



ASYCUDA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



ASYCUDA
40
YEARS



UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD



ASYCUDA

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2020



UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD

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UNCTAD/DTL/ASYCUDA/MISC/2021/2

FOREWORD

2021 marks the 40th anniversary of the ASYCUDA Programme. Today, ASYCUDA's flagship software, ASYCUDAWorld, is used in around 100 countries and territories, delivering the latest web-based technology. This annual report details progress made by the Programme in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic which reduced physical contact and increased the urgency for the importation of medicines and essential goods. As for so many organizations, the pandemic changed how the ASYCUDA Programme operates – with a greater need for remote assistance and shift to virtual capacity building, increased paperless processing, and automation. ASYCUDA proactively supported user-countries, guiding customs administrations on adapting ASYCUDAWorld to COVID-19 enforced restrictions. It allowed user-countries to change their ways of doing business while generating the data required for risk-based decision-making.

The ASYCUDA COVID-19 Customs Administration Survey improved understanding of the challenges being faced by customs administrations and helped maximize the benefits of UNCTAD's guidelines for coping with COVID-19 measures. Recognizing ASYCUDA's real-world impact, initiatives such as the United Nations Development Account provided resources for the Programme to respond to the crisis.

To highlight some real-life examples from 2020: in Lebanon, since customs were running the cloud based ASYCUDAWorld, following the blast at the Port of Beirut, no data was lost, and 350 containers, including humanitarian and relief consignments, were imported the next day. Another example is the ASYCUDA Sanitary and Phytosanitary module, ASYSPS, rolled out to help Vanuatu Biosecurity to automate the process of applying, approving, and paying for SPS certificates – speeding up customs clearance while protecting the country’s food, animal, and plant health. Finally, the ASYCUDA Programme with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), piloted in Sri Lanka a cloud-based electronic permit system, eCITES, that automates permit application, processing, issuance, and reporting.

In a challenging year, ASYCUDA demonstrated flexibility and innovation, providing excellent value to user-countries. As focus turns to UNCTAD 15 – and transitioning from inequality and vulnerability to prosperity for all – at UNCTAD, we are proud of the achievements of ASYCUDA and the role it plays in facilitating trade to enable less advanced countries to prosper, thrive, and improve the livelihoods of their citizens – ultimately accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.



Shamika Sirimanne,
Director, Division on Technology
and Logistics (DTL), UNCTAD

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
AW	ASYCUDAWorld
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEC	Eurasian Economic Community
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
IRU	International Road Transport Union
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
P-SIDS	Pacific Small Island Developing States
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SIGMAT	Regional Customs Network for Transit Trade [ECOWAS project]
SW	Single Window
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WCO	World Customs Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report describes the activities, achievements, and financial situation of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) Programme of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) from 1 January to 31 December 2020. It is intended for the Programme's donors, development partners and beneficiary countries, and for all others interested in: customs reform and automation; the monitoring of customs procedures and reform; and trade facilitation. Since its inception, the Programme has assisted over 120 countries and territories. In 2020, ASYCUDA systems were used in approximately 100 countries globally. ASYCUDA systems were active in 39 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 34 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and 21 Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), among others. Over the years the Programme has collaborated with over 50 donors, international organizations, regional entities, trade associations, UN agencies, and universities.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the way we work, cooperate, and interact. The Programme adapted to provide bespoke on-site and remote assistance to user-countries covering: the deployment of ASYCUDA systems; delivery of trainings; development of new tools/modules; and the implementation of customs reforms. Moreover, the Programme provided additional assistance to tackle the economic

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic following two approaches – one global and one local. Globally, the adaptation of ASYCUDAWorld, ASYCUDA's customs management system, to the current reality by: increasing paperless processing and automation; undertaking a risk management strategy review; adapting for tax policy changes implementation; and adjusting to meet administrations' organizational arrangements. Locally, to address each user-country/territory's specific pandemic enforced needs, from both health and economic perspectives. Further, ASYCUDA's capacity building approach was also affected in 2020, with a shift to remote training sessions and the implementation of an e-learning platform to share learning content and materials.

In 2021, the ASYCUDA Programme celebrates 40 years of facilitating international trade for developing countries by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of customs administrations. Today, as well as the development and implementation of its automated customs management system, the Programme also offers trade facilitation through partnerships with specialized agencies, and support to most regulatory agencies involved in international trade.

ASYCUDA
40
YEARS



II. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

A. Background

In 1981, UNCTAD received a request from the secretariat of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) to assist in the compilation of foreign trade statistics in their Member States. After an initial evaluation it quickly became apparent that this would require the involvement of customs clearance offices, and the modernization of customs clearance procedures, to achieve quality results. Capitalizing upon advances in computer technology, UNCTAD proposed to develop a customs software system which would be modular, adaptable, and configurable so that it could be used in difficult environments requiring only a small number of trained maintenance staff. This marked an important milestone in the digital technology transfer programmes of the United Nations.

The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) is a computerized customs management system which covers most foreign trade procedures. The system handles manifests and customs declarations, accounting procedures, transit and suspense procedures, among other tasks. It expedites the customs clearance process for customs administrations while facilitating the customs clearance processes for businesses. It generates trade data that can be used for statistical economic analysis. ASYCUDA takes into account the international codes and standards developed by ISO (International Organization for Standardization), WCO (World Customs Organization) – e.g., Data Model –, and the United Nations. It can be configured to suit the national characteristics of individual customs regimes, national tariff and legislation. ASYCUDA provides Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) between traders and customs using prevailing standards such as XML.

Since its inception, the ASYCUDA Programme has become the leading customs reform programme, and the ASYCUDA Integrated Customs Information System is among the world's most comprehensive customs automation systems. The most recent version, ASYCUDAWorld, is the fourth generation of ASYCUDA's customs procedures and data management system. It combines state-of-the-art IT and proven field experience in customs and trade facilitation for the modernization of IT and the reform of legislation and procedures.

Today, ASYCUDA has become UNCTAD's largest technical assistance programme with approximately 100 user-countries around the world. In 2020, ASYCUDA systems were being used in 39 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 34 Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and 21 Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), among others.

B. Mandate

As an outcome of UNCTAD 14, the quadrennial Ministerial Conference, the mandate of the ASYCUDA Programme was renewed and affirmed in paragraph 38 of the Nairobi Maafikiano, where it is noted that UNCTAD should “continue to provide assistance to developing countries to design and implement policies and actions aimed at improving the efficiency of trade transactions as well as the management of transport operations. It should also continue to cooperate with Member States in implementing the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA)”.

Prior to that, the Doha Mandate in 2012 states that UNCTAD should “assist developing countries, particularly Landlocked Developing Countries and Transit Developing Countries, and some countries with economies in transition, to address challenges affecting their participation in trade from geographical constraints, with a view to improving transport systems and connections, designing and implementing resilient and sustainable transport systems, and enhancing transit infrastructure and trade facilitation solutions”. Further, the need for UNCTAD to “continue its work in the field of trade facilitation, including the Automated System for Customs Data programme” and

“advise Small Island Developing States on the design and implementation of policies addressing their specific trade and trade logistics challenges linked to their remoteness and geographical isolation” is also noted.

In line with the above stated mandates, ASYCUDA projects – comprising expertise, technical assistance activities, implementation of the ASYCUDA system and corresponding training – are designed to assist the beneficiary Member States to reform their customs regimes, procedures and systems in line with international standards and best practices, and to ensure the system’s ownership by customs and its staff. They expediate the customs clearance process while enforcing security through the introduction of computerization and the simplification of procedures, thus minimizing administrative costs to the business community and the economies of user-countries.

During the last few years, at the request of Member States, ASYCUDA has broadened its scope to assist Partner Governmental Agencies in modernizing and automating their respective trade related procedures. The Programme participates in the design, development, and implementation of customs-centric Single Window systems for trade – allowing for the submission of information required by various entities, (such as Ministries of Health, Ministries of Agriculture, commercial banks, regulatory agencies, etc) via one system. The Programme has and continues to develop partnerships with a number of international organizations and agencies (such as CITES, IATA, OCHA, UPU, and WCO), to provide integrated and standalone solutions to facilitate international trade. It is also proposing a tool, ASYPM (Automated System for Performance Measurement), that helps customs management to monitor and assess the performance of customs nationally and locally.

C. Impact on SDGs

The work of the ASYCUDA Programme contributes directly and indirectly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1 NO POVERTY



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Customs' contribution to national revenue through revenue collections, and the subsequent investment of revenues into national development programmes.

2 ZERO HUNGER



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Improving food security and food safety through strengthening customs and inter-agency controls at the borders, automation of issuance and monitoring of use of phytosanitary and veterinary certificates, integrated quota monitoring for agricultural exports and imports.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Automated customs control of the movement of excisable goods/tobacco products (ASYCUDA-DTCS). Strengthening of customs and inter-agency controls at the border for trade in goods that affect human health (e.g., food safety, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and dangerous drugs), introduction of electronic certificates, integrated risk management and surveillance mechanisms in the ASYCUDA and Single Window environment.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

ASYCUDA provides automated support to customs as it applies its controls in compliance with the international conventions of Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm, and the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. This is expected to lead to improved water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping, and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Customs makes a key contribution to facilitating trade, enabling access to global value chains, innovation, economic growth, and employment opportunities.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

By embedding early taking of ownership and sustainability in its Technical Assistance approach and the use of ASYCUDA, which has always combined state-of-the-art advanced technologies with proven in-the-field expertise, UNCTAD ensures an efficient and tailored support to countries thus contributing to their ICT infrastructure development and upgrade especially in least developed countries and Africa, and by improving regional and trans-border infrastructure.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

ASYCUDA supports the development of customs and trade infrastructure (ports, logistics terminals, warehouses, supply chains in cities) and contributes to the facilitation of legal cross-border movements, while combating illicit trafficking of cultural and natural heritage, including by cooperating with other Cross Border Regulatory Agencies (CBRAs) operating in the regulatory fields related to cultural and natural heritage protection.

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

ASYCUDA provides tools to monitor the legal trade, and the prevention of the illegal trade, in Ozone Depleting Substances (Montreal Protocol) and Timber.

15 LIFE ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and stop biodiversity loss

Customs contributes to protecting society from unwanted pests and preventing the flow of illicit wildlife products by applying health and agricultural policies, and the IPPC Convention. Customs also helps to take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna, and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products by applying the CITES Convention. ASYCUDA jointly developed and implemented the eCITES Electronic Permitting System under a MOU between the CITES Secretariat and UNCTAD, with support from Swiss government.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

Simplification and digitalization of customs and CBRA procedures to decrease human interactions, thus contributing to good governance, transparency and accountability, and support the fight against corruption.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The ASYCUDA customs system, by applying international standards, trade-related agreements, and through collaborating with other national authorities, countries, and international agencies such as the WCO, contributes to increased efficiency and coordination, strengthened resource mobilization, and trade facilitation and statistics. In addition, the ASYCUDA Programme organizes a multitude of study tours, technical and functional training sessions for customs delegations to visit and learn from experiences in implementing new technology and/or new infrastructure in other parts of the world. Thus, directly contributing to North-South and South-South international and regional cooperation.

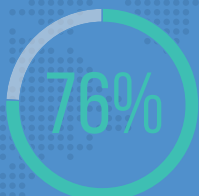
D. ASYCUDA Community

ASYCUDA is UNCTAD's largest technical assistance programme. Since its inception, it has assisted 126 countries and territories. As of the end of 2020, ASYCUDA systems are implemented in approximately 100 countries and territories.

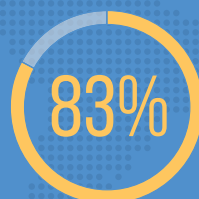
The Programme is represented by 75 staff, as well as consultants and UNDP recruited national staff. These are based at both headquarters in Geneva and in the field.



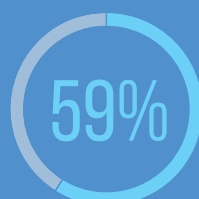
ASYCUDA SYSTEMS OPERATING IN



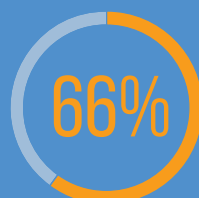
AFRICAN COUNTRIES



LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES



SMALL ISLANDS DEVELOPING STATES



LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

ASYCUDA

COMMUNITY












AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Anguilla |  Jamaica |
|  Antigua and Barbuda |  Montserrat |
|  Aruba |  Nicaragua |
|  Barbados |  Puerto Rico |
|  Belize |  Saint Kitts and Nevis |
|  Bolivia |  Saint Lucia |
|  Caribbean Netherlands |  Saint Pierre and Miquelon |
|  Curaçao |  Saint Vincent and the Grenadines |
|  Dominica |  Suriname |
|  El Salvador |  Trinidad and Tobago |
|  Grenada |  Turks and Caicos |
|  Guyana |  Venezuela |
|  Haiti | |

AFRICA

- | |
|--|
|  Angola |
|  Benin |
|  Burkina Faso |
|  Burundi |
|  Cabo Verde |
|  Central African Republic |
|  Chad |
|  Comoros |
|  Congo |
|  Côte d'Ivoire |
|  D.R. Congo |
|  Djibouti |
|  Equatorial Guinea |

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

-  Afghanistan
-  Albania
-  Bosnia and Herzegovina
-  Georgia
-  Gibraltar
-  Kazakhstan
-  Kosovo
-  Moldova
-  Turkmenistan

MIDDLE EAST

-  Jordan
-  Lebanon
-  Palestine
-  Syria
-  Yemen

ASIA AND PACIFIC ISLANDS

-  Eritrea
-  Eswatini (former Swaziland)
-  Gabon
-  Gambia
-  Guinea
-  Guinea-Bissau
-  Lesotho
-  Liberia
-  Madagascar
-  Malawi
-  Mali
-  Mauritania
-  Namibia
-  Niger
-  Rwanda
-  Saint Helena
-  Sao Tome and Principe
-  Seychelles
-  Sierra Leone
-  Sudan
-  Togo
-  Uganda
-  Zambia
-  Zimbabwe

-  Bangladesh
-  Cambodia
-  Cook Islands
-  Fiji
-  Kiribati
-  Lao PDR
-  Maldives
-  Nauru
-  Nepal
-  New Caledonia
-  Niue
-  Papua New Guinea
-  Philippines
-  Samoa
-  Solomon Islands
-  Sri Lanka
-  Timor-Leste
-  Tonga
-  Tuvalu
-  Vanuatu

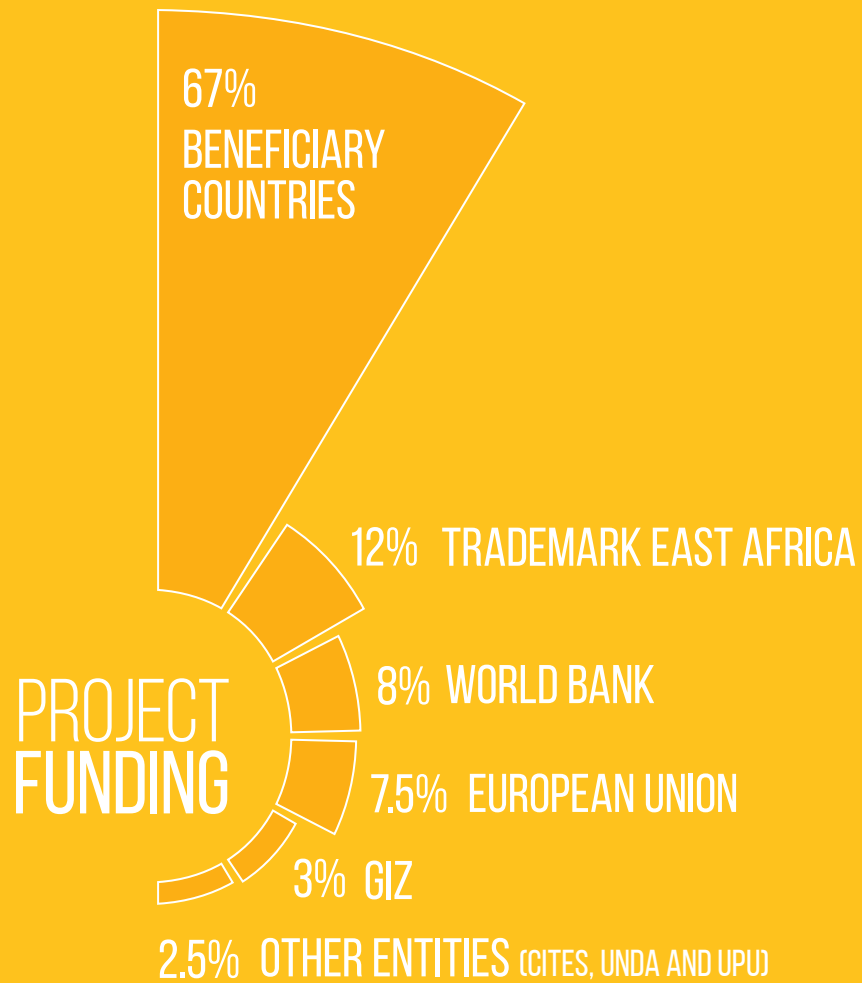
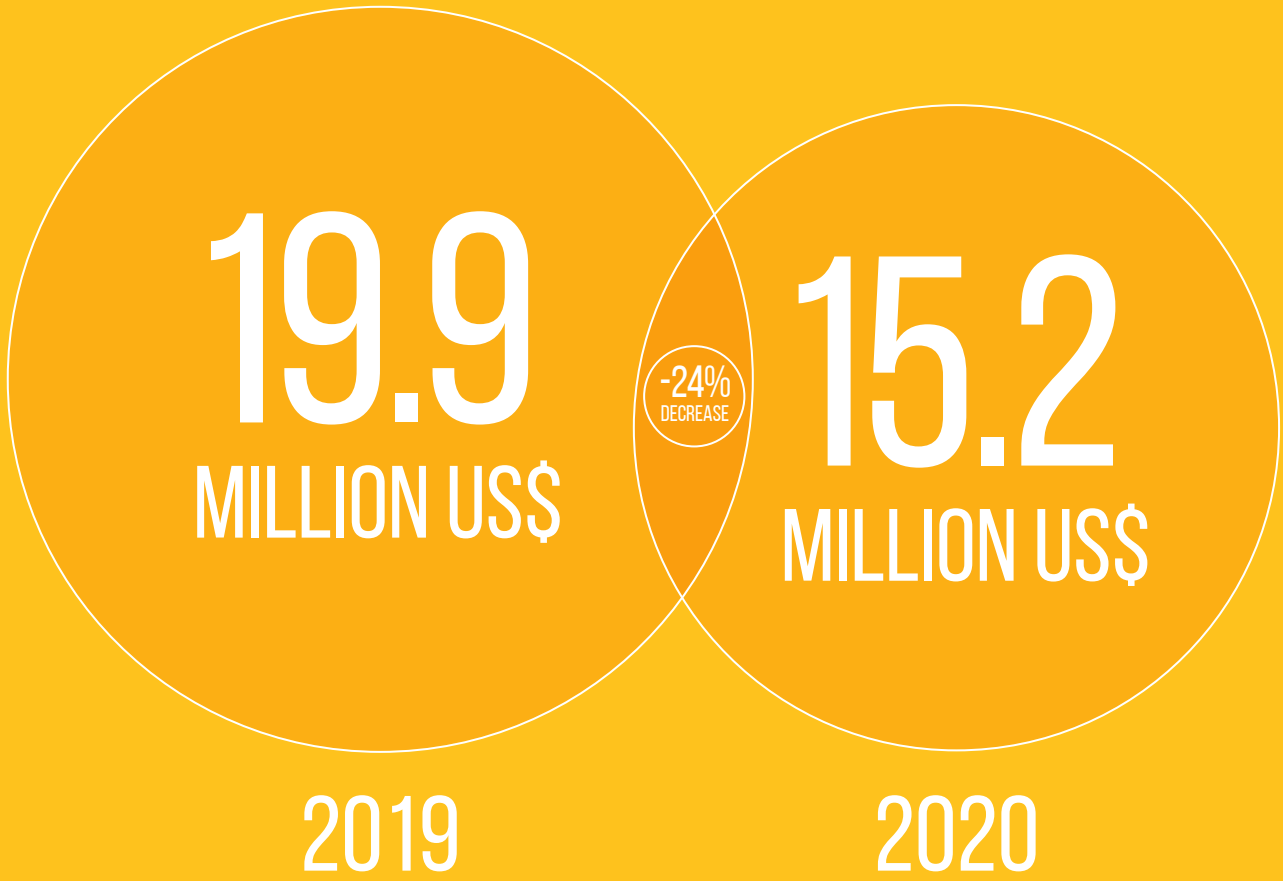
III. NEW ACTIVITIES

The budget raised by ASYCUDA for new projects and extensions to current projects decreased from approx. 19.9 million US\$ in 2019 to approx. 15.2 million US\$ in 2020, with donors (beneficiary countries, development partners, and international organizations) allocating most of their budget to tackle the sanitary and economic fallouts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Customs administrations focused their efforts in accelerating the import of medical supplies and equipment, and other essential goods, while ensuring business continuity and reducing human contact.

Although ASYCUDA's annual budget decreased in 2020, the number of projects and extensions signed increased by 41% (from 22 in 2019 to 31 in 2020), reaffirming global recognition of ASYCUDA's expertise. Despite the reduced budget, many countries turned to ASYCUDA for assistance in minimizing the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Further, programmes like the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded the ASYCUDA Programme to propose the best assistance possible.

In 2020, most projects and extensions signed concerned countries willing to further enhance their use of the ASYCUDAWorld system by implementing additional features and modules, strengthening existing ones (e.g., selectivity module for Risk Management, regional transit management, and systems connectivity) and raising national staff capacity. In addition, 4 new Single Window projects were signed in 2020 (compared to 3 in 2019), representing 24% of total funding and demonstrating ASYCUDA's evolving focus and expertise extension in recent years.

ASYCUDA's project funding stems from beneficiary countries (67%), TradeMark East Africa (12%), the World Bank (8%), the E.U. (7.5%), GIZ (3%) and from other entities such as CITES, UNDA, and UPU (2.5%). There is a direct link between the high proportion of funding by beneficiary countries and proportionally less funding via third-party donors and non-beneficiary countries due to the latter experiencing the adverse economic impact of the pandemic.



The table below details all the ASYCUDA projects and extensions signed in 2020.

New ASYCUDA projects signed between, 1 January – 31 December 2020

Country / Project Symbol	Title	Budget (USD)	Category ^a	Donor ^b
Africa				
Angola ANG0TCBO	ASYCUDAWorld Project	764,445	A	Government
Angola ANG0THCK	Single Window Preparatory Assistance	506,156	N	World Bank
Burkina Faso–Cote d'Ivoire TJAA	Implementation of customs inter connectivity on rail between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire	226,683	N	World Bank
Burundi TJAE	Deployment of Single Windows modules	273,596	N	TMEA
D.R. Congo DRC0TIAW	Introduction to practices of trade and customs clearance facilitation	1,519,850	N	TradeMark East Africa
ECOWAS Region TICD	Evaluation and improvement of the regional transit and connectivity in ECOWAS Region	384,130	N	World Bank
Guinea TBCX	Technical assistance and training for enhancement of ASYCUDA World	142,234 (124,526 EUR ^c)	A	Government
Guinea TJBA	Improvement of selectivity	141,200	N	Expertise France
Liberia LIR0T8CD	ASYCUDA World Project Liberia	131,080	A	World Bank
Niger TJAL	Migration to ASYCUDA World (phase 3) – dematerialization	1,192,986	N	Government
Sudan SUD0TJBT	ASYCUDAWorld Support Mechanism	68'930	N	Government
Zambia ZAM0THAU	ASYCUDAWorld Support Mechanism	290,410	A	Government
Americas				
Barbados BAR0TCAA	ASYCUDAWorld Implementation	700,000	A	Government
Belize RLA0T3AD	ASYCUDAWorld Support	214,000	N	Government
Caribbean Netherlands RLA0T3AD	ASYCUDAWorld Support	306,500	N	Government
Curaçao CUR0TFAY	ASYCUDA World Consolidation	105,500	A	Government
El Salvador ELS0TJAN	ASYCUDAWorld support	985,000	A	Government

Country / Project Symbol	Title	Budget (USD)	Category ^a	Donor ^b
Grenada RLA0T3AD	ASYCUDAWorld Support	167,700	N	Government
Haiti HAI0TDAO	Electronic Single Window	498,864	A	Government
Saint Lucia RLA0T3AD	ASYCUDAWorld Support	160,600	N	Government
Venezuela VEN0TICE	ASYCUDAWorld Support	485,436 (425,000 EUR)	N	Government
Asia & Pacific				
Cambodia CMB0TICG	ASYCUDAWorld upgrade & Implementation of an enhanced Risk management feature	399,207	N	GiZ
Kazakhstan KAZ0TIBU	Technical support and modernization of ASTANA-1	468,950	N	Government
Kazakhstan KAZ0TJBR	Technical support of ASTANA-1 system	54,250	N	Government
Pacific Region RAS0T1DA	ASYCUDA Support Mechanism for the Pacific	379,864	A	Fiji, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Is., Vanuatu
Turkmenistan TUK0TJAF	Implementation of SW for Export and Import	2,400,000	N	Government
Europe & CIS				
Georgia TJAR	Development and implementation of NCTS for Georgia Revenue Service	1,142,203 (1,000,000 EUR)	N	EU
Moldova TJBE	Implementation of PAP for express consignments	58,890	N	GiZ
Interregional				
INT0TFAK	ASYCUDAWorld Support to Albania (AW) and Georgia (interoperation with UPU/CDS)	835,880	N	Government of Albania (750,000) & UPU (85,880)
INT0THCP	Enhancement of eCITES system	105,000	N	CITES
United Nations Development Account (UNDA)	COVID-19 Survey & e-learning	110,000	N	UNDA
Total		15,219,544		

a (A) Addendum, (N) New country/project.

b (BMZ) German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (EU) European Union, (GiZ) German Corporation for International Cooperation, (IDA) International Development Association – World Bank Group, (TMEA) Trade and Markets East Africa, (UPU) Universal Postal Union.

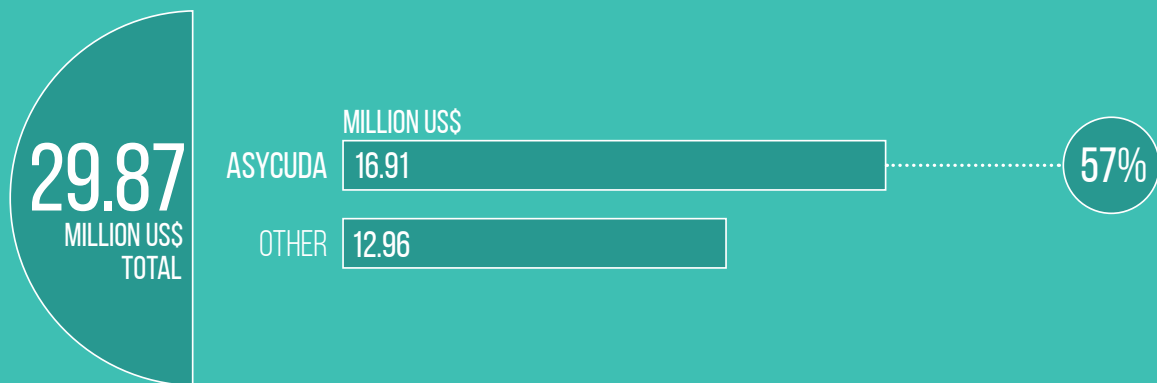
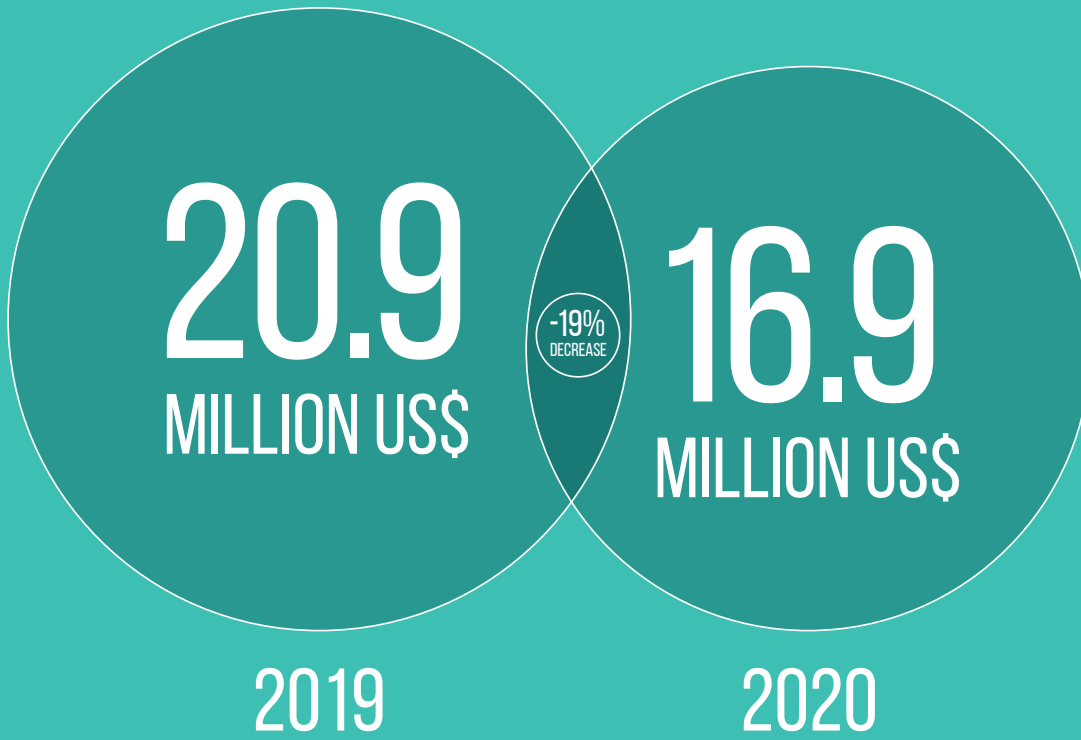
c EUR-USD exchange rate: 1.142203 (2020 average rate).

IV. EXPENDITURES

ASYCUDA's expenditure decreased from 20.9 million US\$ to 16.9 million US\$, largely due to pandemic enforced travel restrictions. Travel in 2020 only represented 3.3% of total expenditures.

As in previous years, ASYCUDA's expenditure constituted more than half of UNCTAD's technical assistance (approx. 57%), as shown in the graph.

ASYCUDA's expenditure also constituted more than 60% of UNCTAD's technical cooperation expenditure for 2020 (16.9 million US\$ out of 29.8 million US\$¹).



V. PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond its close partnerships with user-countries, since its inception ASYCUDA has collaborated with over 50 donors, international organizations, regional entities, trade associations, United Nations agencies, and universities.

In 2020, UNCTAD signed 2 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that involve the ASYCUDA Programme.

The first was signed with the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Customs Department of Cambodia. The MOU covers the installation of ASYHUB, which uses ASYCUDAWorld combined with a shipping data provider's ICT systems to enhance the efficiency of customs clearance processes and risk management systems by facilitating pre-arrival processing of sea cargo manifests. Cambodia was selected as the pilot country for the implementation of the solution.

The second MOU was entered into by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and UNCTAD. It mandates ASYCUDA to assist all Forum Island country members in the deployment of ASYCUDAWorld, and to support the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and electronic interfacing between postal services and ASYCUDA to facilitate e-commerce.



ASYCUDA Partners

Donor Countries



UN Agencies



International Organizations & Agencies



Regional Entities



Trade Associations & Universities



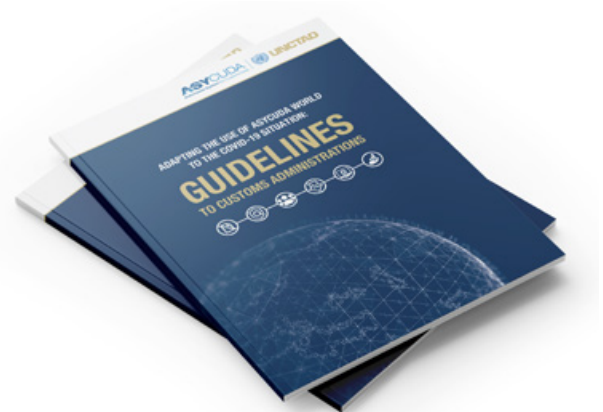
VI. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shook the entire world. Customs administrations and ASYCUDA were no exception. The Programme and its partners had to learn together how to provide remote technical assistance to our user-countries because of the travel restrictions. Customs administrations' priorities were altered as they sought to accelerate the import of medical supplies, ensure business continuity, review organizational arrangements and reduce human interaction at customs offices.

The ASYCUDA Programme has tailored its assistance following two different approaches. The first is general and is addressed to all customs administrations using ASYCUDAWorld while the second is bespoke, ad-hoc, country-specific assistance.

A. ASYCUDA Guidelines & Survey

In April 2020, ASYCUDA issued guidelines for customs administrations to adapt their use of [ASYCUDAWorld to the COVID-19 situation](#)², cope with its related measures at the workplace, and reduce direct interaction. The recommendations dealt with implementing and promoting further paperless processing, tailoring the ASYCUDAWorld risk management module, reviewing organizational arrangements, implementing tax policy changes, adjusting the ICT infrastructure and performing trade data analysis to monitor the impact of the pandemic.



The ASYCUDA COVID-19 Customs Administration Survey was launched by UNCTAD to rapidly assess the current conditions in customs administrations and to facilitate the implementation of UNCTAD guidelines for coping with COVID-19 measures ([refer to Annex I](#)).

Figure 1.a

Please select the main processes where the Customs Administration is presently using the AW feature to upload scanned documents (i.e. ancillary/supporting), thus avoiding submission of hard copy documents? Select all that apply.

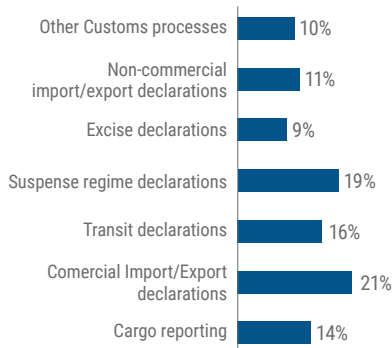


Figure 1.b

Does the Customs Administration require submission or presentation of hard copies of the declaration and supporting documentation?

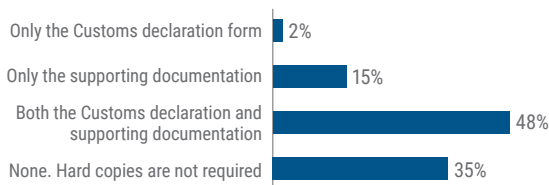


Figure 2.

Does the Customs Administration allow declarants to generate the Release Order (online)?

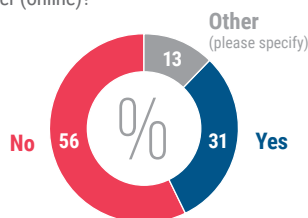


Figure 3.

Does the Customs Administration accept electronic signatures in lieu of handwritten signatures? Responses

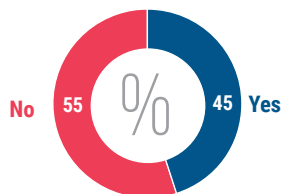
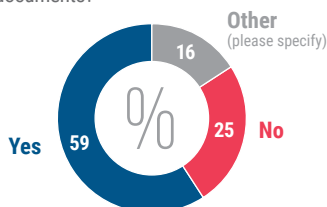


Figure 4.

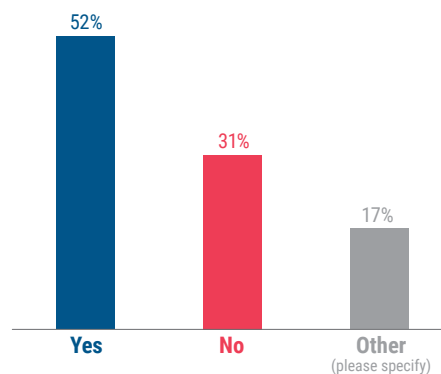
Do Taxation Rules currently set in AW enforce the submission of supporting documents?



Respondents from 46 countries participated in the survey (list of countries in Annex II). The findings suggest that a high percentage of respondents still require both the electronic customs declaration and supporting documentation to be submitted in hard copy (figure 1), raising concerns about the shift to paperless documentation that has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most customs administrations do not mandate the use of online release orders, illustrating that progress is needed to facilitate legitimate trade (figure 2). There is also a need to promote legislative and taxation reform relating to provisions for the use of electronic signatures (figure 3) and the simplification of taxation (figure 4). An unacceptably high percentage of ASYCUDAWorld users are not being allowed to be self-assessed which is also reflective of low trade compliance and/or low trade facilitation (figure 5). There is a dire need for the development and implementation of an ASYCUDA Change Management Strategy to assist customs and trade administrations with the necessary transition to electronic trade.

Figure 5.

Does the Customs Administration allow self-assessment (assessment of declarations) to traders?



Analysis of the survey data led to the drafting of the following set of recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promotion of a Paperless Environment

1. International organizations and development partners should convene symposiums for jurisdictions which promote a more supportive political, regulatory, and business-friendly environment by government border regulatory agencies.
2. Ensure that the legislative, regulatory, and policy environments are sufficiently reformed and supportive of the use of: e-signature; e-payment; e-release; and e-notifications.
3. Promote the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld electronic Single Window projects.
4. Business process re-engineering exercises should ensure that trade facilitation and simplification of trade procedures and documentation reforms occur prior to automation, assuring in the process that complex and time-consuming trade procedures and documents are not automated.
5. Develop and implement customs and trade change management programs **prior** to automation and ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of change management strategies including via the appointment and engagement of change management champions.

Trade Facilitation

1. Administrations should ensure the development and proper functioning of National Trade Facilitation Committees and the implementation of Trade Facilitation Programs.
2. Promote the use of TTP as a pre-cursor to AEO (which is more export-oriented).

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Promote organizational reform in customs to include units such as a Central Documentary Check/Processing Unit, Risk Management Unit, Post Clearance Audit Unit, and Trade Policy and Research Unit.
4. Promote more self-assessment by the trading community in their engagement with customs and other government agencies.
5. Promote the development of Client Service Charters within customs and other government agencies.
6. Promote more private/public partnerships in trade facilitation strategies including greater consultations among private and public sectors.
7. Customs administrations should as soon as possible implement ASYCUDAWorld Trade Portals.

Information Communication Technology

1. Encourage customs administrations to increase their data storage capacity.
2. Convene regional workshops to promote development and implementation of disaster recovery and business continuity plans, as well as other areas of ICT strategies.
3. UNCTAD should assist those jurisdictions who are yet to embark on trade impact analysis.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

B. Ad-hoc Country-Specific Assistance

Although user-countries share a common platform in ASYCUDAWorld, the system can be customized differently from region to region, or country to country. The ASYCUDA Programme, through its regional coordinators, has committed to assist user-countries with development, system configuration, data analysis, review, and other tasks that can help minimize the spread of COVID-19, and ensure business continuity. Below are some examples of support provided by the Programme in 2020.

The Government of Afghanistan needed to facilitate the imports of much needed food and medical supplies for the country’s COVID-19 response. To enable this, the ASYCUDA system is running 24/7, covering daily operations in all border crossing points. When the government chose to cancel customs duties for five hygienic commodities, ASYCUDA national experts configured the new taxation rules in the system to address this change. The transport law was then amended in March 2020 to allow import fees to be collected directly by customs using the ASYCUDA system. Consequently, the customs and ASYCUDA teams configured this new functionality with the change going live in April 2020 – making the Ministry of Transportation an additional user of [ASYCUDAWorld in Afghanistan](#)³. In terms of coordinated COVID-19 response, UNCTAD’s ASYCUDA team actively shares the daily customs operation status at all borders crossing points with the COVID-19 task force, OCHA HQ, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

**ASYCUDA System
is running 24/7**

Albania and Kosovo customs administrations have implemented special transit measures to further accelerate the movement of CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) approved essential goods.

In Belize, UNCTAD and the ASYCUDA Programme guided the National Trade Facilitation Committee in [mainstreaming COVID-19 response](#)⁴.

In D.R. Congo, with the assistance of ASYCUDA, measures such as the exemption of taxes on imported medical supplies, suspension of delay penalties, and tailoring of the risk management mechanism to expedite shipments while performing less inspections, were implemented in [ASYCUDAWorld](#)⁵.

In March 2020, the Government of Equatorial Guinea issued a Presidential Decree adopting measures to strengthen the National System for Social Protection and supporting SMEs (PYMES). The decree made into law the mandatory use of the ASYCUDAWorld system in the customs jurisdiction of Malabo. This measure aimed at automating collection of duties and ultimately helped to enforce procedures of [social distancing linked to the pandemic](#)⁶.

Risk Management mechanism

Exemption of Taxes on imported medical supplies

Trade Facilitation and enforce procedures of social distancing



In Guyana, the pre-payment functionality of [ASYCUDAWorld](#)⁷ was extended to export declarations to avoid unnecessary in-person interaction.

**Online
payments**

In Jamaica, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, customs has actively encouraged the use of online payment services such as the [ASYCUDAWorld e-payment](#)⁸.

In Kazakhstan, the ASYCUDA-based ASTANA-1 system, which allows for the processing of customs transactions and payments online, enabled brokers and customs officials to comply with COVID-19 restrictions and work from home. ASTANA-1 also ensured the prompt automatic application of emergency measures such as a ban on the export of medical protective equipment, the introduction of tax incentives for the import of socially important goods, and a ban on the export of such goods. Further, the ASTANA-1 reporting and monitoring tools provide timely and reliable data to different arms of government.

**Modernization
of customs**

In Kiribati, digital solutions such as [ASYCUDAWorld](#)⁹ are supporting the modernization of customs to combat the spread of COVID-19.

In Sri Lanka, trade operators can now submit, through [ASYCUDAWorld](#)¹⁰, scanned copies of supporting document such as invoices.

In Vanuatu, ASYCUDA assisted in the launch of the New Biosecurity SPS Online Module, as a component of the Vanuatu Electronic Single Window Project, that monitors and prevents the import of pests and diseases while facilitating imports and exports of plant and agricultural products. The electronic connectivity features of ASYCUDA allow for the remote processing of customs and trade related formalities, without face-to-face interaction.

**Biosecurity SPS
online module**



VII. ACHIEVEMENTS, NEW DEVELOPMENTS & THEIR IMPACT

A. Achievements

The UN is committed to enabling the world to adapt and make progress towards the SDGs, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ASYCUDA Programme is no exception. In addition to supporting efforts to minimize the impact of the pandemic (see previous chapter), in 2020, experts in the field and at headquarters mobilized to provide the necessary assistance to governments and customs administrations in the implementation of ASYCUDA systems and modules, and the development of new standalone tools. The following table details the Programme's achievements, the development of new tools, and the impact of ASYCUDA on economies during 2020.





Africa

Region	Country	2020 ASYCUDA Update
	Angola	As part of the preparatory assistance for the implementation of a Single Window, the Programme analysed procedures and processes, and assessed the forms and costs in application in two main governmental agencies (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Commerce).
	Comoros	Launched four modules of the ASYCUDA-based Single Window system.
	D.R. Congo	Implemented new features in ASYCUDAWorld such as the excise management, the exemption management, and the 2-D certificate for means of transport.
	Gabon	Gabon customs and ASYCUDA progressively implemented ASYCUDAWorld in the main customs offices of Libreville.
	Gambia	Gambia customs, with the assistance of ASYCUDA, started in June 2020 the implementation activities of ASYCUDAWorld through teleworking.
	Lesotho	Lesotho Revenue Authority migrated to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld and implemented the Automated System for Performance Measurement (ASYPM).
	Madagascar	Migrated the three remaining customs offices still running ASYCUDA++ to ASYCUDAWorld.
	Mauritania	Mauritania customs and ASYCUDA started migrating to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld in a test environment. Testing was undertaken remotely due to travel restrictions.
	Rwanda	Successfully launched the Single-Sign-On Portal and the Single Transaction Portal for the ASYCUDA-based Single Window system.
	Uganda	Rolled out the Single-Sign-On Portal for its ASYCUDA-based Single Window.
	COMESA	COMESA's Member States' Customs Management Systems and Trade Information Portals were assessed as part of the development of a prototype COMESA Regional Trade Information Portal.
	ECOWAS	Following the successful rollout of the ASYCUDA regional transit tool in three ECWOAS corridors in 2019, the solution was tested in Mali and Senegal. Technical specifications were also discussed and development initiated for the exchange of rail transit data through ASYCUDAWorld between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.



Americas & the Caribbean

	Aruba	Cargo management module was upgraded with additional functional features integrated to facilitate co-loader's data submission, application for amendments, and vessel's departure card. Electronic data interchange (EDI) and interoperability were developed and deployed between ASYCUDAWorld and other governmental automated systems. The main consumers of the data sharing mechanisms were the Central Bank and Central Bureau of Statistics. The project upgraded the service-oriented architecture by installing and deploying the new ASYCUDAWorld components for building interfaces, mobile applications and other EDI mechanisms, as well as the deployment of the new ASYCUDA Portal.
	Barbados	Project focused on implementing ASYCUDAWorld. Additional functional features were deployed to assist with cargo delivery verification at exit gates. The release function for cross-border agencies was enhanced through a web application enabling the use of mobile devices. To provide an efficient service to traders, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and Barbados customs jointly worked on extending functional features to automate the processing of import licenses.
	El Salvador	ASYCUDA missions were undertaken to analyse customs operations and system performance for the upgrade to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld. Virtual meetings were held between ASYCUDA experts and with customs personnel to set an action plan and organize ASYCUDA's support.
	Jamaica	Implemented ASYCUDA-based Jamaica Single Window for Trade at three government agencies responsible for issuing import and export licenses and permits. A legal gap analysis of existing or potential barriers to data sharing and exchange, digital signature, data privacy, among others, was the first step in enabling a legal environment for JSWIFT. The project reviewed the current legal framework and assessed the readiness of Jamaica's legal system to allow the full operationalization of JSWIFT.
	Venezuela	Field support was provided to maintain ASYCUDA systems (ASYCUDAWorld and ASYCUDA++) and implement configuration adjustments to comply with the Venezuelan customs regulations.

Region	Country	2020 ASYCUDA Update
 <p>Asia & the Pacific</p>	Afghanistan	Continuous support and maintenance of 28 ASYCUDAWorld customs sites. Piloting of e-Payment with central bank. Implementation of Electronic Pre-Declaration and the development of customs data exchange between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries (Iran and Uzbekistan).
	Cambodia	Migration to the latest version of ASYCUDAWorld started in November 2020 in a test environment, with testing commenced in December. Tasks were undertaken remotely.
	New Caledonia	ASYCUDAWorld prototype deployed on the New Caledonia ICT infrastructure with a copy on the Kuala Lumpur datacentre. Most project activities were carried out remotely.
	Kazakhstan	Development of express cargo customs declarations module and the e-document application for release of goods prior to submission of declaration commenced.
	Timor-Leste	Video conference held with representatives from the customs authority and all government agencies involved in the Single Window project in which UNCTAD experts introduced the ASYCUDA Single Window. Conduction of a remote inception mission was agreed. Additional Partner Governmental Agencies (PGAs) showed interest in the Single Window and requested their inclusion. Two commercial banks were also interviewed to discuss payment facilities. The development of the first module of the Single Window was completed and is planned to go live in early 2021.
	Turkmenistan	ASYCUDAWorld Integrated Customs Information System was implemented in all automated customs offices in Turkmenistan, including the module for automation of transit in national and regional corridors. The statistics reporting modules was further enhanced to meet Turkmenistan customs requirements and specifications. Data exchange was also prepared with Afghanistan.
	Vanuatu	Development of ASYCUDA Sanitary and Phytosanitary Module (ASYSPPS) for Vanuatu Biosecurity was completed, and ASYSPPS was rolled out successfully in all border entry points nationwide. While it was not included in the project scope, ASYCUDAWorld's Administration Selectivity was implemented to automate Biosecurity risk management, and to harmonize joint intervention and examination with customs, to reduce clearance time.
 <p>Europe</p>	P-SIDS	Project inception missions were undertaken in 4 out of the 6 countries (Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu) for the Pacific Trade and Customs Harmonization Project during March 2020 and inception reports were submitted. The project inception report for Tonga was prepared following online consultation with customs officers and other trade stakeholders from August to September 2020, with the consultation with Niue ongoing. Of these, Tonga was the most advanced in the development of its national ASYCUDAWorld prototype with 70% completed and training organized and held in 2020. The ICT infrastructure to host the development and test system were procured and delivered to the ASYCUDA Regional Office for the Pacific.
	Albania	ASYCUDAWorld system was enhanced with the integration of a module to facilitate the pre-arrival processing of express deliveries and their interconnection for exchange of related information and data.
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	ASYCUDAWorld system was enhanced with the integration of a module to facilitate the pre-arrival processing of express deliveries and their interconnection for exchange of related information and data.
	Georgia	ASYCUDA system migrated to the latest version and was enhanced to work with Universal Postal Union (UPU) systems through the integration of the ASYPCD (ASYCUDA Postal Customs Declaration) module for the automated clearance of postal parcels.
	Kosovo	ASYCUDAWorld systems were enhanced with the integration of a module to facilitate the pre-arrival processing of express deliveries, and their interconnection for exchange of related information and data. An automation tool for the transit procedure between Albania and Kosovo, the deployment of an ASYCUDAWorld mobile application, and e-payment functionality were launched.
	Moldova	Moldova customs and ASYCUDA jointly migrated ASYCUDAWorld to the latest version, including the migration of the existing database into the ASYCUDA environment.

B. Developments

The ASYCUDA Programme took advantage of the travel restrictions to further develop and improve its systems and tools. Here are some of the new developments and enhancements that started in 2020.

ASYADN

ASYCUDA's Automatic Data Notification Tool (ASYADN) consists of a software module that facilitates the compilation of trade statistics via the extraction of trade and customs related data for the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Integrated Database (IDB). The module is to be piloted in Africa and Asia. The African potential pilot countries are under discussion and could include Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, D.R. Congo, and Togo. The main activities undertaken in 2020 were the specification and the development of the tool, with monthly meetings held with WTO and potential pilot countries.



ASYATO

ASYATO is the ASYCUDA extraction tool for the African Trade Observatory developed in cooperation with the International Trade Centre (ITC). Both entities have been collaborating for the development of a tool that extracts trade data from the ASYCUDA system for customs to provide to ITC and the African Trade Observatory. In 2020, the tool was successfully deployed in Comoros, Madagascar, and Uganda.



ASYCUDAWorld

Version 4.3.3 of ASYCUDAWorld was released in 2020. It integrates the management and automation of clearance for express couriers. Multiple improvements, corrections and enhancements in selectivity, transit, and reporting were also made.



ASYHUB Maritime

ASYHUB is a tool that stands between ASYCUDAWorld and shipping data provider's ICT systems. It enhances the efficiency of customs clearance and risk management systems by facilitating pre-arrival processing of sea cargo manifests. It simplifies and automates the process of submission of sea cargo manifest information through a system-to-system interface. It also harmonizes and streamlines the information exchange between ship data providers and customs. Further, it provides authorities with richer information to support a more informed risk assessment for a better targeting and more effective decision on which shipments to inspect.



ASYPM

An enhanced version of the Automated System for Performance Measurement (ASYPM) was developed in 2020. ASYPM is currently being implemented in eleven countries (Angola, D.R. Congo, Eswatini, Gabon, Jamaica, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). It is a web-based business intelligence tool that facilitates the measurement of performance in customs administrations and monitors the movement of foreign goods and the performance of various stakeholders such as importers, exporters, customs officers, and PGAs. It is based on thirty performance indicators composed of tables with drill-down functions, dynamic graphs, and diagrams that provide live and accurate information on customs operations.



The new version includes compatibility with most database management systems and with non-ASYCUDAWorld user-countries and allows for the development of additional dashboards.

ASYREC

The Automated System for Relief Consignments (ASYREC) is a cooperation between OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs) and UNCTAD's ASYCUDA. Its proof-of-concept was nominated for the 2017 UN Secretary-General awards under the "Innovation and Creativity" category. It provides for coordinated, efficient, and facilitated imports of humanitarian relief. This is a tool of the utmost importance for the humanitarian aid coordination mechanism, the Global Logistics Cluster, to ensure that the humanitarian response to an emergency crisis proves logistically efficient and effective. In 2020, the ASYREC tool environment was installed in the Kuala Lumpur datacentre. The system is to be improved in 2021 with new functionalities and visuals, complemented with e-learning material.



Data Warehousing

There is a technical and legal need to electronically archive customs data, thus ASYCUDA countries require a robust, configurable, and flexible tool that archives e-documents in line with local requirements. The common solution developed considers the different database products in use, legislation for modification of customs e-documents (declaration, manifest, T1, etc.), and available space on the hardware. Given the volume and critical nature of the data, archiving is complex and comprises 4 components:

1. **Management** – decide which e-documents should be archived and who will have access.
2. **Business and legal** – define retention policies according to legislation.

3. **Technical** – implement the electronic archive including automated processes according to retention policies set out, backup, and monitoring.
4. **User adoption** – train users how to access archives when necessary.

Dynamic Selectivity

ASYCUDA introduced Dynamic Selectivity to be plugged in automatically by any country using selectivity in ASYCUDAWorld. This function will further assist customs intelligence in achieving efficient and fully automated risk management at different stages of the clearance process. As opposed to the current selectivity that executes targeting criteria entered manually, with Dynamic Selectivity the system automatically identifies targets and manages risk profiles based on history of examinations, inspection acts, and fraud found in the database. Based on a Machine Learning Model, the system extracts and analyses data elements (declarant, importer, country of origin, etc.) from processed e-documents to calculate a score that determines the level of customs inspection (i.e., selectivity lane).



eCITES

The Conference on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and UNCTAD's ASYCUDA Programme jointly developed a cloud-based electronic permit system, called eCITES, offering automated support for permit application, processing, issuance, and reporting. The system was piloted in Sri Lanka in February 2020.



IATA Cargo-XML integrated into ASYCUDAWorld

IATA and ASYCUDA jointly developed and implemented IATA's Cargo-XML standard messages in ASYCUDAWorld for the electronic processing of air cargo information. ASYCUDAWorld directly integrates IATA standard Cargo-XML messages and related code lists for ASYCUDA user-countries. All data entered by airline members on the IATA system are automatically transmitted to ASYCUDAWorld. The feature was implemented in Angola, Jamaica, Seychelles, and Uganda in 2019. In 2020, the solution was enhanced and launched in Rwanda with additional standard messages for: electronic processing of air waybills' degroupage; and the addition



of an air waybill to a registered manifest, among other improvements. Additional countries are implementing the solution in 2021.

Post-Clearance Audit

The purpose of the Post-Clearance Audit (PCA) is to verify the accuracy and authenticity of customs declarations and covers the control of traders' commercial data, records, and accounting books. ASYPCA, the ASYCUDA module for PCA, strictly adheres to the WCO standards on PCA, risk management, and the provisions of the WTO TFA. It includes advanced statistical tools and algorithms to detect fraud and allows customs auditors to easily perform a post clearance historical analysis. It aims at enhancing the ability of customs administrations to successfully detect and prosecute fraudulent practices and mount an effective response to the malpractices of undervaluation and under-invoicing.



TiSStat

TiSStat, the Trade in Services Statistic tool, has been designed for the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). It is a cooperation between ASYCUDA and UNCTAD's Development Statistics and Information Branch (DSIB). In 2020, periodic meetings were held with DSIB to ensure that developments follow the defined technical and functional specifications requirements. A meeting was also conducted with Senegal, a potential pilot country for this project.



C. Impact

ASYCUDA is a result-driven programme and, as described in this section, the implementation of its systems has a measurable, direct, and positive impact upon economies.

To increase efficiency in customs procedures and improve their service, Aruba customs and ASYCUDA implemented an online facility for the electronic payment of duties, taxes, and other charges on international trade. Commercial banks collaborated with customs to enable their online banking applications and ATM machines for these e-transfers, expediting the way revenue is collected and the transfer of funds to government accounts. The payments received by the banks are collated and sent in batches to ASYCUDAWorld every five minutes for processing and automated reconciliation. In 2020, 99.8% of payments of duties and taxes were made online.

99.8%
of payments of duties and taxes now made online

In Barbados, data exchange mechanisms between ASYCUDAWorld and the Barbados Port Inc.'s (BPI) systems were built to forward to BPI's systems: advance cargo manifest data before arrival; immediate notification when a customs release order is issued; and immediate notification in ASYCUDAWorld when BPI is delivering shipments to consignees. During Q1 2020, 60% of commercial imports were cleared within 24 hours after payment of duties. In January 2020, Mr. Owen Holder, Comptroller of Customs, stated

60%
of commercial imports
cleared within
24 hours after payment

“ [ASYCUDAWorld] creates transparency where we can now streamline all processes. We are able to report accurately on the importation of goods and to collect the duties on those goods. ”

In Comoros, 4 government agencies' procedures were automated, and documents data digitized as part of the implementation of an ASYCUDA based customs-centric Single Window system. The National Research Institute on Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment (INRAPE), which delivers, manages, and controls import/export authorizations of animals, plants, and agricultural products, increased its tax collection efficiency by 125% in 2019-2020. Its General Director noted their,

125%
Increase in INRAPE
tax collection efficiency

“ Appreciation to Comoros customs and UNCTAD for the automation of its authorization procedure in the Single Window that allows the control of 70% of foods items imported in 2020, compared to 30% in 2019. ”

The National Agency for Medicines and Sanitary Evacuation, which authorizes and controls the import of medicines, validated 158 requests, among which 93 were written-off from June to October 2020.

In 2019, ECOWAS launched the regional customs interconnection project, SIGMAT, to enhance regional integration through the automation of transit procedures in the union. The ASYCUDA Programme and ECOWAS Member States, with the support of WCO and donors like the World Bank, developed a regional transit module to exchange transit information among the customs clearance systems. The solution was implemented in 2019 in 3 main corridors: Abidjan-Ouagadougou, Lomé-Ouagadougou, and Cotonou-Niamey. As of Q4 2020, the solution was tested in Mali and Senegal, with the latter not using ASYCUDAWorld as a customs clearance system. The number of transit documents (T1) processed in the corridor Abidjan-Ouagadougou increased by 111% in September 2020, year-on-year.



111%
Increase of
Transit documents (T1)
Abidjan-Ouagadougou



The Guyana Revenue Authority and ASYCUDA developed an ASYCUDAWorld module for Post-Clearance Audit (ASYPCA). It strictly adheres to the WCO standards, risk management, and the provisions of the WTO TFA. ASYPCA includes advanced statistical tools and algorithms to detect fraud and allow customs auditors to easily perform a post-clearance historical analysis. In less than a year, the effectiveness ratio in detecting infractions improved by 25%.

The ASYCUDA-based Jamaica Single Window for Trade enabled a predictable and consistent service delivery. It greatly reduced application processing times to an average of 28 hours and overall clearance times to an average of 32 hours, with considerable savings in associated costs.

28 HOURS
Instead 32 hours
for overall clearance

In Lebanon, the 2020 Beirut blast caused customs to lose half of its IT power and archive of critical hard copy documents (manifests, declarations, etc.). Thanks to the blast-tolerant private customs cloud, ASYCUDAWorld and electronic services kept running. Customs did not lose any data or transactions, and no servers needed to be recreated or reconfigured. Lebanese customs were also able to retrieve lost documents from ASYCUDAWorld. Further, the system is expediting imports of humanitarian goods into the country and helping authorities better manage increased incoming relief consignments. To demonstrate resilience, over 350 containers were processed through ASYCUDAWorld in the Beirut port the day after the explosion.

350+

Containers processed through ASYCUDAWorld the day after the explosion

In Nepal, an ASYCUDA mobile app, integrated with the ASYCUDAWorld system, provides inspectors with an easy way to complete and update in real-time the Inspection Act, meaning that, despite limited access to equipment in the field, the customs process can continue without interruption. The app initiative was further enhanced with transit features, developed in partnership with Kosovo customs. In 2020, approximately 500 concurrent users were connected during peak time and 3,000 declarations were processed daily through ASYCUDAWorld.

3000

Declarations processed daily through ASYCUDAWorld

In Saint Pierre and Miquelon, ASYCUDAWorld was tailored to customs requirements and the business needs of the Collectivity, to provide a 100% automated procedure and service to key stakeholders. Ms. Marie Christine Saliba, Customs Department Chief, stated that

|| *In the actual context, the automation of the entire clearance procedure is a real asset for companies and customs to pursue their clearance activities.* ||

In 2019-2020, Sierra Leone customs progressively migrated to ASYCUDAWorld, temporarily running 2 systems in parallel, without disrupting the business environment. In 2020, Ms. Jeneba J. Bangura, Deputy Commissioner-General of the National Revenue Authority stated

|| *Sierra Leone's ASYCUDAWorld System was implemented along with added functionalities as demanded by the management of the National Revenue Authority. It was also designed to roll out an Electronic Single Window System for clearance of goods through customs.* ||



Sri Lanka piloted the implementation of eCITES, a cloud-based electronic system offering automated support for permit application, processing, issuance, and reporting for international trade of endangered species. The solution was developed in 2019 in cooperation with CITES. In 2020, over 650 import/export permits were issued for international trade of endangered species on eCITES.

650 Import/
export permits
were issued for international
trade of endangered
species on **eCITES**

The Vanuatu Electronic Single Window National Project Team and ASYCUDA implemented the bespoke ASYCUDA Sanitary and Phytosanitary Module (ASYSPS) to automate the process of applying, approving, and paying for SPS certificates. A risk management mechanism between customs and biosecurity was integrated using ASYCUDAWorld selectivity. In 2020: over 350 SPS export certificates and 2,000 import permits were issued; over 250,000 US\$ were collected; and 114 biosecurity officers and stakeholders were trained (53% women & 47% men). The application process average time went from days to as little as 10 minutes.

47% Men
53% Women
Persons Trained

In Venezuela, ASYCUDAWorld played a key role in simplifying customs clearance processes from 30 to 7 steps, facilitating trade and revenue collection. Average clearance time went from 8 days in 2019 to 6 days for the first semester of 2020.

7 Steps
to simplifying customs
clearance processes
instead 30 before

VIII. CAPACITY-BUILDING

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, distance training and e-learning have become the cornerstone of capacity-building. Nevertheless, traditional classroom training also took place but with strict sanitary measures.

It is to be noted that even though the ASYCUDA Programme delivered quality, remote trainings in 2020, the virtual and e-learning environment is no substitute for traditional classroom trainings. When travel restrictions are lifted, it is planned to use remote learning to complement in-person trainings and to deliver capacity building using blended learning.

A. Classroom Training

COVID-19 enforced travel restrictions drastically reduced the number of training sessions held in 2020. Indeed, countries with no ASYCUDA expert/trainer on site were unable to organize or deliver ASYCUDA trainings. However, countries with on-site trainers undertook capacity building sessions, but with sanitary restrictions. These included: reducing the number of participants by half; using larger training rooms to respect social distancing; mandatory wearing of masks by participants; and the provision of hydroalcoholic solutions for frequent disinfection of hands and materials. In some countries, like Gabon, participants' temperature was measured before entering the room.

In Afghanistan, the ASYCUDA team delivered nine training courses to 110 customs officers in local customs houses.

In Aruba, training on functional aspects was delivered to designated customs staff, cargo agents, and customs brokers prior to the implementation of ASYCUDAWorld. Three 40-hour training sessions were executed to a total of 85 trainees in this reporting period.

In Barbados, training on functional aspects was delivered to customs staff, cargo agents, and customs brokers before the functionalities were deployed. Five training sessions were executed to a total of 122 participants in this reporting period.



Comoros customs officers participated in an ASYCUDA Single Window functional training delivered by an on-site expert.

In Djibouti, an ASYCUDAWorld technical training was delivered to the national IT team.

Gabon customs officers attended an ASYCUDAWorld functional training before the implementation of the system in Libreville customs offices. The national IT team received an ASYCUDAWorld technical training.

'Traditional' ASYCUDAWorld technical trainings occurred before March 2020 (pre-COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) in Kampala for the Uganda IT team, in Lusaka for the Zimbabwe IT team, and in Kuala Lumpur for the Sudan IT team.

B. Distance Training

As an alternative temporary solution to classroom trainings, the ASYCUDA Programme organized and delivered virtual sessions where the trainer and the trainees interacted through their computers. While acceptable in pandemic conditions, it is not believed that this approach will be sufficient for the long-term due to limitations such as: the reduced focusing capacity of trainees comparing virtual to in-person training; the inability for the trainer to assess and monitor the participants' understanding and application of concepts; outside world and internet connection disruptions; and the often significant time difference between the trainer and the trainees.



In Jamaica, 350 people were trained on the use of JSWIFT. As part of the capacity building component, the end-users received training in: the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to support their new roles; business processes and/or technology. Given the disruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project relied heavily on virtual training means. Most training sessions during the implementation phase were delivered using Microsoft Teams. The project employs a Learning Management System for loading, storing, managing and tracking the e-learning and classroom training.

In New Caledonia, ASYCUDAWorld functional and technical trainings were delivered to customs and IT teams respectively. For the technical sessions, one common screen was used by four participants to display the trainer's presentations. The learning material was shared with the participants beforehand. The time difference between Geneva (where the trainer was located) and Nouméa (where the trainees were located) is 10 hours in winter, which limited drastically the duration of training sessions to 3 hours per day: 1 hour to present the agenda and discuss concepts, 1 hour for practical exercise on the system and 1 hour for direct interaction between the trainer and trainees (assessment of understanding, discussions, Q&A, etc.).

C. E-learning Development

E-learning is an important aspect of capacity building and its benefits have only been emphasized with the rapid rise of technology and the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASYCUDA has mobilized efforts to offer quality training materials to its systems' users around the world. **ASYCUDA would like to thank and express its high appreciation to the TrainForTrade Programme, UNCTAD's reference programme in terms of trade-related capacity building and training.** Their expertise, recommendations, advice, and availability were invaluable while implementing the ASYCUDA e-learning platform and material.

In that context, the Programme implemented the most efficient Learning Management System platform, moodle. Thanks to our designer and IT experts, the platform was tailored and designed to meet the Programme's and user's requirements and expectations.

In 2020, the first course was created covering the efficient use of the Automated System for Relief Consignments (ASYREC). The course content includes high-quality video tutorials, documentation, articles written by third-parties, theoretical exercises, a satisfaction survey, and a discussion forum for use by participants and moderators. By the end of 2020 the first module was developed and 2021 will see the development of the remaining modules, and of other additional courses for the use of eCITES and ASYCUDAWorld, among other systems. The platform will also be complemented with live chats and training sessions using Zoom.



IX. OUTREACH



A. Website

The ASYCUDA Programme official website¹¹ was overhauled in 2020 to be more user-friendly, better structured, and more frequently updated with recent information and content.

In 2020, 64,635 users (37% from Asia, 23% from Africa, 22% from the Americas and the Caribbean, 13% from Europe, 4% from Oceania and the Pacific, and 1% unknown) visited the ASYCUDA website for a total of 95,651 sessions. The average session duration was 2 minutes and 12 seconds and the average number of pages visited per session was 2.5. Approximately, 48% website sessions originated from Google searches, 20% using the website address directly, 9% from user-countries websites and portals, and 3% from Bing searches. In comparison with 2019, the numbers are steady with an 8% increase of average session duration (1 min and 58 seconds in 2019) and average number of pages visited per session (2.3 pages visited per session in 2019).



B. Social Media

ASYCUDA increased its social media presence in 2020 by using Twitter more frequently. Indeed, the Programme posted over 100 tweets and was mentioned 205 times by other accounts. The number of new followers for 2020 is 703, making a total of 1,457 followers and equating to a 93% increase.



ASYCUDA Programme is also strengthening its presence on YouTube. The official account was redesigned and shares more videos produced by the Programme and user-countries. By the end of 2020, the channel was followed by over 340 people around the world and videos viewed over 13,000 times.





C. Compendium

As in 2019, and following the success of its first edition, ASYCUDA prepared a compendium of 26 case studies bringing to life the achievements of ASYCUDA systems beneficiaries, and the impact made upon economies and societies. This second edition was prepared under the theme of partnerships. By the end 2020, an unedited version of the compendium was drafted. It is expected to be published in early 2021.

D. Publications

In 2020, the ASYCUDA Programme published numerous papers, articles, and newsletters¹². Most of them focused on tackling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic's economic and sanitary fallouts.



E. Promotional Video

COVID-19 travel restrictions led to ASYCUDA project officers dealing with the additional complexity of presenting new solutions and tools to customs administrations around the world. They used technology such as Teams or Zoom for systems live demonstrations and presentations. The Programme also supported project officers with promotional videos for systems such as ASYPM¹³ or ASYREC¹⁴.



X. CONCLUSION

As detailed in this annual report, 2020 was a year of adaptation for the ASYCUDA Programme. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the Programme's ways of working and while some of those changes will be temporary (such as the enforced shift to remote capacity building), others have resulted in improvements that will stand the test of time. For example, the lessons learned from the COVID-19 survey are relevant to shaping the future support for beneficiary countries.

2021 is a landmark year for the Programme as it celebrates its 40th year of improving social and economic conditions in developing countries by facilitating trade. In 2020, the Programme supported ASYCUDA users' bespoke needs as they overcame the challenges of engaging in international trade amid an ongoing pandemic. The ASYCUDA Programme in 2020 supported customs as they worked with evolving government policies, enforced by COVID-19, and the Programme will continue to enable users to adapt and thrive in the years to come.

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ANNEX I. GUIDELINES TO CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS SURVEY

Adapting the use of ASYCUDAWorld to the COVID-19 situation

The following is a set of questions aimed at quickly assessing the current conditions in the customs administration, in order to facilitate the implementation of UNCTAD guidelines for coping with COVID-19 measures.

Kindly prepare the questionnaire and send it back to the Regional Coordinator's Office in order to discuss possible ways for remote assistance.

Paperless Processing

DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	N/A
Is the Customs Administration currently using the AW feature to upload scanned documents, therefore minimizing the requirement for submission of documents in hard copy?			
Are all supporting documents currently being scanned?			
Do Taxation Rules currently written to enforce the submission of scanned documents?			
Is the Customs Administration using Electronic Payment?			
Is the Customs Administration using Deferred Payment?			
Is the Customs Administration using Pre-payment Accounts?			
Would the Customs Administration allow traders to directly generate the Release Order (online)?			

ASYCUDAWorld Risk Criteria

DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	N/A
Is the Customs Administration currently using a list for classification of goods related to COVID-19 emergency medical supplies (see WCO COVID-19 emergency medical supplies indicative list ^a)?			
Have the Risk Management Unit created risk criteria to expedite shipments of COVID-19 emergency medical supplies?			
Is the Customs Administration currently using an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) or similar programs?			
Is the current risk criteria reducing physical inspection rates in Customs offices where compliance is higher?			
Is the current risk criteria increasing documentary examination rates in offices where compliance shows to be lower?			
Has the Customs Administration currently assigned relevant staff to increase monitoring of consignments with COVID-19 emergency medical supplies?			
Is the Customs Administration currently implementing the ASYCUDAWorld Multi-Agency Integrated Risk Management Framework?			
If the country has implemented a Single Window system, is ASYCUDAWorld currently electronically consuming permits and certificates issued by other Government Agencies?			

^a http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/natural-disaster/covid_19/hs-classification-reference_en.pdf?la=en

Organizational Arrangements

DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	N/A
Does the country have a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC)?			
Has the Customs Administration appointed a point of contact (PoC) for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Payment issues? 2. Releases without duty payments? 3. Emergency flights? 4. Cargo reporting matters? 5. Staffing matters? 			
Have other cross-border agencies designated staff to work in areas where there is higher risk of COVID-19 exposure?			
Are Customs Staff rotating on a weekly basis?			
Are other cross-border agencies's staff rotating on a weekly basis?			
Have Customs designated staff to strengthen the manifest screening (to identify cargo that may require physical intervention)?			
Is Customs staff (assigned to interact with cargo and other personnel) provided with proper personal protective equipment (PPE)?			

Tax Policy Changes

DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	N/A
Has the Government considered policies to reduce (or remove) tariffs and non-tariff measures for imports of essential medicines, medical equipment and related inputs?			
If such policies were considered, did the ASYCUDA team introduce relevant information in AW taxation rules (identifying the corresponding relief code)?			

ICT Infrastructure

DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	N/A
Is there sufficient space available for data storage to handle the additional load of scanned documentation?			
Is there sufficient space for database storage?			
Has Customs Administration engaged the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to increase the bandwidth for ASYCUDA services in proportion to the anticipated volume of scanned documents?			
Is the key personnel of the Customs response team provided with cellphones?			
Were mobile devices (tablets, laptops and similar devices) re-deployed to Customs personnel who are required to work remotely from home?			
Has the Customs Administration setup an off-site disaster recovery environment, enabling a secondary data center for the mission critical systems?			
Information Security: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the Customs Administrations increased its information security monitoring? 2. Were Customs Officers trained on information security? 			

ANNEX II. **RESPONDENT** COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES

Afghanistan	Mauritanie
Anguilla	Nepal
Bangladesh	Niger
Barbados	Papua New Guinea
Belize	Rwanda
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Cambodia	Saint Lucia
Congo	Samoa
Curaçao	Sierra Leone
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Solomon Islands
Dominica	Sri Lanka
Fiji	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Gibraltar	Suriname
Grenada	Syria
Guyana	The Gambia
Iran	Timor-Leste
Jamaica	Togo
Kosovo	Trinidad and Tobago
Laos	Turkmenistan
Lebanon	Uganda
Lesotho	Vanuatu
Madagascar	Zambia
Maldives	Zimbabwe



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Automated System for Customs Data

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