

## UNECA supports e-trade in Ghana

Ghana and the rest of Africa can make significant progress in developing high-tech export products' industry to boost trade if attention is given to the development of scientific and industrial research base.

By [Emily Nyarko](#) 10 Aug 2007

According to reports, and supported by evidence collated by the World Bank, a number of countries in Africa have a low research.

Analysts believe that the trend could be attributed to the minimal number of scientists and engineers available on the African continent.

In Ghana for instance, a study conducted as part of the input for the Ghana ICT4AD process on the number of research scientists and engineers in the universities and the number of registered practicing engineers in the country, estimated that the number of these professionals per million persons was close to 300.

Less than 10% of the number was involved in research and development (R&D) works. This was interpreted to mean that Ghana had as little as less than 30 scientists and engineers per million persons involved in research and development.

The statistics in the World Bank report also meant that countries with a high percentage of scientists and engineers involved in R&D were those that were doing well in the area of high tech exports.

Another study report on ICTs and Trade urged Ghanaians to develop scientific and industrial research base and take policy steps to increase the percentage of scientists and engineers involved in R&D work.

"The recommendation here is that: if Ghana is to make any progress in developing a high-tech export industry to enable it address the challenges of a weak and narrow export based dominated by traditional products, a lot of efforts will need to be directed at developing the nation's R&D base devoting particular attention to establishing linkages between industry and the research institutions and universities," the report said.

This, the ICTs and Trade report said, would enable the nation to make appreciable progress in developing high-tech exports.

The World Bank report formed part of the basis for the recommendations in the other report that sought to find ways to inculcate ICTs into trade in Ghana.

The other report titled *The ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Study: The Ghana Report*, researched into a number of policy issues relating to the prospects and the opportunities of the deployment and exploitation of ICTs to facilitate economic growth through the promotion of Ghana's internal and external trade.

The study was funded by the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

The main objective of the UNECA supported study was to carry out extensive research work on the subject

matter with a view to come out with specific policy recommendations to guide and facilitate the deployment and the use of ICTs to promote regional and international trade to promote Ghana's economic growth and development in the information age.

Among the areas researched was the socio-economic and ICT landscape of Ghana with a focus on a number of indicators including those relating to demographic and ICT deployment and roll-out.

The study also reviewed Ghana's trade landscape through the use of a number of broad and specific trade indicators to provide a basis for assessing Ghana's capacity to facilitate economic growth.

While assessing Ghana's readiness to promote trade and economic growth through the deployment and the exploitation of ICTs, the study also identified key target areas and sectors such as commodities, financial services, BPOs, e-Content services, tourism, export and m-trade whose activities can be supported and harnessed through the use of ICTs and trade facilitation to improve their competitiveness.

An area of policy recommendation that Ghana can also pursue to develop e-trade capacity especially in ICT products and services is to put in place policy initiatives and incentive packages to product development in the ICT industry and services sector.

The report said promotion of ICT friendly and trade related policies must seek to promote enabling industrial and trade policies and instruments as well as suitable investment, competition and business promotion policies and regimes, mechanisms and environment.

The report said while looking at policy interventions, there is the need to also pay attention to issues that would complement private sector investments, availability of a critical pool of labour with the requisite technical skill, education that makes ICT specialisation a prime focus, simplified trade procedures and a consistent capacity building.

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