

International Trade Centre

*Transforming trade. Changing
lives.*

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To: OECD Suez EPZ event

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The International Trade Centre



Joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization established in 1964.

Only international agency fully dedicated to the development of **MSMEs in developing countries**.

Core services:
firm-level capacity building,
ecosystem development,
enabling policy environment,
trade and market intelligence

Clear geographic focus:
>80% of country-level interventions in priority countries* and ≈39% in LDCs (in 2024). Active in 142 countries in 2024.

HQ in Geneva and project offices in partner countries.
In 2024, 423 staff members, representing 97 nationalities (55% women).

** Priority countries include least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), small and vulnerable economies (SVEs), countries in armed conflict or at risk of (re-)lapsing into conflict and countries in sub-Saharan Africa.*



The challenge we face

Access to finance and investment remains a persistent trade finance gap for SMEs, especially in LDCs and fragile markets which limits businesses growth potential



<1%

The global trade value revenues reached \$31 Trillion, however Least Developed Countries account for less than 1%



70%

MSMEs in least developed countries struggle to compete in global markets due to challenges in accessing finance. IFC reports 70% of MSMEs have unmet finance needs



**\$5.2
trillion**

The annual financing gap is estimated at \$5.2 Trillion, a huge gap calling for stronger public private collaboration, new partnerships, innovative and catalytic solutions to address it.

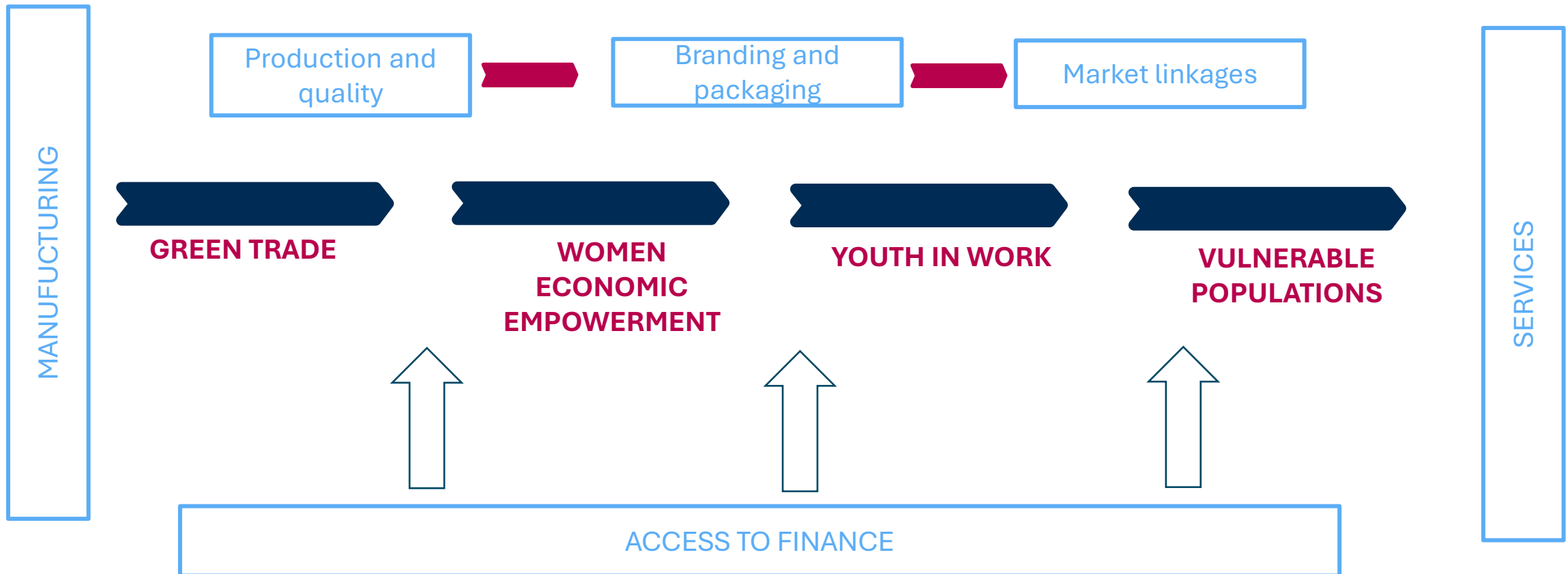


Data Sources:

[UNCTAD](#)

[IFC](#)

Access to Finance that is linked to strengthened competitiveness, business viability and inclusion





ITC's Access to Finance work

Increase the capacity of MSMEs in developing countries to trade in exports and support them access to capital that is affordable and appropriate.

	Goals	Core services
GOAL 1	SMEs are finance and investor ready, with enhanced capacity to engage and attract financial actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical assistance• Transaction facilitation
GOAL 2	SMEs are able to access affordable and diversified financial services and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bridge capital – catalytic grants• Blended facilities
GOAL 3	SMEs are supported to access finance through enabling trade and policy environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy and convening• Research and analysis• Technical assistance

Lessons from ITC work with SMEs

Pre-investment and post-investment technical assistance (TA) remains critical to enhancing financial access for SMEs and building the confidence of financiers.

Transaction facilitation that provides professional support to SMEs throughout the finance and investment journey results in higher conversion rates.

Catalytic bridge financing is a game changer and complements TA efforts.

Trade markets and sector intelligence are essential for attracting capital providers and empowers evidence-based policy action.

Transformation requires a market systems development approach.

Examples of our work: Non-Financial Services with FI's



We work closely with financial institutions to strengthen their offering through non-financial services to export oriented businesses, improving the risk profile and viability of businesses for trade finance facilities.

East Africa SheTrades Hub – hosted by ABSA: Serves as a resource centre for women-led businesses access trainings on key topics, market and investment opportunities; institutions to access to a community of partners from a network spanning 19 in-country and two regional hubs across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa region; and to support policy makers with enhancing gender-inclusive policies.

Examples of our work: NEXT Ecuador



ITC's NEXT Ecuador project focuses on developing productive capacities, certifying quality and traceability, and generating exports of Ecuadorian agrifood products.

To unlock the constraint on access to finance, ITC supported Ecuador's development bank to jointly develop a model that included two mechanisms providing credit lines to farmers:

- 1 **De-risking of farming enterprises** through technical assistance, including the connection to markets
- 2 **Compensation scheme for enterprises** implementing sustainability criteria.

In 2025 BANEQUADOR launched the credit line “**Siembra Futuro for the Sustainable Production of Pitahaya**” with an initial capitalization of USD 1 million.

Examples of our work: Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP)



The **MARKUP programme** supports initiatives to address selected supply side constraints and enhance competitiveness in the East Africa Community (EAC). To improve the access to finance for SMEs in the agricultural value chains, ITC provides an end-to-end access to financing approach for SMEs including:

- Targeted **capacity building programme** for SMEs in the EAC in financial literacy and management, loan applications and investment readiness.
- **Combined de-risking guarantees** from development financing institutions (DFIs) and local organizations, along with ITC led coaching.
- Analytical study to identify challenges and opportunities to strengthen and leverage **innovative agriculture finance models and products** that support private sector development and export promotion in the EAC.

Results

- **Supported 200+ SMEs** across 6 EAC countries
- **US\$ 15 million** in financing secured
- **US\$ 12 million** additional funding in pipeline



Looking ahead to unlock trade and finance for SMEs



ITC is developing an early-stage catalytic facility that combines pre-investment TA and concessional first-loss capital to de-risk investments and change the risk profile of early-stage markets. This addresses the **gap between TA and capital flows**, supporting the hand over of deals to commercial finance markets. The facility

- 1 Supports **growth and development of export trade** through providing funding and technical assistance support to export oriented / exporting SMEs seeking less than US\$250,000.
- 2 Develops a **strong portfolio of viable and bankable businesses** as a funnel for different lenders and investor mandates.
- 3 **Strengthens coordination and integration of the financing value chain:** Provide a variety of capital structures under **US\$250,000**, supporting capital flow and enabling better hand-over/graduation of deals.

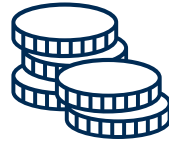
Opportunities with the SC Zone

The Suez Canal Economic Zone is a strategic global trade hub linking Europe, Asia, and Africa

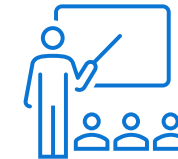


Pilot SME support programme

Target export-oriented SMEs in SC Zone and combine TA and export and investment readiness



**Engage financial institutions
Partner with Egyptian banks & investors and strengthen SME financing models such as blended finance solutions and risk-sharing mechanisms**



**Strengthen the enabling environment
Support policymakers in SME financing frameworks that will improve capital flow for SMEs**



**Drive inclusive & sustainable growth
Facilitate the integration of Women and Youth-led initiatives**



Stay connected!

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