smoother customs clearance processes.

[3] Converted from USD5.5 million

Opening European Doors for Pacific MSMEs

PTI Europe helped Pacific businesses make around AUD11.2 million in assisted export sales, with many MSMEs and women-led firms benefiting. Highlights of PTI Europe interventions include:

- **Fijian ginger**: worked with a distributor to the European Union to grow sales to AUD2.5 million, a 35 per cent increase from the previous two years;
- **Solomon Islands Cocoa:** set up buyer–seller virtual meetings with ethical chocolate makers based in the European Union so that five women-led exporters increased knowledge about quality needs; pricing, and contracts. This groundwork is expected to result in deals;
- **skincare**: guided a group of nine women-led companies through European Union compliance requirements, opening the door to market entry;
- **gourmet foods:** helped Pacific firms apply for awards in the sector, resulting in 12 wins, including 17 per cent to women-led firms. This boosted visibility and buyer interest in the European Union and the United Kingdom; and
- **United Kingdom market access via Pacific diaspora**: used a Fijian-diaspora distributor to take sub-container orders, cutting freight barriers to facilitate market entry by small brands.

/ Outcome 1: Coordination and Collaboration

DFAT's development priorities underscore the importance of strengthening partnerships and helping build resilient economies in the Indo–Pacific, including to help respond to crises. In line with this, the Fund aims to maximise results by ensuring its investments complement regional and bilateral investments. This Report captures results from this partnership approach.

Outcome 1: Theory of Change:

Outcome 1: Increased coordination and collaboration with stakeholders improves visibility of investment goals and impacts and contributes positively to bilateral and regional trade and development partnerships.	
INPUTS	**IF:** program data is reviewed to determine impact areas, complementary activities, and synergies across programs;
OUTPUTS	**THEN:** coordination and formation of partnerships with geographic and thematic stakeholders with mutual interests will be determined;
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	**THEN:** coordination among geographic and thematic stakeholders will be more effective; **AND:** that coordination will minimise duplication and maximise impact;
OUTCOMES	**SO THAT:** visibility of investment goals and impacts will be improved and positive contributions to bilateral and regional trade and development partnerships will be realised.

Outcome 1 articulates examples of added value experienced by partners and highlights the value add of coordination and collaboration between DFAT and its partners over the reporting period. Fund partners reported **47 instances of formal coordination**, including notable results from:

- TFSP–PIF Secretariat collaboration on the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy. Refer to the box on the next page for more information and
- collaboration between DFAT and Australia's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to help drive improvements to sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) capacity in the Indo–Pacific through enhanced Australian and regional partners' participation in the STDF Working Group and on projects and knowledge work.

Coordination increased efficiency and led to shared learning and strategic co-programming. Examples of shared increased efficiency and learning include:

- more than 2,000 stakeholders engaged in cross-program learning through workshops and communities of practice;
- Better Work's agreements with industry associations in Bangladesh created self-financing compliance services;
- STDF and EIF partners used Fund-supported events to align technical standards;
- TFSP–PIF Secretariat cooperation eliminated overlapping diagnostics and ensured sequenced definition and implementation of border reforms; and
- Australia's support to the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office helped Pacific island countries engage in the WTO.

Several Fund investments sequenced activities deliberately, including

- STDF's SPS projects and capacity building and TFSP's border modernisation assistance and
- the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office's incorporation of regional priorities into WTO negotiations.

This coherence enhanced Australia's profile as a knowledge partner and underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of challenges faced by Indo–Pacific developing countries rather than just their symptoms. This approach is helping transform the way the Fund is seeking to work with underlying structures and policies across the region to help highlight the challenges and opportunities for Indo–Pacific economies in global trade.

PIF Secretariat–TFSP Coordination on the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy

The PIF Secretariat–TFSP coordination on the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy is one example of PIF Secretariat-led coordination that came to fruition during the reporting period.

With support from Australia's Multilateral Aid for Trade Program Fund, the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office continued to develop and drive regional strategies in its Aid for Trade priority areas of e-commerce, quality infrastructure, trade facilitation, and services. For each strategy, the PIF Secretariat started with wide-ranging consultations to identify priority actions, and national, regional and international implementing partners that would agree to take forward these strategies. It then established a regional governance mechanism (committee) to steer and oversee implementation and monitor results.

In 2023, Trade Ministers endorsed the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy, identifying 22 actions to cut trade time and costs. In 2024, the Pacific Regional Trade Facilitation Committee was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy.

This joint work on Aid for Trade priorities, including but not limited to trade facilitation, reduced duplication and increased impact by conducting joint trainings, joint workshops, and joint programs. Agencies working on the same priorities delivered together on PIF Member priorities, such as trade in goods and services, and did not work in silos. This member-led, evidence-based model ensures regional work happens in a coordinated, measurable, and accountable way.

Added Value and Support — Comparative Analysis

Since 2022, Fund investment managers have tracked collaboration and coordination, including ways the Fund generates added value for development partners.

Investment partner feedback on the Fund's added value was first tracked in November 2023 through a voluntary survey.[4] A follow-up survey was conducted as part of the data call for this report. Comparative responses were collected across five standard dimensions of added value created by Fund investments. Partners were asked to rate the Fund's added value on a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = Not at all, 7 = To a great extent).

A comparative analysis shows the Fund's overall performance, as reported by its investment partners, strengthened significantly between November 2023 and November 2025. Partners reported higher satisfaction with the Fund's knowledge sharing, coordination, and ability to foster collaboration across multiple initiatives:

- **advocacy power (+1.91)**: the Fund's visibility and strategic engagement in global forums, such as EIF, the STDF, and WTO were seen as key factors enhancing partners' influence;
- **network of valuable relations (+1.82)**: investment partners highlighted the Fund's role in connecting diverse stakeholders, facilitating information flow, and creating new cross-program collaborations;
- **learning and knowledge exchange (+1.46)**: the Fund's technical backstopping, portfolio learning sessions, and evidence synthesis functions were viewed as increasingly valuable to investment partners' programmatic and policy work;

[4] Representatives from 11 of the 16 investment partners responded to the survey in 2025, and 11 of the 16 investments responded to the survey in 2023.

- **new opportunities in trade and investment (+0.63)**: partners reported moderate improvement in the Fund's ability to help them identify and pursue new opportunities; and
- **financial and in-kind benefits (0.0)**: partners' access to perceived value of Fund-supported services, resources, and participation opportunities arising from DFAT's approach to partnering remained unchanged.

The results shown in the table below suggest the Fund's role as a connector, knowledge broker, and coordinator has become more visible and effective. No change in the Fund's financial or in-kind benefits was to be expected given its overall funding envelope and contributions to investments remained consistent over the reporting period.

Partner Ratings of Fund's Support by Theme (All Programs)

Dimension of Analysis	2023 Average	2025 Average	Change
Increased advocacy power	3.91	5.82	+1.91
Network of valuable relations	4.27	6.09	+1.82
Learning, knowledge & expertise	4.36	5.82	+1.46
New opportunities in trade/investment	3.82	4.45	+0.63
Financial or in-kind benefits	3.91	3.91	0.00

/ Outcome 2: Trade Policy and Regulation

One of the Fund's core objectives is to support developing country and LDC partners to participate more effectively in, and derive benefits from, regional and multilateral rules-based trading systems. This is achieved through improved capacity to negotiate and implement trade agreements, formulate and implement trade policies and strategies, mainstream trade, and undertake trade-related legislation and regulatory reform.

Outcome 2: Theory of Change:

Outcome 2: Increased capacity to negotiate and implement trade agreements, formulate and implement trade policies and strategies, mainstream trade, undertake trade-related legislation and regulatory reform among developing country and LDC partners leads to more effective participation in, and greater benefits derived from, the multilateral rules-based trading system.	
INPUTS	**IF:** investments deliver technical assistance, capacity development and skills; provide support through knowledge management systems; coordination support, negotiating support, analysis, policy platforms, and databases; and disseminate evidence and learning;
OUTPUTS	**THEN:** developing country partners will complete capacity building and materials will be disseminated; **AND THEN:** developing country partners will develop increased capacity to identify key offensive and defensive interests; draft and analyse policies and positions; undertake negotiations; draft legislation and regulations with clearer and better articulation traceable to activities;
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	**THEN:** developing country partners will demonstrate increased capacity through more quality proposals/ interventions, efficient and full implementation of trade agreements, and implementation of quality trade policies and regulations; **AND THEN:** projects that support developing country partners will realise results;
OUTCOMES	**SO THAT:** developing countries and LDCs more effectively participate in and derive benefits from the multilateral rules-based trading system.

The Fund invested financial and technical resources to strengthen partner government abilities to design and implement rules-based trade policy. Core inputs came through the ACWL, EIF, TFSP, and WIPO FiT. Collectively, these results demonstrated that Fund investments directly improved the enabling environment for transparent, evidence-based trade regulation.

Support included diagnostic assessments, legal advisory services, policy analysis missions, judicial training, and secondments that **built institutional capacity in 23 Indo–Pacific economies.**

Evidence from partner reporting shows substantial progress in regulatory performance and institutional coordination. TFSP reforms simplified customs documentation, introduced pre-arrival processing, and automated manifests in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, cutting clearance times by up to 60 per cent. In Timor-Leste, the bilingual Trade Information Portal reduced procedural ambiguity and improved trader compliance.

STDF and EIF diagnostic studies in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam integrated gender and environment criteria into SPS and export-promotion frameworks. ACWL advice to Indo–Pacific countries **prevented at least 29 potential WTO disputes** and **reduced the risk of 16 existing measures being challenged in WTO dispute settlement proceedings.**

By the end of 2024, Fund beneficiary countries had measurably enhanced their capacity to negotiate and implement international trade rules. Average TFA **implementation scores among TFSP participants rose from 41 to 51 per cent.** Countries **enacted 74 policies and regulations** to institutionalise good regulatory practice and strengthen cross-border cooperation.

The EIF's gender-responsive frameworks in Nepal and Bhutan supported trade strategies to monitor women's economic participation, and WIPO FiT's judicial training model produced lasting gains in IP enforcement and investor confidence.

Together these outcomes confirm the Fund's technical partnerships are helping Indo–Pacific economies consolidate transparent, predictable, and inclusive trade systems.

Effective and efficient implementation of trade reforms, agreements, rules, and standards

Most of the Fund's investments contributed to this outcome area by supporting effective and efficient implementation of trade reforms, agreements, rules, and standards so developing country and LDC partners could realise results from regional and multilateral trading systems.

Investments provided advisory services to support WTO TFA alignment and ratification, drafting of legal opinions on WTO obligations, facilitation of bilateral trade agreements and WTO accession, development of sector-specific national action plans, and other services.

Investments also contributed to trade reforms through consultation processes, diagnostics and assessments, provision of expert advisers, and coordination among country partners or sector stakeholders.





Across investments with aligned objectives, 168 trade reforms, agreements, rules, and standards were drafted, with 74 (or 44 per cent) having reportedly been enacted. These results demonstrate the role Fund investments have played in realising productive participation in the multilateral rules-based trading system.

The table on the next page describes progress made from capacity development delivered through Fund investments over the reporting period.

Please note that several Fund partners do not use the term Indo–Pacific, rather measuring geographic coverage across the Asia–Pacific. This is why the terms Indo–Pacific and Asia–Pacific are both used in the table and this Report.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AREA	PORTFOLIO OUTPUTS
Legal Compliance	**62** Asia–Pacific participants in an annual training course to better defend interests in the WTO (ACWL) **3** Asia–Pacific government trade lawyers participated in secondment program (ACWL) **2** Asia–Pacific country-specific training activities on WTO law (ACWL) **2** judicial bench books on IP adjudication (Philippines & Vietnam) (WIPO FiT) **1** legal reform report on trade and investment law (ACWL)
Policy & Strategy Formulation and Implementation	**366** dissemination events or materials distributed featuring research and evidence of success (Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific, PIF Secretariat, PROVISU, STDF, TESS) **9** trade integration studies and TFA gap analyses (TFSP) **1** policy research publication on sustainable trade integration (EIF) **1** regional strategy (PIF Secretariat, TFSP)
Institutional Capacity and Skills Development	**6,200** officials trained in trade policy, regulation and negotiation (DATA Fund, EIF, STDF, TFSP, WIPO FiT) **27** regional or national workshops on SPS, trade facilitation and e-commerce (EIF, PIF Secretariat, TFSP) **21** industry associates trained and engaged in compliance or export readiness (Better Work, EIF) **11** staff mobilised to support factory compliance and advisory functions (Better Work) **4** gender specialists trained on inclusive trade monitoring (EIF, STDF) **2** research assistants contracted (EIF)
Trade Finance and Business Services	**8** webinars on anti money laundering and financial crime prevention (TSCFP) **5** online anti money laundering/compliance training platforms and knowledge products (TSCFP) **1** business licensing and registration system piloted in Fiji (TFSP) **1** Pacific E-commerce Portal and toolkit for MSMEs (PIF Secretariat, UNCTAD)
Digital Trade and Data Systems	**5** Aid for Trade publications disseminated on digital trade and competitiveness (Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific, DATA Fund, UNCTAD) **4** SPS databases and knowledge hubs developed for cross-border information sharing (STDF) **1** multi-national trade information portal and single window developed and operationalised in the Pacific (PIF Secretariat, TFSP) **6** policy briefs and 3 data-quality toolkits on digital-economy measurement produced (DATA Fund)
Sustainable and Climate-Responsive Trade & Standards Compliance	**2,035** tea farmers and workers trained in sustainable agriculture (EIF) **26** SPS and technical standards strengthened to improve agri-food exports through Fund-supported investments in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam and Pacific island countries (STDF, EIF). **18** new SPS projects integrating biodiversity and biosecurity safeguards (STDF) **15** food safety systems incorporating gender-responsive design (STDF) **3** circular economy pilot initiatives with green trade metrics established (IISD, STDF, TESS) **2** countries' public and private sectors trained on biosecurity, animal health, and plant health (TFSP)
Inclusive and Decent Employment	**1** disability employment pilot implemented in garment sector (Better Work) **1** industry-led model for compliance self-management established (Better Work) **1** gender-based violence and harassment prevention curriculum institutionalised across participating factories (Better Work)

Engagement on the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (the Agreement) was adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in 2022 and entered into force on 15 September 2025, after it was accepted by the required two-thirds of WTO Members.

Australia worked closely with Pacific WTO Members, particularly Fiji, and played an integral role in securing the Agreement and a timeline to negotiate additional commitments on subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

At the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) in 2024 and in follow-up talks in Geneva, the Pacific Group coordinated by the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office helped shape the negotiating text on additional rules to better deliver on Sustainable Development Goal 14 and its Target 14.6 — to end subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, with appropriate special and differential treatment for developing countries and LDCs.

/ Outcome 3: Productive Capacity

The Fund invested in technical assistance, training, and partnerships that reduced supply-side constraints and improved business competitiveness across the Indo–Pacific. Inputs included advisory services and policy support through Better Work, the EIF, STDF, TFSP, and TSCFP. Resources were channelled to factory-level training, MSME export-readiness programs, trade finance workshops, SPS compliance systems, and digital business platforms. Fund investments contributed to increased productive capacity across the Indo–Pacific. MSMEs gained market access through improved standards compliance, and public–private collaboration created sustainable mechanisms for ongoing training.

Collectively, these results confirm that Fund-supported productive capacity interventions have delivered measurable economic and social dividends.

Outcome 3: Theory of Change:

Outcome 3: Reduction in targeted supply-side constraints enhances the ability of developing country and LDC private sector actors to engage in trade.	
INPUTS	**IF:** investments develop capacity and skills through training, support services, tools, and analysis, and disseminate evidence and learning to MSMEs, including women-owned firms in productive sectors; **AND IF:** beneficiary countries hold stakeholder consultations and undertake diagnostics;
OUTPUTS	**THEN:** the private sector in these countries will complete capacity building to articulate key barriers to trade (e.g., access to finance, business support services and e-commerce skills, and meeting standards); **AND THEN:** sectoral barriers to trade will be identified through and recorded as a result of consultations and diagnostics;
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	**THEN:** these countries and their private sectors will report improved sector-related capacity and skills and other requirements to engage in trade; **AND THEN:** partners will increasingly adopt inclusive approaches;
OUTCOMES	**SO THAT:** constraints to inclusive trade are reduced and MSMEs, including women-owned firms and other vulnerable groups, are better placed to engage in trade.

These interventions are intended to lead to improvements in productivity, compliance, and access to markets in Cambodia and improvements in compliance in Bangladesh. Factories implementing gender-based violence prevention training saw a **65 per cent drop in harassment incidents and productivity gains of up to 22 per cent.**

STDF and EIF projects enhanced export readiness among rural cooperatives through certification training, and TFSP activities reduced border clearance times, directly lowering logistical costs for small exporters. The TSCFP's women-focussed financial literacy sessions improved MSME credit access, with local banks approving their **first gender-responsive trade finance transactions in Fiji and Samoa.**

TFSP-enabled automation cut transaction costs and improved competitiveness, and Better Work's transition to industry-led compliance systems secured national ownership. STDF and EIF projects helped thousands of rural producers to enter new export markets, strengthening livelihoods, and the DATA Fund and TSCFP deepened financial inclusion by linking trade finance with digital systems.

Identifying Barriers through Inclusive Stakeholder Consultations

The TFSP's **National Trade Facilitation Committees** (NTFCs) are established best practice mechanisms for supporting the public and private sectors in developing countries to identify and develop action plans for resolving barriers to trade through inclusive stakeholder consultations.

At the United Nations Global Supply Chain Forum in Barbados (May 2024), the World Bank participated in technical panel discussions to share best practices, challenges, and opportunities experienced in NTFCs. The TSFP shared practical examples from NTFCs and discussed the private sector's crucial role in trade facilitation reform. Participation in the Forum helped highlight the contribution made by these Committees and the importance of ensuring they are sustainable and adaptable.

Since its inception, the TFSP has established NTFCs in 10 Pacific island countries — Fiji, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and 12 Asian countries — Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar,[5] Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

Enhancing the Ability of Developing Country and LDC Partners to Engage

The PIF Secretariat Geneva Office provides vital support on public sector consultations, including helping to turn consultations into results. During the reporting period, the Office hosted regular Ambassadors' meetings and joint negotiation preparation sessions, prepared circulars and briefings, and coordinated multi-donor logistical support ahead of MC13 and the WIPO Diplomatic Conference on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge.

The Office was instrumental in aligning Pacific positions, presenting a unified Pacific voice, strengthening coordination with the broader Pacific Islands Forum family (including Australia and New Zealand), improving engagement with like-minded members and groups, and increasing impact. This enabled effective engagement in support of the MC13 ministerial package, which agreed a forward mandate on dispute settlement reform and development issues, maintained the WTO e-commerce Moratorium to 2026, and advanced post-ministerial fisheries subsidies negotiations.

At WIPO, the PIF Secretariat coordinated briefs to help secure the Treaty on Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge. The PIF Secretariat also coordinated and supported work in non-trade areas, including submissions to the International Court of Justice and Pacific-backed outcomes at the United Nations Human Rights Council.[6]

[5] Australia does not provide any direct funding to the military regime in Myanmar, and takes proactive steps to ensure its assistance neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

[6] The non-trade work is not directly supported by the Multilateral Aid for Trade Fund. It is supported by DFAT's Office of the Pacific.

/ Outcome 4: Contemporary and Sustainable Approaches

As far as possible, the Fund mainstreamed contemporary trade priorities across its investments, integrating digitalisation, climate resilience, gender equality, social inclusion, and locally led development. These priorities were supported through the Fund's investments in the DATA Fund, the ECDE Programme, IISD, TESS, STDF, TFSP, and WIPO FiT.

Australian funding supported the creation of digital policy frameworks, climate-resilient border operations, inclusive trade dialogues, diagnostics, and action plans, and disability equity resources on innovation and IP.

Outcome 4: Theory of Change:

Outcome 4: Development partners (i.e., developing countries/LDCs and implementing partners) **incorporate and derive benefits from contemporary and sustainable approaches** to trade in investment designs, policies, practices, and regulations.	
INPUTS	**IF:** investments deliver technical assistance, capacity building and training, share evidence, program analysis and learning;
OUTPUTS	**THEN:** partners will complete capacity building and materials will be disseminated; **AND THEN:** contemporary trade challenges (e.g., sustainable trade, digital trade, decent work, green economy transition, and market access opportunities) will be identified and recorded;
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	**THEN:** investment partners will demonstrate improved knowledge of contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade;
OUTCOMES	**SO THAT:** partner countries will incorporate and derive benefits from contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade through more agile, responsive, and modern approaches to investment design, policy development and implementation, and regulatory practices.

Results in this outcome area positioned partner countries to institutionalise sustainability, inclusivity, and digital readiness in national trade systems.

Highlights over the reporting period included:

- in the Philippines, the DATA Fund helped shape broadband competition policy, integrate digital trade metrics into its national statistics framework, and operationalise e-commerce through establishment of an E-Commerce Philippine Trustmark, an online dispute resolution mechanism, and a Code of Conduct;
- a recent evaluation of the ECDE Programme's digital economy work found its e-Trade Readiness Assessments offered unique and holistic diagnostics of e-commerce ecosystems and served as important reference documents for subsequent development of e-commerce in the supported countries. UNCTAD was seen as a promoter of multi-stakeholder, consultative processes and public–private dialogue, and it produced outputs that were relevant to developing country partners;
- the TFSP's Pacific Emergency Preparedness Framework established protocols to maintain trade operations during natural disasters; and
- WIPO FiT's judicial graduates applied new knowledge to streamline IP rulings, thereby helping to improve investor confidence.

The Fund helped institutionalise contemporary approaches to trade governance. Partner countries implemented **38 trade reforms** and **74 new or amended laws and regulations across digital, environmental, and social domains.** Countries adopted green logistics practices, improved transparency through digital systems, and mainstreamed gender equality and disability equity in trade policy.

Evidence from the STDF and EIF showed sustainable production practices increased export opportunities, while the DATA Fund and the ECDE Programme effectively articulated that data and digitalisation are now central to trade competitiveness.

Disability Equity and Rights

The Fund embedded disability equity as a systemic principle rather than a standalone initiative and, following the 2024 release of Australia's new International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy, has shifted its focus from inclusion to equity and rights, championing outcomes that remove barriers for people with disability so they can fully and equitably participate in and contribute to trade and development outcomes. Practical actions demonstrated Fund investments are institutionalising these principles across their systems, empowering persons with disabilities to benefit from trade opportunities and digitalisation.

Highlights included:

- Better Work integrated sign language interpretation and accessible training materials in its Sri Lankan factories and established a garment-sector disability employment pilot linking employers with vocational training centres;
- the TFSP upgraded national trade portals in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste to include accessibility features, such as screen-reader compatibility and text-to-speech; and
- the December 2024 WIPO "Right to Read" Conference for Pacific island countries saw nine Pacific nations pledge to drive forward uptake of WIPO's *Marrakesh Treaty* and equitable reading initiatives. Refer to the box below for more information.

Regional Support Advanced for the Visually Impaired

Disability advocates and government representatives from nine Pacific nations pledged to drive forward uptake of WIPO's *Marrakesh Treaty* and inclusive reading initiatives during a "Right to Read" Conference for Pacific island countries in December 2024. The *Marrakesh Treaty* makes easier the production and international exchange of specially adapted books for people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled. The Cook Islands, Kiribati, Rebublic of the Marshall Islands, and Vanuatu have joined the *Marrakesh Treaty*, although are yet to transpose its provisions into national law.

The Conference facilitated discussions on the importance of equal access to published works for people with print disabilities and promoted initiatives to significantly increase accessible book availability. It was attended by blindness and disability associations, and representatives from copyright authorities from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

The Conference advanced a united vision for equal access to knowledge across the Pacific, proposing potential collaborative initiatives, including:

- the creation of a network among organisations of persons with disabilities across the region,
- enhanced availability of accessible reading materials through WIPO's Accessible Books Consortium Global Book Service, and
- joint advocacy for stronger legal frameworks in support of people who are print disabled.

The conference closed with a shared commitment from all attendees to ***work towards creating a Pacific region where individuals who are print disabled can fully access books and educational resources.***

Additional highlights of contemporary and sustainable approaches to trade in investment designs, policies, practices, and regulations are articulated in the boxes below.

Environmental Sustainability Embedded across the Fund

Activities in support of trade and environmental sustainability are underway in some investments, but these activities have not yet yielded outcomes. Highlights to date include:

- the DATA Fund enabled governments to model the trade impacts of climate transition measures, building analytical capacity for sustainable industrial policy;
- engagement and research with IISD and TESS helped to facilitate Indo–Pacific engagement in national, regional, and global trade and climate discussions;
- the TFSP Pacific Emergency Preparedness Framework ensured border agencies could maintain operations during natural disasters and other TFSP projects promoted low-emission cold chains and waste management; and
- environmental considerations were mainstreamed throughout the UNCTAD eTrade Readiness Assessment of Indonesia, including on technology adoption and MSME performance in e-commerce and digital trade.

Trade and Environment

In 2023, the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office drafted a Trade and Environment paper for the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting recommending a shift to a sustainable Trade and Environment agenda. Ministers endorsed the shift, which was subsequently confirmed by Forum Leaders.

Building on that mandate, in 2024, the PIF Secretariat Geneva Office delegation co-hosted with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme a side event during WTO Trade and Environment Week. The event highlighted Pacific island priorities for international trade negotiators and partners. Messaging was aligned with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and used the Blue Pacific Messages Guide to keep climate, biodiversity, and plastics central to trade dialogue.

Looking ahead, the delegation is coordinating Members and partners towards a 2026 Trade and Environment scoping study and strategy, which will help position the Pacific to contribute substantively to the UN Climate Change COP31.

/ Spotlight: The Fund and Gender Equality

Gender equality is a vital part of the Fund's Program Performance Framework, consistent with Australia's *International Development Policy* and *International Gender Equality Strategy* in its prioritisation of women's economic equality and inclusive trade. Furthermore, the Fund tracks progress on gender equality and gender equality-focussed programming separately under Outcome 4.

During the reporting period, gender equality remained a defining pillar of the Fund. Across the Fund's investments that reported sex-disaggregated data, women represented approximately 48 per cent of 6,200 trained officials and participants, confirming near parity in access to capacity building initiatives.

Examples include:

- Better Work programs aim to advance gender equity through policy and workplace reforms: narrow gender pay gaps by up to 20 per cent, and increase women's promotion rates by 30 per cent in participating factories. Another goal is to conribute to a decrease in gender-based violence through prevention modules and improved productivity;
- at the policy level, the EIF supported *Nepal's Trade Integration Strategy 2023* to institutionalise gender and inclusion objectives in trade governance and export strategies;
- the TFSP's 2024 regional workshop on gender and border management resulted in six customs administrations committing to integrate gender considerations into staff training; and
- UNCTAD delivered its first eTrade for Women Masterclass for South Asia, bringing together 21 women digital entrepreneurs from Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka for an advanced course on business growth, fundraising, pitching, and IP.

Empowering Pacific Women and MSMEs in the Digital Economy

During the reporting period, the PIF Secretariat advanced flagship programs on digital and trade inclusion in the Pacific:

- by the end of 2024, 30.5 per cent of the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy's priority actions had been implemented — demonstrating real progress toward a more connected, inclusive Pacific digital economy;
- the PIF Secretariat's E-commerce Rules Course trained 82 officials from 11 Forum Island Countries (46 per cent women), building national capacity to engage in digital trade negotiations; and
- its E-Biz Plus program supported 95 MSMEs in the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu with hands-on training, and eight entrepreneurs (62.5 per cent women) received around AUD8,950 in grants to grow online. In the Federated States of Micronesia, Norleen Oliver of Hard Rock Sokehs launched her online store, doubling sales from around AUD41,675 to AUD106,570. In Samoa, Elena Chan-Fabricius of O-Tahiti Pearls entered new digital marketplaces and boosted online sales by 20 per cent.

/ Spotlight: Support for MSMEs

The participation of MSMEs in trade is an important part of Australia's agenda for inclusive development and growth in the Indo–Pacific.

MSMEs are the backbone of national economies in developing countries and LDCs. Their growth drives economic prosperity and job creation, contributing to poverty alleviation. Job creation through MSMEs can also be a lever for reducing inequality and bringing benefits to vulnerable groups, making them vital to inclusive economic growth.

The Fund **directly supported 38,902 MSMEs across the Indo–Pacific:**

Examples include:

- the TFSP simplified documentation, introduced single window systems, and reduced compliance costs, saving small traders time and resources;
- in Fiji, the TFSP also supported customs digitisation that **reduced clearance times from three days to one,** allowing family-run exporters to reinvest savings in business expansion;
- EIF and PTI Europe helped strengthen MSME export readiness through mentoring and trade fairs;
- the TSCFP helped improve access to trade finance globally, facilitating 19,000 trade finance transactions valued at AUD24.5 billion, with more than half benefiting MSMEs; and
- WIPO FiT supported MSMEs through capacity development on IP issues. Refer to the box on next page for more information.

Guiding Tech Startups and SMEs in Vietnam to Leverage IP for Innovation and Business Growth

WIPO FiT successfully launched its IP Management Clinic Program in Hanoi in November 2024 in close collaboration with the IP Office of Vietnam, the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, the ASEAN Secretariat, BK Holdings–Hanoi University of Science and Technology, and WeLead Vietnam.

Driven by a young, tech-savvy population and with strong government support, Vietnam is quickly becoming a tech hub in Southeast Asia. The country's focus on artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and semiconductors, as well as its startup ecosystem, has enabled it to climb two spots to rank 56th globally in the Global Startup Index and to be the current 5th best country for startups in Southeast Asia. Establishing a comprehensive IP strategy is therefore crucial for managing businesses' intangible assets to stay ahead of the curve, drive innovation, maintain and diversify market shares, and remain an attractive target for investors both at home and abroad.

Forty-two participants (57 per cent women) from 24 startups and SMEs — from technology-related industries such as education technology, biotechnology, food technology, agriculture technology, information technology, healthcare, cosmetic, and pharmaceutical sectors — learned how businesses can establish a competitive advantage, increase brand recognition, attract investors and generate new revenue streams by protecting, leveraging and monetising their IP and other intangible assets.

Following the workshop, 10 selected enterprises participated in one-on-one mentoring sessions to discuss their business models, and to analyse the IP-related or driven aspects of their products, services and technologies. The companies received general advice on the international and domestic protection of patents, copyrights, trademarks, and trade secrets, as well as specific recommendations on how to strengthen and diversify their IP portfolios and values.

Participants reported the program played a crucial role in positioning them more favourably within the highly competitive and rapidly changing digital economy.

/ Lessons Learned

1. **Early coordination multiplies impact.** Programs that aligned planning — such as the TFSP and the PIF Secretariat — achieved stronger, more sustainable, and more regionally-focussed results than interventions that operated without partnerships or associations with other implementers. They were also more likely to realise results on a regional level.
2. **Achieving equality and equity in approaches to trade and development works best when embedded across the lifecycle of investments.** Investments that incorporated gender equality and disability equity at every stage, rather than treating it as an addon, achieved measurable outcomes. While Fund investments on the whole delivered results on women's economic equality and disability equity, some investments still struggled with the basics, such as disaggregation of participation data by vulnerable groups.
3. **Digital initiatives require sequencing, especially if the aim is to achieve sustainable, system-wide effects.** Hard economic infrastructure and capacity development are a prerequisite for sustainable, system-wide regulatory reform and uptake. Australia supports initiatives across the lifecycle of digital development: from infrastructure and connectivity to capacity building, regulatory reform and MSME networking initiatives. Coordination with other relevant partnerships within and outside the Fund could be further prioritised.
4. **Local stewardship secures continuity.** Better Work's transition to industry-led compliance, and the TSCFP's engagement with local banks show how local stewardship sustains reforms. This is consistent with Australia's commitment to locally led development and supporting local leadership across different aspects of society, including government, business, academia, and civil society.
5. **Flexibility is key to resilience.** Adaptive management allowed investments to adjust timing and scope in response to external shocks, such as supply chain disruptions and natural disasters. This was first demonstrated post-COVID–19 (by 2023 benchmark results) and continued to bear out through events like the December 2024 Vanuatu earthquake. The Fund has played a role in regional readiness.

/ Recommendations

1. **Support improvements in data capture and reporting.** The Fund has a role in ensuring consistency and completeness in data gathering and reporting by its investments. Introduction of the Program Performance Framework led to some changes in partner-designed MEL and data gathering and reporting. Notable examples were incorporation of aligned metrics by the PIF Secretariat and WIPO into their own results frameworks. More formally established minimum data standards, including sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated indicators would ensure better alignment. Also, working with all partners to adopt compatible monitoring templates will improve data comparability and auditability.
2. **Introduce annual data collection and reporting against the Program Performace Framework.** Since 2023, the Fund has conducted two data calls with partners — to support the 2023 internal benchmarking exercise and to support this Report. If this cadence were changed to annual data collection, reporting accuracy would be enhanced, and the Program Performance Framework would be more likely to become institutionalised among partners.
3. **Enhance coordination and collaboration among digital connectivity and capability initiatives to achieve more sustainable effects.** Infrastructure and capacity investments are a prerequisite for sustainable and system-wide regulatory reform and uptake. Enhanced coordination and collaboration with relevant investments and partnerships within and outside the Fund could help achieve more sustainable and system-wide results in digital trade and e-commerce.
4. **Deepen linkages between digital development and climate.** The Fund has an opportunity to ensure investments integrate digitalisation, data governance, and climate resilience throughout their design, implementation, and MEL. Cross-program collaboration between the DATA Fund, IISD, STDF, TESS, and TFSP could be encouraged to capitalise on synergies between evidence-based policymaking, trade facilitation, and the green transition.
5. **Scale proven models for sustainability.** Successful programmatic approaches could be expanded and/or replicated. For example, the TFSP's trade information portals, Better Work's gender-based violence prevention modules, WIPO FiT's judicial training model, and the DATA Fund's digital economy measurement framework. Prioritisation of the embedding of these tools within national systems and more comprehensive documentation of results from private sector consultations could enhance sustainability and increase evidence of the extent to which there is local ownership.

/ Annex A: Fund Investment Profiles

Investment	Description	AUD	Duration	Geographic Coverage
Advisory Centre on WTO Law (ACWL)	Support to the ACWL provides legal assistance to developing countries and LDCs to enable their governments to take full advantage of participation in the rules-based multilateral trading system. The ACWL achieves this by providing legal advice on World Trade Organization (WTO) law, assisting countries in WTO dispute settlements, and providing training on WTO law.	3 million	5/2023–6/2025	82 developing countries and LDCs are eligible for ACWL services. In the Indo–Pacific this includes Bangladesh, Cambodia, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Myanmar,* Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
Aid for Trade in Asia and the Pacific	This research report aims to advance understanding of the challenges and opportunities of trade facilitation in Asia and the Pacific and contribute to advancing the Aid for Trade agenda. It is produced and disseminated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and prepared for launch at the WTO's biennial Global Review of Aid for Trade.	0.45 million	5/2024–6/2027	Asia and the Pacific.
Trade and Supply Chain Finance Program (TSCFP)	Implemented by the ADB, this program works with banks in developing countries to improve their prudential and governance practices, and develop new instruments that improve access to finance for SME traders. It seeks to achieves this through financial products that fill market gaps in trade and supply chain finance and through the delivery of knowledge products and capacity building initiatives aimed at banks, their employees and SMEs.	3 million	05/2024–5/2028	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Tonga, Vietnam, the Maldives, the Philippines and Vanuatu.
Direct Aid Program for Geneva WTO (DAP)	This program supports WTO Members that are developing countries and LDCs, especially those from the Indo–Pacific, to participate in multilateral trade fora in Geneva. It funds targeted research, event participation, and negotiation support including in collaboration with the PIF Secretariat Geneva delegation and PTI Europe, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the WTO.	0.65 million	7/2023–6/2025	This program supports developing countries and LDCs, with a focus on Indo–Pacific partners.

*Australia does not provide any direct funding to the military regime in Myanmar, and takes proactive steps to ensure its assistance neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

Investment	Description	AUD	Duration	Geographic Coverage
Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)	The Framework supports LDCs (only) to participate in the global, rules-based trading system. It aims to support LDCs to address supply-side constraints and enhance trade-related capacities. It seeks to achieve this by providing financial resources and technical assistance and capacity building, supporting trade promotion activities and helping LDCs integrate trade into their national development strategies.	2.5 million	6/2019–12/2024	This program is global. Indo–Pacific countries supported include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Myanmar,* Nepal, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
Forum on Trade, Environment and the SDGs (TESS)	TESS is an independent initiative, based at the Geneva Graduate Institute. It aims to foster inclusive international cooperation and action on trade and sustainability. The Fund supports TESS to help developing country partners to identify trade-related priorities that address domestic climate change mitigation and adaptation needs.	1 million	11/2023–12/2027	Australia supports a TESS pilot in the Philippines and Cambodia and a regional pilot in the Pacific.
International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)	IISD is a policy research organisation working to advance sustainable trade, investment, and environmental governance. It contributes to strengthening the capacity of developing countries and LDCs to engage in multilateral trade and environmental negotiations by producing policy analysis, facilitating dialogue, and supporting knowledge sharing on climate and sustainability issues.	1 million	05/2023–6/2026	Australia supports an IISD pilot in Vietnam and a regional pilot in the Pacific.
ILO Better Work	This program is a joint initiative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC). It partners with governments, the private sector, unions, and workers to raise compliance with international labour standards and national laws, reducing gender discrimination and boosting the competitiveness of the garment industry in developing countries. Better Work seeks to achieve this by simultaneously influencing business practices in the global garment supply chain and strengthening the enabling environment for decent work.	3 million	3/2024–9/2027	Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

*Australia does not provide any direct funding to the military regime in Myanmar, and takes proactive steps to ensure its assistance neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

Investment	Description	AUD	Duration	Geographic Coverage
Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat Office in Geneva and Pacific Trade Invest Europe (PTI Europe)	PIF Secretariat Geneva Office (comprising the PIF Delegation to the UN and WTO, and PTI Europe) plays a vital role in ensuring Pacific island voices are represented at the WTO, thereby also enhancing the inclusiveness of WTO discussions. The PIF Secretariat Geneva Office works to strengthen and facilitate member engagement with the WTO and the UN, develop regional Aid for Trade initiatives, improve the business enabling environment in the Pacific, and increase exports to Europe.	1.61 million 7.78 million	1/2022–4/2024 06/2024–12/2027	Eligible PIF Members.
PROSIVU — Governance and Economic Development program	A bilateral program that strengthens governance, public sector capacity, and economic management in Timor-Leste. It supports government institutions to design and implement sound economic and trade policies, fostering a more transparent, resilient, and inclusive approach to sustainable development and investment. The Fund's contribution to PROSIVU supports Timor-Leste to engage in and implement its new WTO obligations.	2 million	7/2022–6/2026	Timor-Leste.
Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)	A global partnership of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the WTO, the STDF aims to increase the capacity of developing countries to implement international SPS measures to gain and maintain international agricultural market access. The STDF helps to add value across supply chains and promote inclusive growth. This is achieved through knowledge work and funding to develop, implement, and learn from innovative pilot projects.	2.9 million	3/2022–6/2024	This program is global. Indo–Pacific countries supported include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.
UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) — E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme	This program helps developing countries and LDCs enhance their readiness to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy. It seeks to achieve this by conducting e-Trade Readiness Assessments and supporting national e-commerce strategies, delivering training on measuring digital trade and the digital economy, empowering women digital entrepreneurs through the *E-Trade for Women* initiative, and fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue through platforms such as *E-Trade for All* and the *UNCTAD E-Week*.	3 million	11/2023–11/2026	This program is global. Indo–Pacific countries supported include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar,* Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

* Australia does not provide any direct funding to the military regime in Myanmar, and takes proactive steps to ensure its assistance neither goes to the regime nor lends it credibility or legitimacy.

Investment	Description	AUD	Duration	Geographic Coverage
Digital Advisory and Trade Assistance (DATA) Fund	The DATA Fund is a World Bank program established with funding from Australia and Switzerland to support eligible countries to contribute to international digital trade policies, regulation, and negotiations, including uptake and implementation of the WTO Agreement on Electronic Commerce, develop policy frameworks and improve regulatory and business conditions for engaging in global digital markets.	1 million	03/2023–12/2024	This program is global. Indo–Pacific country supported is the Phillippines.
Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP)	The TFSP is a World Bank program that assists developing countries and LDCs seeking assistance to implement the TFA and related trade facilitation reforms. Effective implementation of TFA measures helps to improve cross-border trade environments, reducing constraints, and ultimately increasing trade activity. The TFSP seeks to achieve this by helping client countries identify existing constraints, design and implement reforms, and improve systems and procedures in line with international standards.	3.6 million	03/2021–12/2024	This program is global. Indo–Pacific countries supported include Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar,* Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.
WIPO Funds in Trust (FiT)	This program allows WIPO to provide technical assistance and capacity building to developing countries in the areas of IP services, policy, information and cooperation.	2.29 million	1/2024–1/2027	Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.
WTO Fisheries Funding Mechanism (Fish Fund)	The Fish Fund assists developing country and LDC Parties to the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to implement the disciplines under this Agreement. It helps these countries align domestic legislation with WTO disciplines, strengthen fisheries management systems, and improve institutional coordination across trade, fisheries, and environment sectors.	2 million	5/2023–6/2026	This program is global. Indo–Pacific countries supported include Cambodia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tonga, and Vietnam.

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