



# E-COMMERCE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

## CONTEXT

UNCTAD has carried out Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessments for [Bhutan](#), [Cambodia](#), [Lao PDR](#), [Liberia](#), [Myanmar](#), [Nepal](#), [Samoa](#), [Senegal](#), [Solomon Islands](#) and [Vanuatu](#). Each assessment was carried out along the seven policy areas of the [eTrade for all initiative](#):

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

Although each assessment identifies country-specific barriers and opportunities related to strengthening e-commerce, and provides corresponding policy recommendations, some common themes are emerging.

This document summarizes the key findings and main policy recommendations, based on the seven assessments completed so far, with regard to: **e-commerce skills development**.



## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

E-commerce can only be effective if the people managing and engaging with it have the right skills. In many countries, there is a need to enhance the awareness and understanding of e-commerce and its implications. This may apply to the general public as well as to enterprises, organizations and the government itself. Addressing existing skills gaps typically requires effective collaboration between public sector organizations and the private sector. Training may need to be offered to government workers, entrepreneurs and SMEs to help them capitalize on e-commerce opportunities.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. E-commerce awareness is low but growing

Although awareness among the general population remains low, young consumers are beginning to shop online and often look to the Internet for information about products. Young consumers are more likely to look for information on regional trends, products and entertainment. Awareness of e-commerce among civil servants is generally low.

### 3. Professional workforce lacks adequate e-commerce skills

The general lack of e-commerce curriculum in colleges and universities, combined with limited opportunities for practical hands-on training, has led to a workforce that is unprepared to work in the e-commerce industry. Although most new graduates have some ICT skills, specific knowledge and skills related to e-commerce remain limited.

### 2. Limited e-commerce curriculum in tertiary education

Information technology courses are available in most colleges and universities. However, there is a lack of curriculum dedicated to e-commerce. Courses in important areas such as application development, search engine optimization, data analytics and web-based marketing are uncommon in most tertiary education systems.

### 4. Local language considerations are important

In some countries, there are no local-language words for many of the terms and concepts involved in e-commerce. Some countries also require that contracts, customs forms and tax invoices be provided in the local language. Meanwhile, local-language platforms are beginning to take hold, but they lack the resources of global platforms.



# MAIN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



## 1. Include e-commerce courses in tertiary education.

Courses dedicated to e-commerce would help to close the gap between the knowledge and skills of current graduates and the needs of the burgeoning e-commerce industry. New e-commerce courses should be practical and tailored to the local job market, with opportunities for hands-on training. As a starting point, policymakers should assess the current e-commerce skills gap in their countries.

## 2. Increase e-commerce fluency of general population.

Where relevant, developing a lexicon of e-commerce terms in the local language can help raise overall awareness and understanding of the e-commerce phenomenon. The development of local-language e-commerce platforms, or the adaptation of global platforms to suit the habits, preferences and cultural traditions of different groups of people should also be encouraged.

## 3. Educate consumers on the costs and benefits of cashless transactions.

Many consumers, especially the unbanked, perceive cashless transactions as risky. Educating consumers on the benefits and risks of cashless transactions would increase consumer confidence and accelerate the development of e-commerce. Entrepreneurs could also be trained on how to do business online.

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## 4. Develop awareness-raising programmes for merchants.

Similar to increasing confidence among consumers, highlighting the benefits and costs of cashless payments to merchants would help close the trust gap. In addition to traditional channels, some awareness-raising programmes could be carried out through social media.

## 5. Prioritize the skills development of women and girls.

The ICT field is traditionally seen as a male domain, and digital literacy of women in the assessed countries remains low. Prioritizing e-commerce skills development for women and girls would help to bridge the gender divide, bring more working women into the formal sector and provide new opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

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Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessments:  
<http://unctad.org/en/Pages/Publications/E-Trade-Readiness-Assessment.aspx>