



Covid-19 impact on Trade Facilitation observations, challenges and opportunities

Committee on Trade Facilitation

30 September 2020 | Geneva, Switzerland

ALLIANCE PROJECT PORTFOLIO – SEPTEMBER 2020



UNFOLDING OF COVID-19

- **Unfolding of events over the past 6 months can be split into 3 phases:**



- **This pattern was observed in every country in which GATF operates. Timeframe for each phase variable from country to country.**



ALLIANCE RESPONSE – PHASE 1 / CRISIS

- **Ensure safety and welfare of GATF staff and contractors.**
- **Cancellation of all travel plans.**
- **Monitor immediate reaction of countries where Alliance is involved.**
- **Engage with partner governments on immediate needs.**
- **Provide governments with visibility on actions by other governments.**
- **Resist knee-jerk reaction and remain within Alliance scope of work.**
- **Monitor actions by other TA/Intl organisations. Align/support/contribute where appropriate.**



ALLIANCE RESPONSE – PHASE 2 / RECOVERY

- **Virtualise in-country operations and maintain momentum where possible (Virtual - meetings, -project management, -PPD, -advisory sessions).**
- **Assess level of “virtual uptake” from countries in order to better plan future actions.**
- **Map general recommendations published by international organisations against TFA and assess possible Alliance intervention.**
- **Assess if projects need to be adjusted or reorientated in consultation with Government partners and private sector.**
- **Consult closely with donors to keep them informed and assess any changes in their priorities.**
- **Collaborate with entities such as TFAF, WTO, IATA (consolidation of recommendations, Covid-19 survey).**



ALLIANCE RESPONSE – PHASE 3 / REORGANISATION

- **Assess medium/long term impact of Covid-19 on Trade Facilitation in developing countries.**
- **Support countries in accelerating reform towards digitisation and simplification of border processes.**
- **Increase reliance on local TF experts and build capacity locally. Reduce fly-in/fly-out interventions.**
- **Support countries in anticipating future challenges caused by Covid-19 (e.g. possible 2nd wave, vaccine distribution) and support where possible.**

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- **Local authorities and private sector overloaded during the crisis phase but considering the seriousness of the situation, recovery more rapid than expected.**
- **Pandemic re-emphasised importance of digitalization, broad local ownership of reform, fluid movement of transport workers, e-payments.**
- **Virtualisation process successful in most countries.**
 - **Infrastructure more effective and resilient than expected**
 - **Stakeholders have largely embraced new virtualisation technologies**
 - **Project scoping missions delayed but being completed successfully in virtual environment [e.g. Ecuador/Madagascar]**
 - **Some countries have in fact embraced virtualisation and becoming more efficient in conducting dialogue process**
- **Only minor changes to Alliance project priorities. General consensus among local authorities that work should continue despite disruptions.**

CHALLENGES

- No guarantee that “new normal” will be effective in the medium/long term
- More operational challenges to be expected (e.g. 2nd wave, further lock-downs, etc...)
- Virtualisation has benefits but this is still early days. In-person interaction remains valuable
- Travel restrictions means increased reliance on local teams. In the long term this can be a benefit
- Some operational work does require on-site intervention, this has to be postponed



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Virtual environment can accelerate planning of dialogues as no travel required.**
- **Ability to mobilise TF experts in multiple countries concurrently.**
- **Ability to establish hybrid consultations – physical convenings in country with international experts virtually.**
- **Strengthening local public-private ownership of reform in some cases.**
- **Covid-19 is providing additional impetus to digitise and simplify processes, this needs to be leveraged.**



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: www.tradefacilitation.org

Email: info@tradefacilitation.org

Twitter: [@GATFnews](https://twitter.com/GATFnews) [#TradeFacilitation](https://twitter.com/TradeFacilitation)