



TRADE IMPACT
FOR GOOD

50
YEARS

1964-2014



A large, stylized number '50' in a dark blue serif font is positioned on the left, with a light yellow rectangular shadow behind it. To the right of the '50', the text 'years of unlocking' is written in a dark blue sans-serif font, followed by 'SME competitiveness' in a larger, bold dark blue sans-serif font. The background features a dynamic, abstract pattern of overlapping geometric shapes in shades of pink, purple, blue, and yellow, creating a sense of motion and complexity.

50 years of unlocking
SME competitiveness

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

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The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of
the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

Street address: ITC
54-56, rue de Montbrillant
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Postal address: ITC
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Telephone: +41-22 730 0111

Fax: +41-22 733 4439

E-mail: itcreg@intracen.org

Internet: <http://www.intracen.org>

50 years of unlocking SME competitiveness

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE



ABSTRACT

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International Trade Centre (ITC)

50 Years of Unlocking SME Competitiveness: Lessons for the Future.

Geneva: ITC, 2014. xv, 128 p

The book, published on the occasion of International Trade Centre's 50th anniversary, traces the history of the organization since its inception in 1964 - reflects on five decades of global growth and illustrates how the world economy is rebalancing; identifies and analyses the three major drivers of trade growth: technological change, policy reform and competitiveness; summarizes ITC's assistance in four primary areas: trade and market intelligence, institutional support, enterprise-oriented programmes, public-private partnerships; highlights key trends to watch for the future of international business; discusses the implications for trade-related technical assistance; elaborates on how dynamics and new trends will impact on ITC's efforts to strengthen SME competitiveness and to foster inclusive and sustainable growth in developing countries; includes bibliographical references (pp.120-124) and a snapshot of ITC's progress over 50 years.

Descriptors: **ITC, SMEs, Competitiveness, Technical Cooperation, Trade Policy.**

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Foreword

This publication, *50 Years of Unlocking SME Competitiveness: Lessons for the Future*, is a testimony to the International Trade Centre of the past and to that of the future.

It traces this organization's beginnings from a four-person unit around a small desk in the offices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), to an institution of more than 300 committed individuals of diverse backgrounds, focused on 'trade impact for good'. The evolution of ITC is indeed the evolution of the trade landscape. It is a window into the dramatic transformations that the global system has witnessed, yet it also yields insight into what remains to be done.

In 1964, ITC was created with a clear purpose. The press release announcing its establishment referred to ITC as a 'new trade information and trade promotion advisory service' that would be available to 'all less developed' countries and, interestingly, to all developed nations as well.

The press release went on to set out the areas where ITC would focus its energy: establishing a document centre, a correspondence answering service and a register of sources of trade information; publishing a monthly trade news bulletin; preparing manuals on efficient export promotion services; providing training in export promotion; and undertaking studies on development trends. Many of these functions have been replaced, thanks to technology or the varying needs of its client base. Yet at its core, ITC remains the pre-eminent source of information, tools and expertise for trade promotion and development, and a highly recognized repository of trade and market intelligence.

Fifty years later, the ITC mandate has evolved with the changing topography and geography of trade, the maturing priorities of its partners and clients, and the shift in the way businesses produce, trade and interact.

ITC offers a suite of support services specifically focused on helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to increase their competitiveness, achieve their economic potential and internationalize. Our offerings engage with the value chain along its full length, encompassing services, e-solutions, environmental solutions, quality standards, non-tariff measures, trade facilitation, branding and packaging, export strategies, tools to better empower women, youth, and poor communities economically, strengthening trade support institutions, public-private dialogues, finance for trade, and ... I could fill this page with the forms of innovative and relevant interventions that ITC continues to deliver.

This 50th anniversary publication sows the seeds of renewal by reaffirming our mandate, and by helping us as an institution to ensure that we continue to mature. In its pages, a clear road map is charted toward further growth – to grow in depth, breadth and impact. The millions of SMEs we have assisted over the last 50 years are an encouragement to devote our next 50 years to help SMEs become true engines of decent jobs and sustainable growth.

My thoughts and gratitude go to all my ITC colleagues, present and former, who devoted their careers to helping small and middle-sized businesses become true engines for growth, jobs and development. I extend my commendations to the authors of this book, Bernard Hoekman and Friedrich von Kirchbach, who, under the stewardship of Anders Aeroe, Director of the Division of Market Development, and with input from a team of in-house and external contributors, have created a true commemoration of a great moment in the institution's history, a moment of which we are proud.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arancha González'.

Arancha González
Executive Director, International Trade Centre

Acknowledgements

A book of this scope requires the dedication of many individuals. The book was developed under the leadership of Anders Aeroe, ITC Director, Division of Market Development, as a contribution to the ITC 50th anniversary. This included concept development, management and overall coordination. He was supported by a team including Rajesh Aggarwal, Acting Director, ITC Division of Business and Institutional Support; Raimund Moser, Programme Development Advisor; and Natalie Domeisen, Head of Public Affairs and Publications.

Chapters 1 and 2: Bernard Hoekman, the principal author for this publication, conducted the research and writing for chapters 1 and 2, drawing especially upon research of the World Bank, OECD, UNCTAD, WTO on trade developments and trade drivers of the last 50 years. Bernard Hoekman is the Research Director for Global Economics at the European University Institute, and is a former Director of the International Trade Department for the World Bank.

Chapter 3: Friedrich von Kirchbach, a former ITC Director of the Division for Country Programmes, served as the ITC historian and author of chapter 3. He conducted numerous interviews with ITC staff and retirees, and drew upon a growing body of external evaluations of ITC as an institution and of many individual projects and programmes. He also drew upon publications developed for previous ITC anniversaries: The International Trade Centre 1964-1984 (a book by former ITC director Frederick Glover), Trade Forum magazine 1994 anniversary issue (by Janice Goertz of ITC) and Portraits of Trade Development of 2004 (a book by Natalie Domeisen of ITC).

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