



ITC and DHL renew partnership to help small businesses trade

16-09-2026

The agreement combines ITC's expertise in market intelligence, SME development and inclusive trade with DHL's global logistics network and technical expertise.

Geneva - The International Trade Centre (ITC) and DHL today signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen their long-standing collaboration supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly women-led businesses, to trade across borders.

Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of ITC, and Hennie Heymans, CEO of DHL Express Sub-Saharan Africa, sign a Memorandum of Understanding renewing the ITC-DHL partnership to empower small businesses and foster inclusive trade.

The agreement combines ITC's expertise in market intelligence, SME development and inclusive trade with DHL's global logistics network and technical expertise. SMEs account for around 90% of businesses globally, provide roughly 70% of employment and contribute 70% of global GDP, making them play a critical role in driving growth and job creation, yet many continue to face barriers to participating fully in international trade. This partnership aims to strengthen the ecosystem of support that helps businesses

overcome those barriers and access new opportunities.

Under the agreement, ITC and DHL will:

- Support small businesses with cross-border trade, covering exports, supply chains and logistics;
- Work with business support organizations and ITC SheTrades Hubs to improve their services for small and women-led businesses;
- Advocate for small businesses and women entrepreneurs in global discussions and at high-level events, as well as among private sector organizations and government agencies.

Over the past decade, ITC and DHL have worked together through DHL GoTrade, ITC SheTrades, and the ITC ecomConnect programme, reaching small businesses across more than 60 countries across Africa, ASEAN, Latin America and the Caribbean. The partnership has combined training with tailored support, including shipping assistance for SMEs and women-led businesses, and has extended to advocacy



and high-level dialogue that amplifies the voice of small businesses in global trade discussions. In July 2025, DHL took part as a private-sector champion at ITC's inaugural Global SME Ministerial Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

ITC Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton said: 'For small businesses, the main challenge is not in creating quality products for customers, but getting it to them. That's why we're deepening our work with DHL to help more small businesses, particularly women-led businesses, to overcome last-mile logistics barriers and reach new markets, and to ensure their perspectives are heard at decision-making tables.'

Hennie Heymans, CEO, DHL Express Sub-Saharan Africa, said: 'SMEs are the backbone of economies worldwide, yet their participation in international trade remains disproportionately low. The challenge is rarely a lack of ambition. More often, businesses need access to knowledge, finance, digital capabilities and logistics support. That is why partnerships like this matter. By bringing together the right partners, we can build the ecosystems that help businesses grow with confidence, reach new customers and unlock the opportunities that international trade

creates.'

About the ITC and DHL partnership

DHL and ITC have partnered since 2016 to advance inclusive trade. Results to date include:

- DHL GoTrade: Since 2021, projects launched in more than 60 countries, reaching over 26,000 SMEs and 8,000 women-owned businesses through training on logistics, e-commerce and trade.
- ITC SheTrades: Since 2018, ITC SheTrades and DHL have worked together to provide technical assistance, logistics know-how and shipping solutions to women-led businesses, reaching over 4,000 women-led businesses across 60 countries. The partnership has increasingly worked through local ecosystems, engaging SheTrades Hubs in Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius and Trinidad and Tobago to connect women-led businesses with DHL country offices, relevant expertise and opportunities.
- ITC ecomConnect: Between 2020 and 2024, connected more than 400 SMEs with DHL support, including preferential shipping arrangements that cut costs by up to 60% in selected markets.

Source: [DHL Group](#)